

# TPP

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## Introduction: Habits & Rhythms

Tessa Farmer

Habits and rhythms, the dual themes of this volume of *Text Practice Performance*, are the stuff of daily life that open upon myriad theoretical concerns. They cover the spectrum from the habits of the mind and body (Lopes, Amparo-Alves and Farmer), to the glitches and pleasures of music listening (Baker), to the now-hot, now-cold routines of style (Buckun), to the habits of drug users and the systems set in place to manage, mitigate, punish and rehabilitate them (Guerra). The rhythms in discussion here include those of hip-hop dance crews (Washington) and rhymes voicing Islamic thought in emerging hip-hop music (Rizvi), as well as the routines of daily life in ethnographic field work that both constitute and confound the “research process” (Lynch). The articles touch on habits and rhythms working at multiple levels and modes, exploring the implications of patterns in various forms of social life.

Márcia Lopes and Jaime Amparo-Alves explore issues of race and class in contemporary Brazil, offering distinctive insights into the legacies of habits of thought about racial difference. Amparo-Alves argues that the persistent media depiction of both black male bodies and particular urban geographies as excessively and inherently violent constitutes symbolic violence that, in turn, underwrites very real physical violence targeting these bodies and streets. Through a close reading of the film *City of God*, he explicates the bifurcated paths to manhood for young black men demonstrated in Brazilian media; inherently violent, these young men can either be tamed into docile bodies through state pedagogy or “choose” to give in to their baser instincts and indulge in a life of crime and violence against women. In line with Amparo-Alves’ interest in representations of blackness, Lopes explores the issues of race and class in Brazil through an examination of statues found in a hotel in Pirenópolis, Brazil, that is a stylized recreation of a colonial home. Lopes examines the use of iconography from the time of slavery to evoke colonial nostalgia for the hotel’s primarily white guests, as well as to obviate any accusations of contemporary racism. She additionally examines the position of researcher, as it enables and confounds attempts to approach or distance oneself from manifest injustices.

Spanning the themes of habits and rhythms, Hannah Baker’s contribution investigates the mental and bodily habits of repeated experiences of listening to particular pieces of music. Baker explores the possibility of imperfections and glitches in recorded music, the very physical deterioration of the material objects as well as the unexpected interruptions and unintentional capture of auditory context (car horns, doors closing), as openings that allow us to

experience simultaneous emplacement and dislocation from our temporal and spatial moorings. Ann Buckun's piece follows the rhythms of a fashion refrain, narrating a disembodied eye that repeatedly encounters the emblem of a skull on jackets, shirts, backpacks, and parked car as they move through Austin city streets. Tessa Farmer's retrospective review of Saba Mahmood's book, *Politics of Piety*, examines the habits of both mind and body exhibited in the women's da'wa movement in Egypt, paying particular attention to the complications for liberal-secular analytical presuppositions when confronting illiberal desires.

Santiago Guerra's contribution to this journal approaches the question of habit from a different angle, examining the implications of drug trafficking and drug use in a small community on the US-Mexico border. Guerra provides a thorough examination of literature on drug use among minority communities in the US and goes on to contribute to the field by insisting on a more careful distinction between terms used to discuss drug use and drug abuse. In particular, Guerra shows the socioeconomic differences implicit in both the understanding of what counts as illicit drugs, and in the realities of which groups bear the greater burden for the sale and use of differently classed drugs.

Taking up the theme of rhythm, Derrick Leon Washington's article is an examination of the space of a hip-hop dance crew and the practices of identity construction operative there. While members see themselves as engaged in radical revisions of gendered and racialized identity that they believe to be in opposition to mainstream notions, Washington suggests they reproduce reductive notions of both gender and race. Embodied habits and play are also central to Washington's conceptualization of these processes in action, "important discussions [on race and gender] can only be unearthed through bodily experience" (Washington, this volume). Similarly focused on hip-hop art forms, Mubbashir Rizvi's article in this volume considers the impact of Islam as a language for social justice as it has evolved from the form's pioneering artists through the recurrent evocations of Islamic ideas in contemporary hip-hop lyrics. Rizvi demonstrates the multiplicity of Islamic sects, and the particularity of Black Atlantic Islam as it has manifest in the mainstream Islam found in Mos-Def's opening prayer in 'Black on Both Sides' to the far more exceptional beliefs of the Nation of Gods and Earths, that have impacted hip-hop artists' arguments for racial equality. As with Lopes and Amparo-Alves, Washington and Rizvi scrutinize the legacy of racialized habits of thought and the alternative languages and spaces that individuals and communities have constructed in response.

Emily Lynch's article engages with rhythms and habits in daily life, as she gives the reader a taste of day-in, day-out realities at a social reconciliation center in Northern Ireland, realities that belie the stated goals of social and moral cohesion at least as often as they uphold them. Like Lopes,

Lynch additionally provides insight into the uncertainties and disjunctures of fieldwork, probing at the soft space of discomfort in the participant-observation process where the distinction between life and work blur. What graduate student does not recognize their bleaker moments in the field in the query, “there’s so much going on there, but is my research really one of those things?” (Lynch, this volume).

Intersecting with habits and rhythms, these articles share interests in music, in historicity and nostalgia, racial and gender norms and efforts for greater equality, the patterns of daily life, and the contradictions of the field-work process. Through the richness and diversity of perspectives on habits and rhythms, this volume of *Text Practice Performance* opens a unique view into social life. Together, the works flesh out some directions for Lefebvre’s dream of an interdisciplinary “rhythmanalysis” that encourages future directions for ethnographic research and composition.



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