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Book Review

Shane Greene. 2016. *Punk and Revolution: Seven More Interpretations of Peruvian Reality*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. 235 pp. ISBN 978-0-8223-6274-6 (pbk).

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Shane Greene's *Punk and Revolution* reinterprets the academic monograph, offering a thoroughly punk take on the genre. The seven interpretations Greene offers comprise an analysis of Lima's punk scene in the 1980s and early 1990s. He charts the chaos and the violence that defined Peru during this long decade and throughout the war between the Peruvian state and the Shining Path. A closer look at punk, Greene suggests, forces a reconsideration of two-dimensional post-conflict narratives of Peru. He argues that art and music were part of an "invisible chapter in Peru's war", that "punk's political possibilities, like its creative drive to irrupt, are greater than many have thought" (5). Greene underscores both the diversity of Lima's punk scene and of reactions to the political situation. Through these varied responses, he details an array of experiences and finds revolutionary hope. Ultimately, this rewarding read centres the ambiguity and contradiction that marked the Lima scene and considers themes familiar to punk culture and scholarship such as authenticity, anarchy, death and freedom.

Punk and Revolution opens with a bang. Bucking convention, Greene offers a "Warning!" in place of an introduction. Here, the author names his inspiration for the seven interpretations that follow: José Carlos Mariátegui's *Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality.* Greene claims Mariátegui as a "punk contrarian" and his historical materialist tract, originally published in 1928, provides a form for Greene to remix. Throughout the book Greene relies on a range of methodological approaches: he intersperses close readings of visual texts such as zines and posters with interview material, lyrical interpretation, race and class analyses, and even an art installation. While the role of art and architecture within the Lima scene was clearly significant, Greene's prioritization of the visual left me wanting more in regards to the irruptive

sonic possibilities of Lima's punk. The book's stunning companion website answers this call to some extent, but leaves the music to speak for itself. Similarly, Greene refers to his many interviews throughout the text, but these punk voices don't resound with quite the force one might expect from a punk ethnography.

Greene's first interpretation positions Peruvian punk within the familiar historiography of US and British punk of the 1970s, tracing a genealogy through garage rock of the 1960s. Theorizing punk as that which it *intends* to be—"as a peculiar way of *directing one's attention*" (7; original emphasis)—Greene argues that Peruvian punk must be understood through what he terms the "condition of geomusical marginality". He asks, "What happens when we encounter punk in one of the rock universe's global elsewheres?" (8). He goes on to locate the emergence of Peruvian punk in 1984 when a show flier announced the term *rock subterráneo*: underground rock attacks Lima! The bill featured the bands Leusemia, Narcosis, Guerrilla Urbana and Autopsia, all of whom receive significant attention within Greene's text. The advertisement also hailed the *subte*, an urban identity that Greene claims as "a distinctly Peruvian way of talking about punk rockers" (10). Here, the etymological link between underground and subversive is key: to the state *subtes* were suspicious agents and to the Shining Path they were militants. As such these middle- and lower-middle class, non-indigenous punks were subject to political persecution.

The second interpretation might best be described as a manifesto of sorts. Focusing on the socioeconomics of punk, Greene emphasizes the ways *subtes* found to *underfuck* the system, a practice to which he says "underground punks have long dedicated themselves" (48). This framework arises as a response to subcultural theory which Greene suggests reduces subculture to little more than ritual rebellion. Mocking the Birmingham school, he writes: "Subcultures routinely express structural antagonisms but don't breed a *real* revolutionary consciousness powerful enough to *really* fuck the system, provoking *real* systemic ruptures that result in *real* historical change" (48; original emphasis). Examples of underfucking the system include the piracy cassette culture so crucial to the circulation of Peruvian punk—among other genres—and DIY techniques of underproduction. *Primera Dosis* (First Dose), the demo cassette of the band Narcosis, for instance, circulated transnationally and would have a later influence in Colombia and Mexico. The essay closes with the rallying cry: "Punks of the world unite to underfuck the system!" (51).

Across his seven interpretations, Greene tries on a variety of creative voices. He writes as a fan, from the mosh pit, capturing the ethos and the feelings of punk; he poses in the voice of a snide white boy punk as he takes on British cultural studies; and he stages an imagined and drunken bar

conversation between Mikhail Bakhtin and José Carlos Mariátegui in which the two philosophers discuss the dialectics of punk and revolution. The question of voice also extends to language. The book is not bilingual—a difficult feat to pull off—but it does think through the politics of language and includes Spanish song lyrics and terms relevant to the discussion alongside English translations. Greene describes his interpretations as "intertextual, subtextual, and countertextual dialogues between Mariátegui and a horde of other intellectual misfits" (3); in addition to those mentioned above, these include Emma Goldman, Walter Benjamin, Guy Debord and Karl Marx.

The misfit part is key. Greene foregrounds several aspects of his own identity throughout, but it is the academic hat that seems to cause him the most discomfort. Indeed, he makes several moves to distance himself from academia and, simultaneously, self-deprecatingly authenticate his work for punk readers of the non-academic variety. He describes journal rejections and the placement of his work in a variety of non-academic venues—from publish-it-yourself outlets to punk zines. Later on, Greene self-identifies as a "pesky punk ethnographer" and a "gringo" in his forties. On the one hand, I appreciate the nods to realms and possibilities beyond the academy; certainly, the academy could use more punk and such perspectives are often sorely absent from academic conversations. On the flip side, I wonder about the politics of a tenured professor clinging to an outsider status in an era of ever-increasing precarity for the majority who pursue the academic path.

Although Greene does not exclusively discuss men punks and men theorists, there is a strong sense that other genders are peripheral to his story. Throughout his second essay, for instance, Greene relies on masculine-coded language, tossing out insults, curse words and sexually aggressive metaphors: "wankers" and "circle jerks" and "penis envy", oh my! The problem is that this language centres men's experiences and reinscribes punk yet again as a "(fucking) boys club". Greene underscores his own masculine construction of the genre when he remarks: "The punk critic exposes and defines the problem because *he* looks for its causes in the fuckedupness of the system..." (45; emphasis mine). Because the primary topic is political work, one might read that the revolution will not be feminized. This style of punk machismo bolsters the separate spheres ideology that continues to inform public political discourse—as if to say, leave the "real" work to the dudes.

The exception to this is the fourth interpretation in which Greene calls two women punks to the front: Maria T-ta, who performed as the front woman of Empujón Brutal (Brutal Push) and Támira Bassallo, who played bass and sang in the bands Salón Dadá and Col Corazón (Cabbage Heart). The majority of this essay focuses on the sex positivism and profane humour of T-ta. Greene writes: "It's really her lyrical abilities—the way she uses her tongue, *la*

lengua peruana—that allow us to fully entertain the punkness of her feminist message" (85). Here, Greene offers a welcome shift—a kind of hermeneutics of the feminist tongue—in which he confirms that the political work in Lima often eschewed gendered hierarchies.

The case study of 1980s Peruvian punk offers a strong rejoinder to the "whitestraightboy punk" (8)—Greene borrows Golnar Nikpour's shorthand—so often emphasized in pop music histories. *Punk and Revolution* joins an increasing array of important works that claim punk as Latin American. Experimental and enjoyable, this impressive collection of interpretations enacts the dialectics of punk and revolution.