

Queer Temporality of Contemporary Riot Grrrl Song Lyrics: The Case of *Doom & Bloom* by TÛLIPS

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Artikkelini on tapaustutkimus TÛLIPS-nimisen amerikkalaisen rockyhtyeen Doom & Bloom -albumin (2015) sanoituksista. Tavoitteenani on tarkastella sanoitusten ajallisen epäsuoraviivaisuuden keinoja ja mahdollista epänormatiivisuutta sekä selvittää, miten ne mahdollisesti uudistavat ensimmäisen sukupolven riot grrrl -aktivismia. Riot grrrl -liikkeen juuret ovat 1990-luvun alun feminismissä ja amerikkalaisissa underground-punkpiireissä, joiden miesylivaltaan tytöt turhautuivat, mutta tässä artikkelissa keskityn tietoisesti 2010-lukuiseen, vielä vähän tutkittuun riot grrrl -musiikkiin. Kappaleiden sanoituksiin keskityn niiden huomattavan ajallisen kerrosteisuuden ja epäyhtenäisyyden vuoksi. Tästä johtuen lähilukuun perustuvan analyysimenetelmäni keskeisinä välineinä ovat J. Jack Halberstamin ja Elizabeth Freemanin luomat queer-ajan käsitteet. Diffraaktiivisen lukumenetelmäni tarkoituksena on mahdollistaa sanoitusten ajallisen, vanhaa ja uutta yhdistelevän outouden tarkastelu. Löydösteni perusteella Doom & Bloomin sanoitusten queer-ajallisuus käyttää epäperäkkäisyyden, mimikryn ja intertekstuaalisuuden keinoja. Ironisen itsekeskeinen puhuja palaa menneeseen ymmärtääkseen naiseutta ja (riot grrrl -) tyttöyttä sekä uudelleen hahmottaakseen siten niiden mahdollisuuksia. TÛLIPSin albumi ilmentää yhtäältä riot grrrl -liikkeen innoittavaa kestävyyttä ja toisaalta nykyisten riot grrrl -musiikintekijöiden moniselitteisempää feminististä vastarintaa.

Keywords: girlhood studies, pastness, queer temporality, riot grrrl, song lyrics

1 Introduction: Riot Grrrl Reemerges

- (1) Can I tell you something
Walking in the moonlight
The heatstroke flattery
Streaming across your eyes
Is like vertigo

The above quotation from the song “Vertigo” opens the album *Doom & Bloom* (2015) by American indie rockers TÛLIPS. The band consists of vocalist-guitarists Taleen Kali and Angie Bloom, bassist Miles Marsico, and drummer Travis Barnes and is based in Echo Park, Southern California. Its name is a reference to its two singers and a florid metaphor for labia (Thomas-Hansard 2014). In the former sense, the “tü lips” provide a passageway for the band’s discursive sound, and, in the latter, they are mute and thus traditionally gendered as passively feminine. On the surface, bad break-ups and ceaseless lovesickness form the lyrical material of the album’s ten songs, including “Vertigo”, a song about infatuation-turned-imagined-love-story. But *Doom & Bloom* also offers an alternative view into femininity and girlhood, particularly through its riot grrrl sensibilities, which are evident in the band’s self-description as “riotgaze” (tulips.bandcamp.com) and vocalist Kali’s status as the founder of riot grrrl-inspired

DUM DUM Zine. The early 2010s have witnessed a proliferation of new riot grrrl bands, specialized zines, online discussion groups, and other collectives, which I call ‘second-generation riot grrrl activism’ to indicate both their historical connectedness and recent innovativeness. TÛLIPS represents this reemergence of riot grrrl.

The movement’s original aims were formulated in 1991 in the “Riot Grrrl Manifesto”, one of Kali’s major artistic inspirations (Thomas-Hansard 2014). It boldly urged girls to create collaborative, girl-exclusive, and nonhierarchical “forums where we can recreate, destroy and define our own visions.” (*Bikini Kill no. 2* ca. 1991: 143) It verbalized early riot grrrls’ attempt to harness punk’s anarchism and do-it-yourself ethos for girl-centric action that would rework feminism for girls in 1990s’ America. Despite emerging from the paradoxically male-centered underground punk rock scene, feminist scholars have come to acknowledge the movement as a “crucial third-wave feminist tool for activism and expression” (Heywood & Drake 1997: 204). While many riot grrrls embraced *activism* in the word’s political sense, by volunteering in food programs and pro-choice groups (Kaltefleiter 2009: 229), the movement’s *expression* is located primarily in texts: zines¹, poetry, spoken word pieces, and song lyrics. The latter constitute a prominent example of riot grrrl’s aggressive feminist utilization of punk provocation, including in the song “Don’t Need You” by the seminal riot grrrl band Bikini Kill: “Don’t need you to say we’re good / Don’t need you to tell us we suck / Don’t need your atti-fuckin-tude boy / Don’t need your dick to fuck”². Despite or because of their candor, scholars (e.g., Gottlieb & Wald 1993; Leonard 1997) have paid little attention to the lyrical elements of riot grrrl music, and still others (e.g., Nguyen 2012; Spiers 2015) have tended to authenticate only the movement’s 1990s achievements. With TÛLIPS and other contemporary riot grrrl bands introducing richly diverse and peculiarly anachronistic lyrical narratives, present activism, especially as expressed in such narratives, calls for closer examination. This article is my effort to refocus riot grrrl research accordingly.

2 Aim: Clearly, Queerly Nonlinear?

The song lyrics of *Doom & Bloom* immediately evoke a sense of pastness: a historical pull away from the narrative’s present. Although told in the present moment, the lyrics are stubbornly backward and ethereally timeless. Consequently, I wish to examine the means, purpose, and potential queerness of such temporal nonlinearity. Furthermore, because they only occasionally resonate with the characteristic urgency of riot grrrl lyrics, I also want to explore how the lyrics’ temporal nonlinearity may refigure first-

¹ Zines, or fanzines, are inexpensively made, self-designed and -produced publications that are usually photocopied and distributed hand to hand. They are typically dedicated to the thoughts and passions of their creators and sometimes devoted to a particular art form, music scene, or celebrity.

² From the Bikini Kill song “Don’t Need You” from the album *The C.D. Version of the First Two Records*.

generation riot grrrl activism, on one hand, and verbalize the movement's lasting impact, on the other.

To these ends, it seems relevant to rely on a theoretical framework based on the temporally-focused queer theorizing of J. Jack (a.k.a. Judith) Halberstam and Elizabeth Freeman. First, in his book, *Gaga Feminism* (2012), Halberstam uses cultural narratives, including those by provocative pop artist Lady Gaga, to theorize contemporary gender relations and expression. Gaga feminism is a queer project of sociopolitical anarchy – one that highlights creative forms of chaos to effectively eradicate normalcy and normative categories (Halberstam 2012: 137). It applies to riot grrrl activism in that both are “born of a spirit of experimentation, cooperation, change, motility, combustibility, and urgency.” (Halberstam 2012: 140) I also expect that “by understanding the history of the present”, Halberstam’s (2012: 125) gaga feminism can provide a queer way to envision a temporal elsewhere that is innovative in forgetfulness through remembrance. Second, Freeman formulates a framework expressly for a queer politics of time in *Time Binds* (2010). She states that because queer temporalities are characterized by a “stubborn lingering of pastness” (Freeman 2010: 8) and organized around temporal incoherence, they can create collective structures that rewrite history. Her main argument is that queer bodily acts can unbind history from capitalism’s enforced timings that shape our flesh into appropriate embodiment (Freeman 2010: 4). Consequently, Freeman’s (2010: 14) queer time creatively encounters markers of historical determination, from race to gender and sexual identity, as always already in the present “by encountering the present itself as hybrid.” The framework echoes Donna Haraway’s (1991: 192) demand for situated feminist knowledge-making: “revisualizing worlds turned upside down in earth-transforming challenges to the views of the masters.” It can illuminate how leftovers of dismantled scientific truths are used to forge strange, novel ideas – not so much in terms of unfamiliarity but as critical strangeness *within*. My theoretical view is expressly indebted to Haraway’s (1992: 301) definition of ‘diffraction’: “a mapping of interference, not of replication, reflection, or reproduction.” It points me to possibilities “in the unexpected and the unanticipated”, to quote Halberstam (2012: 27) – beyond copies of the same.

3 Material & Method: A Diffractive Reading of *Doom & Bloom*

- (2) Honey baby
Would you leave me
If falling was my only muscle memory?

The lines from the song “Evil Eye” point to *Doom & Bloom*’s lyrical blend of old-fashioned love-longing and metaphor-driven female empowerment, channeling Buddy Holly, Jim Morrison, Bikini Kill, and Selena, among others. The lyrics operate somewhere between the subcultural and the popular, and unlike the calculated lyrical syrupiness or wittiness of popular female artists, such as Beyoncé, Miley Cyrus, and

Kesha, their ambiguity amplifies the irony in TÛLIPS' heterogeneous esthetic and unpolished sound. And unlike first-generation riot grrrls' willful subculturation to retain control of their representation (Coates 1997: 55), the band happily collaborates with popular media. *Doom & Bloom* is TÛLIPS' debut album, released on November 13, 2015, by the independent, Los Angeles-based label Lolipop Records. It is representative of second-generation riot grrrl, because it is both explicitly riot grrrl-identified *and* explicitly multi-inspired. Moreover, the striking anachronisms of the lyrics imply their significance, both in terms of the band in question and riot grrrl as a whole. Incidentally, this may well be the first study with the particular foci: contemporary riot grrrl and riot grrrl song lyrics.

My method, which I call 'diffractive reading', is to closely read the lyrics using Halberstam's and Freeman's concepts of queer temporality and channeling Haraway's diffraction. In relation to popular music, as Sheila Whiteley and Jennifer Rycenga (2006: xiii) point out, 'queering' usually refers to the subversive interpretation of its gendered heterosexual bias. This means that a queer reading of lyrics would entail an oppositional, against-the-grain process. Rather than 'queer', I call my analysis 'diffractive', however, as I wish to interpret the lyrics in terms of inclusion – a hybridization of tradition and subversion. This diffraction of my own mirrors the problem queer theorist Teresa de Lauretis (1987: 3) identifies in relation to the deconstruction of gender: "For gender... is not only the effect of representation but also its excess, what remains outside discourse as a potential trauma which can rupture or destabilize, if not contained, any representation." In other words, deconstruction and opposition may involuntarily reinforce marginalized gendered representation, as in first-generation riot grrrls' withdrawal from mainstream media (Coates 1997: 55). I thus read *Doom & Bloom*'s lyrics as an "elsewhere", "dislocated from the available maps", to quote Haraway (1992: 300). I acknowledge the challenges related to my method, as the sonic and performative elements of the music fall largely beyond the scope of the analysis. It is important to point out that in no way do I seek to wholly represent the riot grrrl movement, past or present, or even *Doom & Bloom*, but that the focus on the lyrics allows for their detailed examination from a specifically situated, hermeneutical perspective that is expected to illuminate their twofold significance: riot grrrlhood as created *in* and communicated *through* them. For me, the stand-out lyrics represent an apex of contemporary riot grrrl activism, so this article is my invitation to look for more beyond the surface.

4 From Lovesick Lovers to Lonesome Loners

4.1 The Changing Narrative Surface

An initial reading of the lyrics of *Doom & Bloom* indicates the agony and bliss of love as their themes. The album's first song, "Vertigo", finds the speaker intoxicatingly infatuated with the addressee's "magic". An entire love affair plays out in her

imagination, from falling in love to the end of the relationship that leaves her “in shambles”. But when the daydream ends, she is free again. The second song, “Hotspur” pastiches William Shakespeare’s play *Henry IV, Part I* (ca. 1597) from a female perspective. The speaker confesses her desire to Hotspur: “You’ve surely incurred / My heart / My hollow heart”. Nevertheless, she chooses the prince, which Hotspur struggles to accept. In the song “Wait”, the speaker returns home, hoping to reconnect with a former lover, whom she pledges to wait till the end: “I’ll wait, for you, only you”. She appears lonely and jaded (“Simple love it’s not enough to save”), and the song’s repeated California references imply the state’s sunniness as unforgiving rather than uplifting. In “Perfect Love”, the album’s fourth song, the speaker demands immediate gratification from her lover: “Gimme gimme all I ever wanted”. With satisfaction, she then watches her desire crushing him: “I saw your dead eyes”; “Your blood is in my head”. Yet, she egotistically maintains her love as the perfect kind. The speaker returns to a more passive mold in “Dream Lover”. She is forced to admit to the emptiness of a pseudo-lover’s promises. It is a crushing blow – “[s]creeching halt for some introduction ceremony” – one that leaves her wishing that she would have understood sooner to let go of “waiting by the phone” for the call that would never come.

“Evil Eye” is about the speaker’s insecurities that permeate her mask of heartlessness. Because she only knows betrayal and loss (“falling was my only muscle memory”), she is extorting the addressee, an on-and-off again lover, to promise her full faithfulness in exchange for taking him back and stopping to doubt his trustworthiness. In “Pretty Girls”, the mood of the narrative shifts to sarcasm and playfulness. The speaker, describing her own ordinariness, recognizes the ignorance in the arrogance of pretty girls: “They don’t even notice I stare when they pass by / They just pass by”. The song’s narrative is also explicitly queer; the female speaker is seeking the attention of girls. The song “Queen’s Arms” returns to the theme of loss. The phrase “I’m taken from the queen” implies that the speaker has lost her mother to drugs. “Shake me shake me everywhere and / I don’t care”, she states about the numbing effects of the pain. The mood of the narrative changes again dramatically with “Jitterbug”, in which the speaker secretly admires a love interest at a dance club where she feels out of place – “No clue what the fuck I’m doing here” – but gladly so. The song ends with her asking the love interest to “[m]eet me, meet me someday”. In the album’s tenth and final song, “Hopefully Hopefully”, the speaker gives into desire and sleeps with a lover at the cost of “my grand desire”, a hope for a love relationship. She expresses a wish to stop time in order to avoid “the ‘lonely blues’ and ‘I wish I knews’” that will otherwise return. At the end she confesses: “I love you, I love you I do”.

All in all, lovesickness is ubiquitous in the album’s lyrics, despite the speaker’s previous heartaches. She seems to be passively waiting for love to complete her, which implies a lyrical adherence to the tradition of popular girl groups. In *Women, Music, Culture* (2011), an overview of women’s contributions to diverse genres of music, music

historian Julie C. Dunbar (2011: 182) offers the following interpretation of the gender dualism of the 1960s music scene: “While the Rolling Stones and Jimi Hendrix pronounced love from a position of power and control, girl groups often mouthed youthful insecurity and a preoccupation with ‘wanting to be wanted’.” In fact, the lyrics of The Supremes, The Crystals, the Chantels, and other then-popular girl groups highlight finding a man as the culmination of girlhood, which the superficially love-thirsty narrative of *Doom & Bloom* intriguingly replicates.

4.2 Queer Temporality & Nonsequentiality

Beyond the surface, frequent anachronisms interrupt the lyrics’ narrative continuity. I identify them as a strategy of temporal nonlinearity that I call ‘nonsequentiality’, i.e., the refusal of time’s sequentiality and inevitable progression. The speaker is constantly gravitating toward the past and, thus, living in the present by reliving the past of hers and others. In other words, the present moment keeps eluding itself. The album’s nonsequentiality is reinforced on one hand by the brevity of events, such as “Vertigo’s” make-believe love affair, and on the other by their perpetuity, such as “Dream Lover’s” endless waiting. As a result, certain events linger longer in the narrative’s present. Overall, the narrative embraces queer temporalities that fall outside the normative progression of time and, as Halberstam (2005: 2) argues, refuse the logics of reproductive and familial time that is invested in procreation and longevity and follows the heteronormative lifespan from birth to death through adolescence, marriage, and reproduction. The lyrics communicate such refusal through the speaker’s agelessness, pointing to anything from childish optimism (e.g., “Jitterbug”) to mature resolution (e.g., “Dream Lover”), and the absence of familial ties in the narrative. The latter is concretized in the speaker’s loss of her mother in “Queen’s Arms”, as well as her withdrawal from heterosexual relationships in favor of a loner mentality.

The inclusion of near-obsolete items, such as Oxford shoes and disco light in “Jitterbug”, record player in “Vertigo”, and landline phone in “Dream Lover” further stagmates the narrative³. Insofar as the female speaker is idly “[w]aiting, waiting by the phone”, the use of the word ‘phone’ also seems to confirm its traditional gendered meaning. By restricting her movement, the phone binds her to her current circumstances but also to her past through the object of her waiting. Halberstam interprets the symbolism of the phone in the Lady Gaga and Beyoncé song and music video “Telephone”. The video is an “upbeat, wacky, and anarchist take on ‘the end of men’” (Halberstam 2012: 61), offering the extermination of men as the ultimate feminine solution similar to Valerie Solanas’ infamous *SCUM Manifesto* (1967). According to Halberstam (2012: 62), Gaga’s phone refuses feminine passiveness and “demands resistance and

³ Interestingly, TŪLIPS’ sleeve art reuses modified old images. For example, the cover of the cassette single for “Hotspur” & “Wait” contains a black-and-white photo of a glamorous-looking lady talking on the phone.

transformation.” Furthermore, he interprets the phone as an overly technical and impersonal detachment device (Halberstam 2012: 63), which may be surprising, given, similar to “Dream Lover”, that most of the video’s phones are landline phones – not exactly the latest technological invention. Nevertheless, as broken connections render it futile to wait for a call, both “Dream Lover” and “Telephone” ultimately abandon the traditional gendered meaning of ‘phone’.

The landline phone and other outdated items convey the narrative’s insistence to trail behind the present time. The use of religious expressions in the chorus of “Evil Eye” likewise emphasizes the lyrics’ historical backward pull, as phrases such as “sacred smile”, and “faith beguil’d” carry clear religious connotations. According to Freeman (2010: xiii), ‘backwardness’, the willingness “to be bathed in the fading light of whatever has been declared useless,” is integral to queer time. It characterizes the refusal of the institutional push of ‘chrononormativity’, Freeman’s (2010: 3) term for the temporal control of individual bodies, employed to maximize productivity in capitalist societies. Interestingly, such backwardness can be seen to distance the lyrics from coincidental riot grrrl activism that is often deemed inseparable from technology. Feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti (1996) recognizes pro-girl technocultures created in and by cyberspace as important sites of feminist resistance, characterized by what she calls the ‘perverse-productive’ alliance between bodies and technology. Contrarily, in the case of *Doom & Bloom*’s lyrics, the *absence* of technology seems accountable for their nonnormativity. Finally, the connection between the lyrics’ religious references and queer backwardness may seem paradoxical, but as Halberstam (2012: 28) convincingly argues in relation to Lady Gaga’s flirtation with Catholic imagery, ironic, out-of-context religious archaisms can encourage creative gaga feminist nonbelieving.

4.3 Queer Temporality & Mimicry

Mimicry, another strategy of temporal nonlinearity, interrogates gender stereotypes through seemingly stereotypical gender reenactments. French feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray (1985: 76) defines it as a transformative feminist strategy to refuse the pervasiveness of phallogocentrism. According to her, a woman uses mimicry “to try to recover the place of her exploitation through discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it.” (Irigaray 1985: 76) Feminist communication scholars Charlotte Kroløkke and Anne Scott Sørensen (2006: 129–131) apply Irigaray’s argumentation to interpret women’s playful repetitions of patriarchal discourses, from the independent 20th-century woman’s feminine masquerade to Guerrilla Girls’ visual mimicry of art history. In this context, they also identify the riot grrrl movement (Kroløkke & Sørensen 2006: 140). Riot grrrls have utilized mimicry most noticeably to reject the sweetness and innocence traditionally associated with girlishness by embracing masculine features, such as unshaven body hair and muscularity, and masculine behaviors, such as spitting and growling. In fact, the neologism ‘grrrl’ itself represents mimicry; it is based

on and thus identifies with the original word ‘girl’, which the tiger-like growl of the three r’s simultaneously opposes to.

Song lyrics have notably verbalized riot grrrls’ girlish masculinity in ironic narratives centered on girlish intimacy, lesbianism and female violence. Nevertheless, their masculinity has often been overlooked, which, as Halberstam (1998: 2) poignantly argues in *Female Masculinity* (1998), could stem from power and domination so profoundly defining only male masculinity. According to Norma Coates (1997: 51), in rock’s discursive spaces, female musicians have typically been recognized “as imitation males”, seeking authentication as masculine makers of music, but even academic research seems to render alternative masculinities indifferent. While early riot grrrls’ lyrical mimicry was unlikely overlooked because of subtlety, as my previous example of the fierce Bikini Kill lyrics suggests, *Doom & Bloom*’s lyrics employ mimicry in a more nuanced and intricate way. Nevertheless, the convincingly gendered surface overfocuses on specific feminine behaviors, such as the speaker’s obsessive waiting in “Dream Lover”, which calls their supposed naturalness into question. Mimicry is perhaps most recognizable in the organization of the songs, as the sentimental “Wait” is followed by the desire-driven “Perfect Love” and “Dream Lover” by the domineering “Evil Eye”. The song order results in an episodic refusal of passivity, where upsurges of the narrative’s raw core momentarily burst out and mock the seemingly subdued surface of femininity.

Of course, intricacy could also be seen as a weakness; unless closely read, the lyrics’ intricate mimicry runs the risk of going unnoticed, because it does not demand attention in the same way as the provocations of first-generation riot grrrls or, to use Halberstam’s example, Lady Gaga. In Halberstam’s (2012: 26) interpretation, Gaga’s grounds for performing in leather underwear or wearing impractical seven-inch heels is to attract attention to strange, new surfaces that “confuse the relations between surface and depth.” As the name suggests, gaga feminism is about going gaga – about being outrageously “utopian and visionary” (Halberstam 2012: 26) rather than sanely functional. Pre-Gaga, Lori Burns and Méliſse Lafrance analyze in *Disruptive Divas* (2002) how four popular female artists, Tori Amos, Courtney Love, Me’Shell Ndegéocello, and P.J. Harvey, have similarly disrupted mass musical culture. Their focus is on “the radical potential of feminist consciousness channeled through popular aesthetic forms.” (Lafrance 2002: 5) While there is little doubt about the four artists’ impact on the creative and productive avenues popular music provides for women, I view riot grrrl and TŪLIPS from a distinctly more “slanted” point of view. Unlike Burns and Lafrance, I argue that truly revolutionary cultural activism is neither about “the autobiographical ‘female voice’” (Lafrance 2002: 3), as if one voice could somehow objectively represent all femaleness, nor the seizure of productive reins (Lafrance 2002: 3), i.e., the master’s tools. Haraway (1991: 192–193) argues that the master’s perspective is in fact the only one that prevents objectivity, which is why feminist knowledge-making should not strive to organize itself along the axes of domination. In *Doom & Bloom*’s lyrics,

there is no singular female voice but rather something heterogeneous, unexpected, and extraordinary, which emanates particularly in the intricate mimicry. While the often excessive femininity of contemporary popular female artists, such as Katy Perry or Taylor Swift, resembles mimicry, it, like LaFrance's analysis, seems ultimately bound by heteronormative binary oppositions. In comparison, *Doom & Bloom*'s mimicry is truly manipulative in its accessibility and strangely harmonious in its multiple, conflicting voices.

Finally, mimicry creates an obvious link to Judith Butler's widely used theory of gender performativity. Butler (1993: 313; emphasis in original) contests the supposed originality of gender and defines it instead as "a kind of imitation that produces the very notion of the original as an *effect* and consequence of the imitation itself". She recognizes the practice of drag as a way to assume *any* rather than *the* gender associated with one's assigned sex (Butler 1993: 312). On *Doom & Bloom*, drag emerges in the speaker's masculine, loner-like self-sufficiency, as well as in her reenactment of – though not necessarily agreement with – femaleness in its historically conventional, supposedly natural form. The latter echoes Freeman's (2010: 62) suggestion of drag as a temporal rather than simply a gender-dualistic phenomenon, which utilizes pastness as a potentially transformative challenge to the present, in turn connecting it to the history of feminism. The concept of 'temporal drag' denotes Freeman's (2010: 62–63) criticism of Butler's early emphasis on novelty as the defining difference of drag. Freeman (2010: 63; emphasis in original) argues that Butler's implication of time as basically progressive is recognizable in the focus on gendered reenactments as differing from the preceding ones and asks whether drag could "articulate instead a kind of *temporal* transitivity that does not leave feminism, femininity, or other so-called anachronisms behind". Thus, I interpret *Doom & Bloom*'s mimicry as a turn inward into the speaker's queer femininity and backward into the categories of femininity and (riot grrrl) feminism in parallel with Freeman's (2010: 64) work that turns inward and backward from the superficial gendered expression of Butler's drag and into itself and its pasts.

4.4 Queer Temporality & Intertextuality

The backwardness of the lyrics emanates also from instances of intertextuality. It is a literary device of adding narrative layers that are meant to influence the reader and, at least in this case, a strategy of temporal nonlinearity. This final part of the discussion establishes the three identified strategies as intertwined, since *Doom & Bloom*'s intertextuality coincides with nonsequentiality's backwardness and mimicry's detachment. The lyrics seem to utilize intertextuality particularly to rewrite gender-dualistic historical texts to escape the historical subjugation of women. Although the archaic vocabulary and end rhymes resemble 1960s girl groups' search for love or directly allude to specific popular culture texts, the lyrics effectively reverse the original normative meanings. For example, the song title "Dream Lover" alludes to Bobby Darin's

idealistically sentimental 1959 hit by the same title, even though the song itself communicates the female speaker's increasing cynicism and self-interest: "Tell me you going to be / Everything, *I* want" (emphasis added). In fact, the speaker's emerging self-interest is prominently verbalized throughout the narrative, especially in the cold, calculated egotism of "Perfect Love" and the arrestingly languid eroticism of "Hopefully Hopefully". The latter's beautifully gloomy mood is interrupted with the speaker's frustration with dishonesty and demand for *her* postcoital cigarette:

- (3) Piano bones and ribcage keys
Fiddling anatomy, divine melody
These weary eyes can hardly see all these damn lies
I don't ever want to leave the bed, where is that cigarette?

The suddenness of the final phrase creates a highly ironic effect. In Freeman's (2010: 31) terms, it becomes a site of "bad timing" that destroys the dyadic moment, reinforcing the hedonistic female speaker's refusal of expected submissiveness and well-mannerism.

Doom & Bloom's self-interest finds support in the lyrics' entirely first-person female perspective, which significantly rewrites the feminine object as a subject and an agent. Following Haraway (1992: 295), the specific, self-centric perspective is a diffractive 'subject shifter' that repositions worlds for its devotees, as well as opponents. The refusal of classical literature's portrayals of female subordination in the song "Hotspur" is a particularly effective such subject shifter because of its far-reaching historical connection. The lyrics explicitly mention two central characters from *Henry IV, Part I* ("Oh you Hotspur"; "Your name was Hal"), a narrative of masculine rivalries and relations. Despite its stylistic adherence to the play, "Hotspur" is a narrative of female resoluteness. Even though the speaker worries about the exposure of her betrayal ("I won't pass / I won't pass"), she expresses no regret. The lyrics thus elevate the female speaker to a central role in the male-centric Shakespearean context, where women were invisible. To quote Freeman (2010: xi), they offer "an escape from history [and] give access to an alternative history." They communicate a thorough understanding of the history of the present, or as Halberstam (2012: 125) so aptly puts it: "how the hell we came to this particular arrangement of bodies in space and time". In this sense, the lyrics unravel past femininities and, hence, the historical category of 'woman'.

Furthermore, *Doom & Bloom*'s female perspective interrogates male activeness; men are depicted only as quiet addressees or absent objects of reminiscence. Even the songs that emulate dialog, particularly "Wait" and "Evil Eye", do not allow the addressee to respond. Such active silencing evokes Freeman's (2010: 14) argument that heteronormative desire typically refuses to let go of what has been lost and insists on writing it into the present, while queer desire is conversely more invested "in novel possibility". *Doom & Bloom*'s silencing highlights the insignificance of loss by momentarily admit-

ting the addressee into the present, all the while rendering him mute. In fact, the male addressee is most active through exiting, as is the case in “Vertigo”, for example. The song’s title and dreamlike narration reference Alfred Hitchcock’s 1958 film *Vertigo*, in which James Stewart’s Scottie falls obsessively in love with the elusive, mysterious Madeleine, portrayed by Kim Novak (*Vertigo* 1998). Both the song and the film are about the folly of romantic delusion, where the object of infatuation vanishes as the dream ends: “The wind blows you away”. In the film, the pursuable character is female, which points to women’s heterosexual objectification in 1950s mainstream Hollywood cinema, but the song’s dreamlike infatuation with a male object reverses this.

Rather than dreamlike, first-generation riot grrrl lyrics were typically grounded in the then-present reality, communicating a specific personal and political agenda and a heightened sense of urgency and impatience. The song “Nothing Can Stop Me” by the band Heavens to Betsy exemplifies this: “I got something I must do / I know that everything is fucked up / I ain’t never gonna shut up”⁴. Perhaps it also helps explain the disinterest in examining early riot grrrl lyrics; they are sufficiently self-explanatory as such. Despite TÛLIPS’ explicit riot grrrl influences, *Doom & Bloom*’s lyrics partly depart from the first-generation lyrical tradition. While “Perfect Love” and “Jitterbug” convey a similar sense of urgency, the album’s overall narrative is clearly less politically motivated than that of its more punk rock-loyal predecessors. Thus, in the 2010s, riot grrrl song lyrics seem to be drifting away from the aggressive straightforwardness of early riot grrrl lyrics, partially at the cost of attention-attracting fierceness.

5 Conclusion

I began my analysis of the song lyrics of TÛLIPS’ *Doom & Bloom* wanting to consider the queerness of their temporal nonlinearity. I began also as an admirer of the lyrics’ temporal incoherence and layeredness, which I have sought to address in this article. My approach has been inherently hermeneutical, as my reading of the lyrics is exactly that: *my* reading. Through my analysis, I have sought to create a diffractive reading of the particular contemporary riot grrrl lyrics: an elsewhere verbalizing lovesickness, softness, and desperation but leaning toward self-interest, self-sufficiency, and loneliness. Drawing on J. Jack Halberstam’s and Elizabeth Freeman’s theorizing, I have identified three primary strategies of temporal nonlinearity that communicate queer temporality: nonsequentiality, mimicry, and intertextuality. I have argued that the lyrics are characterized by a constant backward pull that enables the past to inform the reimagining of new queer possibilities. To conclude, the temporal nonlinearity of the song lyrics of TÛLIPS’ *Doom & Bloom* diffracts from historical femininities and past riot grrrlhood in order to position present riot grrrls as innovatively strange, transformational social subjects.

⁴ From the Heavens to Betsy song “Nothing Can Stop Me” from the album *Calculated*.

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