

**4<sup>th</sup> July 2018****When moments collide: The importance of now**

Three moments in the past week have coincided to have a collective resonance, echoing in my thoughts. Normally, I deliberately seek out connections and try to make some kind of sense of them so, when connections appear organically, I cannot ignore them. Early last week, I was writing about *The Band* and its effect on memory and generation of nostalgia. In doing so, I was reminded of hauntology and of Mark Fisher, the cultural theorist who, as I recently discovered, took his own life in early 2017. Eighteen months after his death, this news came as a shock to me, as I began to explore some of his online work (k-punk blog, for instance) to illustrate the concept of hauntology. Having read his books *Ghosts of My Life* and *Capitalist Realism*, I began following Mark Fisher's Haunt (@k\_punk\_unlife) on Twitter and had erroneously assumed his tweets were not (to use Fisher's own words), 'ghosts from the past', but 'live' tweets, actioned by the author. Discovering the sad fact that Fisher had taken his own life at the age of 48 was a powerful moment and one that set the emerging theme for my nascent thinking and this subsequent writing.

The second event was Hit the Ground Dance Theatre Company's production of *Macho*, a high-energy, emotionally charged and visceral dissection of men's mental health. In *Macho* (performed at Dance city, Newcastle), the four performers, each embodying the experience of a young male struggling with life and its effect on their mental well-being, communicate something about the nature of contemporary living and, that to sit comfortably in this world, is to battle against a socially accelerated and thus problematic pace of life. I am not entirely convinced the characters in *Macho* knew they were struggling with this socially accelerated existence; I make only a tacit assumption that this was the case. What is clear, however, is that we are all part of this socially accelerated culture, in which to do more in less time is celebrated and that, perhaps for some, it seems easier to cut an existence short rather than attempt to encompass the experience of many lives into a single lifetime.

The final connection occurred today, listening to an iPlayer broadcast of a local London radio show, in which Jorge Lopez Ramos and Persis Jade Maravala – artistic directors of ZU-UK – mentioned Mark Fisher and the effect his suicide had in formulating their forthcoming project *Pick Me Up and Hold Me Tight*. This project – is it performance, live art, or mass-coordinated technological participation? – aims to make all of the UK's 34,000 public telephone boxes ring simultaneously on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020. This date, chosen for its significance to the day and time of the year when there is a spike in suicide rates, will utilize the almost antediluvian technology of the landline phone with the socially accelerated world of the twenty-first century. There is a kind of comfort to be found in the almost quaintness of an old red phone box. Visiting faraway British outposts like Gibraltar, where the Britishness of the police uniforms and the welcoming familiarity of post and phone boxes illustrates this quaintness and pseudo-nostalgia perfectly. We feel at home, comforted and cosseted from the present, a present in which the future casts an omnipresent and oppressive shadow over the now. The now is a moment that could and should be savoured; perhaps then, the pressures of living today might dissipate, which could literally be a lifesaver.