

AIDS Wolf Present

A Distinguishing Historiography of The Badass Genesis-2009

At the farthest reaches of modernity, we still somehow pine for an aesthetic that borders on sociopathy. The badass has long brought this aesthetic principle forward, barely managing to deliver it to us here at our moment in the 21st century. Now the badass, though common in the vernacular, hyperbolically applied wherever, has sadly, like many of the towering concepts that were refined through the centuries only to really come of age in the 20th, gone the way of the fucking chucking spear. Clearly a distinction is necessary to distinguish real badassery from its overuse in language if there is any hope of salvaging this treasured relic of our cultural past.

The original event in the trajectory of this concept is portrayed in the film *The History of World Part 1* in which a cave man discovers music by accidentally dropping a huge rock on his friend's foot, making him scream. Enriching the world around him by tuning the dischordancies of his fellow caveman's screams by way of precise rock dropping, channeling the eternal human urge to savage his colleague, the original badass composed using the suffering of another for the sake of a poignant art. Meanwhile, the film itself takes on what history won't. History streamlines and smudges out the idiosyncrasies, the weirdo's and the dumb, blind luck, the colloquial, the jerks and flukes.

Not that man invented the concept, of course. Preternaturally, badassery of course began with God himself, apologies to the spiritually declined. The original creation bore all the signs and qualities. If lightning bolts, lighting up the edges of the black sky are God's most decidedly badass aesthetic creation, wars are his most destructive, nihilistic and purging. In the case of war, plenty afoot as we speak, God takes on all of the typical behaviors of the badass gone over the edge: He ceases to even believe in himself, so much so as to defy his own basic principles. His conscience so astute and stolid most of the time is so completely out to fucking lunch the rest of the time. But still, geographically the world over, say, in this case Montana, we find mountain ranges, great sweeps of badlands so obviously displaying full color spectrums, scenes so geometrically concise, relationships with the sky so formally obvious. His aims seem to be complete beauty and precision, adulterated with constant, chiding, never ending danger.

The great poem *The Odyssey* involves a whole slew of early badasses. Homer, its author, setting off every possible plot arch to come through his flowing narrative, based on fact, colored by personality. The streamlined hoplite military regalia, decidedly fucking badass, provides the aesthetic and historical backdrop. Its protagonist, Odysseus, a flawed individual, albeit one who did things with heroic gusto...he who rolled back up on the spot and found his wife in the grip of suiters, as we all should well know, killed the bunch pretty much immediately. His journey itself is a typical badass

journey up a river or equivalent body of water. The Return can only happen once a mental line is crossed and is ligatured with a mass of killing.¹

The original American badasses, of course, slung guns. Take Annie Oakley, sharpshooter. She, without much thought, and really slowing her breathing down to a nearly motionless flow of air in order to take aim, shot a cigarette out of Kaiser Wilhelm II's princely Prussian lips. In fact, Oakley would take her sharp shooting on tour, with Wild Bill's Touring Western Review. Every night a different gig, sleeping on floors, selling merch (Oakley posters all the rage) and of course, every day getting up on stage and sniping beer steins off people's heads, splitting playing cards and so on. An aesthetic and entertainment principal based around high precision and felt danger: a few pre-gig sodas too many and the ensuing accidental burp, and that beer stein remains full while long, red strings of blood come out the back of your participating audience-volunteer's head, if it doesn't explode entirely. Especially a problem if the volunteer for a particular gig is a Prussian prince.

Throbbing Gristle, mixing true, worrisome mental illness, with a propensity to wish harm upon an audience, using a combination of 70's art ritual and a keen interest in Burroughsian sonic weaponry². What TG lost in precision, their claims to being non-musicians never really borne out; their music actually very musical³, they made up for in pure danger: getting into onstage fights with the membership of the local hipster class, nearly committing suicide on stage, ect. Oh and yes, the absolute highest form of late 20th century, unadulterated badassery is found in the TG press photo where the gang, nonchalantly lazes about the weaponry, a pile of Roland ampli and homemade electronics. Hanging in the background is the band's logo, the aforementioned badass lightning bolt, the whole scene looking like some grim Victorian sci-fi abattoir/den. "Sleazy" looking, well, sleazy, Gen in tight leather trousers, 'natch, Cosy looking the English northern bird part perfectly. There is real death in the air, but everybody stays cool.

And what of Lou Reed's *Take No Prisoners* Lp? Yes, indeed badass, if only for the fact that it is ahead of its time, presaging new humor trends with an entirely *eventless* comedy lp. The jokes are perhaps so invisible, that flying past you in rapid fire succession, you are not aware of their presence. Lou's mug in the gatefold helps. But the punch line to the whole thing is actually where you expect it least. Not after some pregnant silence following a long rap but on the record's cover: cod piece wearing, yet

¹ See *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad and the subsequent Saturday Morning film version by Coppola, preferable the *still* unreleased 8 hour version, for equally cool variations on this theme...)

² There is, it should be noted, a line in one of the Bush era US Military budgets for a very cost overrun project simply called High Pitch Frequency

³ Self-proclaimed non-musicians are typically the biggest bullshitters: Brian Eno, Captain Beefheart, Jad Fair's claims to NO CHOPS never really pass the non-musicality test, they all end up being exceedingly musical people but, such claims are necessary to ensure a abandonment of the established order of process which so bores/strains/corrupts. The NO CHOPS CHOPS school is badass. Sun Ra had the opposite problem. He had a penchant for obsessive musical technicality and precision, but with clodhopper hands, his errant piano notes gave his pieces a bizarre NO CHOPS vibe... of course, he had REAL CHOPS!

still somehow sexless, a future Lower East Side alien from the planet Zorox standing in an pile of trash, stylish but not really, sorta well drawn, but not really. It is admittedly, pretty fucking badass. Sadly for poor Lou's posterity, the joke as ghost paradigm never really caught on.

Perhaps, more badass still is the pranksterish John Cale, who during the mixing of *White Light/White Heat* suggested that Lou go take a smoke break while he tried a few vocal mixes on *Lady Godiva's Operation*. Lou, feeling like some air, actually, complied and Cale quickly took to the mixing console. He immediately set himself to the task of making Lou sound like a wastrel, boosting Lou's line "SWEETLY" in total disproportion to everything else. Sounds like a madhouse escapee here to add color commentary to the "operation". Lou luckily decided to take a two smoke break, because Cale had time to dump the track down and order the studio engineer to sneak the tapes out the back door, hop in a cab and run them up to the Verve mastering facility, adding "We'll leave the rest of the record unmixed."

It should also be noted that while Lou's dalliance with Vaclav Havel is a fairly refined form of badassery, his aimless improvisations with Laurie Anderson at the Stone are not.

And while we are on the topic of heads of state worthy of the term lets not forget Pierre Elliot Trudeau, on a wee vacay in New York City, wife Maggy obviously loosing a few bolts and in need of some "relaxation." He could swing his ass around with the best of them, no Canadian reticence here, the pretty party boys at 54 all in their disco rigs, looking through disgusting, heavy, 5 am club air, as PET aka Fart Waterhole comes sweeping by doing the Disco Bolero to a Silver Convention cut.

"Who is THAT!?"

"Ohhhhhhh, Its the Canadian Prime Minister. My My!"

Yeah and you ain't even met William Lyon Mackenzie King yet, led our nation through WWII, seanced with the dead, a practicing wiccan, deeply in love with his dog to a weird point where bestiality simply cannot be ruled out as a possibility.

Or Maurice Richard, learned to play hockey by beating frozen dung piles around an Alley with a curved tree branch. Had eyes so fucking steely they bore right through you, looking into a distance of pure hockey geometry. Plus, during one game against a struggling Detroit Red Wings, a rather flamboyant on-ice official gave the Rocket a two

minute penalty simply for looking so good.⁴ And, add to this, the fact that someone set off a bomb in the Forum when Richard was suspended for clocking a referee.⁵

To adumbrate further through elimination, we can rule certain 20th century aesthetic-psychopaths out of the category. For example, Charles Manson, a seriously devoted musician and fan of the Beatles, did seem to know of the existence of a weird thinline form based on the danger/aesthetic dichotomy, and furthermore knew of its desirability. But he lacked any sense of badass in his practice. His tipping over the line into the sorrowful category of murderer could have been cool were he somehow enforcing real justice, based on real Kantian imperative principles. Sadly, he was just another deluded sick fuck. And his record, even though it was released on ESP-Disk⁶, perhaps the coolest record label in the history of record labels, was a tuneless pile of simpy-ass, hippy shit. Not *Volk* in its truest German sense, but *Folk* in the lame marketing sense.

Sadly, badassery cannot be separated from its roots in death, the overriding theme, aesthetically, politically, of the 20th century. From the vantage point of our Hyper modernity, we should begin to take more seriously the distinction. Badass, a real desert and badlands concept, which so tightropes along a fine line separating those who know the ledge, and those who so easily fall over it. But badass simply cannot describe goofball sneakers, a kid in a Michael Jackson video, scroungy hobo jammers living in an abandoned water tank and so forth. Because badassery, like Annie Oakley's nightly routine, requires a delicate precision predicated on getting the danger on.

⁴ . This was during the 1944-1945 season, which happened also to be the season in which Maurice, the first ever to do so, scored 50 goals.)

⁵ Leading to the first of what is now simply referred to in Montreal as a Hockey Riot. There have been many, often involving the smashing of windows on St. Catherine's street and overturning cop cars. The Richard Riot was in 1955. The most recent Hockey Riot was in Spring 08. To say nothing of the GNR/Metallica Banger Riot of '92 or the '03 Exploited Riot.

⁶ The Manson jawns is part of the ESP-Disk 2000 series, check out the Cromangon LP on ESP-DISK (ESP2001) for a sense of what you wished the Manson lp would sound like. The artists themselves, naturally, decide what goes on their ESP-DISK and why should be any other way.

AIDS Wolf are the preeminent Formalist/Unknown Wave quartet, formed in Montreal, 2003. They have released two full-length records on SKiN GRAFT Records and Lovepump United as well as numerous collaborations, splits and seven inches. The membership is Chloe "Deluxxx" Skum on flamejob scream, Yannick "NoNo" Desranleau on Total Downward Thunder, Myles "BOP" Broscoe on Electric Mountain Range and Alex "Kozz" Moskos on Split-Skreen Desert Guitar. The band works and lives in Montreal, where they are presently composing material for concept record on Canadian Prime Ministers and French Military Strategy circa 1759, working on a Throbbing Gristle cover and eating well. Please direct all media inquiries to Maria Catamero at soukitten@blueghostpublicity.com and booking inquiries to Michelle Cable at panachebooking@gmail.com For all other inquires please contact Mark McLean at gogogogonononono@gmail.com .