

Ab Homine: Notes on the Abominable [curatorial statement]

tobias c. van Veen

California State University, Northridge



“Abominated” is a poem, it is a performance, and it is a manifesto of the self-described “mutant” ZiggZaggerZ the Bastard, a “black alien entity” who has crash-landed on our world. Such is the speculative environs of “Abominable,” which cannot be contained to its written text, nor to the recording of its poetic performance, without it being connected with the radical black becoming that is ZiggZaggerZ the Bastard. The poem strikes through the life of its author, otherwise known as Shannon Theus, who has re-named herself ZiggZaggerZ, and denounced her patronym. In the act of its symbolic patricide, “Abominated” announces that which has superseded Theus, in its ziggling-and-zagging: a new mutant, an abominated “ethical disaster” who — in her embrace of outlier moral revulsion — refuses the phallogocentric order.

Thus this poem is also a living elocution of a performance that transgresses representation. It steps over the line, breaks the fourth wall, and smashes the distanced portrayal of character by taking to the limit the subculture of inventive cosplay — as the images here attest — and it does so by a radical enunciation of the abominated, beginning with the erasure of the patronym and its rewriting as the

tobias c. van Veen is Research Fellow in Media and Cultural Studies at University of California Riverside, Visiting Scholar in Communications at California State University Northridge, and a Visiting Tutor at Quest University in Squamish, Canada. Tobias holds doctorates in Communication Studies and Philosophy from McGill University. Writing in both arts and academic publications, tobias’ research addresses philosophy of race, sound, and technology in media, communications, and cultural studies, turning to the ethics, politics, and practices of posthumanism, Afrofuturism, online social movements, science/sonic fiction, and electronic dance music cultures (EDMC). Tobias is co-editor with Reynaldo Anderson of the “Black Lives, Black Politics, Black Futures” special issue of *TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies* (2018), editor of the Afrofuturism special issue of *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* (2013), and co-editor with Hillegonda Rietveld of the Journal’s special issue “Echoes from the Dub Diaspora” (2015). His work has been published worldwide in multiple languages. A sound-artist, media arts curator, photojournalist, and tactical turntablist since 1993, tobias has organized interventions, events, broadcasts, and exhibitions worldwide, working with MUTEK Montreal, Steim, Eyebeam, the New Forms Media Society, Studio XX, VIVO Media Arts Centre, CiTR Radio 101.9FM, Kunstradio, and Turbulence.org. As Founding Director of UpgradeMTL.org at the Society for Art and Technology (SAT), tobias curated the Cabaret for Critical Art Ensemble, the [CTRL] conferences with Media@McGill, and the Critical Practice Resuscitation gathering of Nettime.org. He hosts the Other Planes: Speculative Cultures podcast on CreativeDisturbance.org, is creative director of sound-art label IOSOUND.ca, broadcasts techno-turntablists mixes on <http://soundcloud.com/djitobias>, and his photography can be found on Instagram @fugitivephilosophy.

tobias.vanveen@csun.edu

improper name. What is enunciated is more than a refusal of the patriarch, however, in the renaming of the patronym. What is spoken and enacted into being $n+1$ — for this being is not a stasis field of negative *existenz*, where black lives do not matter, but “a radical praxis of refusal to contain blackness in the dialectical form” (da Silva, 2017) — is a *black radical becoming* wherein the very *vita materia chaotica* of life itself becomes the star-stuff of radical blackness. According to Denise Ferreira da Silva (2017) blackness signals “another world, that which exists without time and out of space, in the plenum” (2017). For da Silva, blackness is ontologically infinite. Radical black becoming, as that which is excluded from the dialectic of Hegel’s (1991) world history, orbits to the outside of the white world’s time and space. Yet, what does the matter of such blackness unbound look like? What steps are necessary for its radical becoming? ZiggZaggerZ undertakes first a rejection of the proper name, exiting the linear time of phallogocentric spacing, and its attempt to order flesh as property through patronymy. Yet, and in the same gesture, she eschews the ontological containment of the human, insofar as the latter has been determined, as Sylvia Wynter has pointed out, by white supremacy (2003). As a black alien entity, ZiggZaggerZ plays upon the Latin root of abominable — *ab-homine* — as an instantiation of the black post-human.

Which is to say, ZiggZaggerZ inhabits a world increasingly called Afrofuturist, insofar as its aesthetic praxes address not just black science and speculative fiction, but in its 2.0 formulation, the “technogenesis of Black identity reflecting counter-histories” that speak to, along with black technoscience, metaphysics, and politics, “gender fluidity, posthuman possibility [and] the speculative sphere” (Anderson & Jones, 2016, p. x). Yet this term, too, may be too limited, as Valorie Thomas (2018) has pointed out, in her turn to an *Afrxfuturism* that takes into account black womanist counter-lineages that, I suggest, disrupt the *sons* of Afrofuturism. ZiggZaggerZ intersects Afrofuturism only at its limits, wherein black speculative and science fiction is understood not as simulacra to the supposed cold reality of nonfictional existence, but as the lived production of the black surreal in a world where, on a day-to-day basis, blackness is already deemed unworthy and thus unreal. This is a world where, as Public Enemy noted in 1988, “Armageddon been-in-effect.” The apocalypse has already taken place; as Mark Sinker (1992) commented of Afrofuturist dystopic temporality, “the ships landed long ago: they already laid waste whole societies, abducted and genetically altered swathes of citizenry, imposed without surcease their values.” Such supremely *realist* temporality embarks upon all the paradoxes of “Alien Nation.” By splitting the Marxian sign of the subject fundamentally separated from life itself so as to recognize racialized slavery as well as class, both belonging and distancing is marked in the out-cast yet alien insider, that likewise emphasizes the science fictional *estrangement* of W. E. B. du Bois’ double consciousness (see van Veen, 2016).

As a black womanist Afrofuturist, ZiggZaggerZ is alien-ated not once but twice twice, doubly simulacra, doubly in-existent, and thus caught in the vertigo of black womanist existence that intersects an Afrofuturist tradition too often caught in its own patronymy. ZiggZaggerZ, then, intersects the Afrxfuturist, as she explores what Thomas describes as the “black Atlantic womanist aesthetic of diasporic

vertigo,” undertaking “a salute to the balancing forces of black femme optimism and spiritual swagger anchored in ancestral tranquility. . . . [and] immersed in African-derived cosmologies” (2018).

What follows is a brief reading, a guide to intersecting the personal and the conceptual, to “Abominated.” It is necessarily incomplete and, of course, an interpretation. As a collaborator of ZiggZaggerZ — as photographer, cosplayer, and writer — this text touches upon what cannot be fully expressed, yet what has been impressed upon the few publics lucky enough to have viewed a ZiggZaggerZ performance in person.

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1. *To Read the Abominable* — “Abominated” begins with a mutation of the adjective: the abominable, that thing causing moral revulsion, has tensed itself. It sees itself abominated, and in the self-recognition of abomination, it reclaims as monstrosity, as corruption, perversion, evolution, prophecy, the very state of revulsion into which it has been cast — bastardy.

“Abominated” proclaims the war cry of the Bastard — not because the bastard has been denied its name, its lineage, its heritage, but because the Bastard *refuses it* precisely because the patriarch has tried to *enforce* it. ZiggZaggerZ the Bastard, like Malcolm X, has refused the proper name of the patriarch. Yet here the refusal is as personal as it is conceptual, and does not signify the rejection of the slaveowner’s name, but that name of the Sun — and here it resonates with the *son* — which signifies the deity itself: *Theus*. Like Sun Ra, ZiggZaggerZ has refused the proper name of Earth-bound existence; yet unlike Ra, ZiggZaggerZ refuses the orbit of the Sun, in the figure of her father, Sonship Theus, drummer of Sun Ra’s Arkestra, who “refused to claim me.”

ZiggZaggerZ the Bastard is the heteronym of Shannon Theus, and her renaming signifies a refusal of the patrimetaphysics of the sun — and thus of Sonship Theus. ZiggZaggerZ’s renaming perverts divinity only because divinity has already been overtaken by its *père-version* (as Lacan, 2002 would say) of *theos* to *theus*, *son to sun*. Thus ZiggZaggerZ “conspires” with Nature, the capitalized *nomos* of the eternal feminine, to incorporate all that is Man’s *père-version*: “I am to ingest / like the old god Cronus — / Father feeding on fetus flesh.” A new “immaculate conception.”

“That which you tried to prevent you created,” begins ZiggZaggerZ. The monstrosity has begun that distorts the legacy of *man*: the immaculate birth of womyn that disowns the forced patronym. Bastardy is not a state of disgrace for ZiggZaggerZ the Bastard, but the refusal of patronymy and its possessions — particularly of wo-men as named property. “Abominated” marks the resistance of that which has been out-cast, ab-jected, by “disjointing ancestry.” The abominated proclaims the final refusal of Nietzsche’s (2015) Last Man and his petty moral revulsion of the *ab-homine*: here births the monstrous ex-human, *the black alien womyn Bastard*, ZiggZaggerZ, who also gives the drunk and dull Zarathustra a run for his money.

2. *To Hear the Abominable* — “Abominated” begins with a sing-song schoolyard

taunt that upends the conventional *gravitas* of performance poetry. Spoken and sung into a mobile phone, “Abominable” is registered into the most common of communication devices, signifying all the affective registers, and petty tones, that traverse modern telecom. With its commons of register, the taunt dares us to refuse the elocution and insight of its words; its grandiosity blends with monstrosity. This is not what poetry sounds like — mark the refusal — and as ZiggZaggerZ’s voice distorts the caricature of the soft feminine, she embraces instead the registers of force reserved for disregarded expressions of womanist voicing. Black anger arises at the white education system, who “Made me learn your language / and resented my vernacular.” Black rage boils to the surface reminiscent of the sharp signifiers, sung or spoken, of Nina Simone (2000) and Laini Mataka (a.k.a. Wanda Robinson) (2000). But also anger at the cosmic contingency that left ZiggZaggerZ with the disability of photosensitivity, causing a literal as well as metaphorical aversion to the Sun, thanks to a car accident that “Took away my light / So now my sight’s no longer ocular.”

3. *The Hy-Story of the Abominable*. ZiggZaggerZ “evolved last night” along with Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (2013)— and evolved from the very ex-human dialectic that *Frankenstein* symbolizes: the attempt to birth Man by Man. The most inhuman of technics rendered into patriflesh is here an ally to that Bastard fleeing from the dialectic, becoming both “master and slave,” the ex-human, *ab-homine*, who declares herself, in closing as in ending, the Monster of the Alpha and Omega, as “that which you tried to prevent you created.” ZiggZaggerZ is *herstori*cal inevitability: the event of the Bastard that disowns the patronym, that refuses the Son-ship, choosing instead a moonlit sojourn, where, beyond the patrimetaphysics of the sun and its shadow, “Intuition’s now my vision / My pronouncements are oracular.”

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