

12-11-2017

Altered Bodies, Altared Art: Genesis Breyer P-Orridge and Pandrogeny

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ALTERED BODIES, ALTARED ART: GENESIS BREYER P-ORRIDGE AND
PANDROGENY

by

ANDREW LEE

Under the Direction of Kathryn McClymond, PhD

ABSTRACT

The present research project will explore a case study of the experiment of Pandrogeny as conducted by artists Genesis and Lady Jaye Breyer P-Orridge, arguing that it is best understood as art that performs religion. Utilizing behavior and body modification, this collaborative experiment was intended to create a third, androgynous being, coming into existence through a merging of their identities and referred to as “Breyer P-Orridge.” The experiment was conducted between 1993 and 2007, when Lady Jaye passed away; however, Genesis, in various ways, continues Pandrogynic explorations into the present. The case of this project being religious for Genesis will be made by examining a recent solo exhibition displaying Genesis’s work as well as the performative dimensions of Pandrogeny from its inception to the shift that occurred with Lady Jaye’s death.

INDEX WORDS: Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, Pandrogeny, Spirituality, Performed Religion,
Hybridization, Living Art

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ANDREW LEE

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2017

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2017

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December 2017

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to expressly acknowledge the tremendous support I received from my committee members. This project began as a series of small conversations, some of which developed greatly over the course of a two-week seminar Dr. Louis Ruprecht, Jr. held at the American University of Rome on “Religion and Sexuality.” Upon my return I was able to then attend the “Try to Altar Everything” exhibit in New York City. Both of these events prepared me to bring to my committee a more focused idea, a tough situation given the enormous ideas the project began with. For the freedom given, and the pushing back to narrow my focus, I am indebted to each of my committee members in helping me complete the first part in a potentially much larger work as well as helping me think through where it can be taken in the future.

I must also acknowledge both photographers whose images I used. The importance of a visual element in this paper was paramount and I am grateful to Laure Leber and David De Armas for their permission in using their wonderful images.

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1 INTRODUCTION

During the summer of 2016 the Rubin Museum of Art in New York City held an exhibit featuring works by Genesis Breyer P-Orridge with the title “Try to Altar Everything.” In addition to displaying works that span thirty years of Genesis’s artistic creation, the museum held many other events: a concert by Genesis’s band Psychic TV, film screenings curated by Genesis, site-specific performances, and an installation that invited museum visitors to contribute an “offering” of personal significance. Throughout this variety of forms and media runs a common thread: an experiment called Pandrogeny; but given the exhibition title, there is also a suggestion of religious resonance. The Pandrogeny project, developed by Genesis, has seen various iterations, most popularly as the process conducted in collaboration with h/er late wife Jaqueline Breyer P-Orridge (Lady Jaye).¹ This collaborative experiment was intended to create a third, androgynous being: a “conceptually more precise body” coming into existence through a merging of their identities and referred to as “Breyer P-Orridge” (a combination of each artist’s last names). This was to be achieved by matching styles, behavior, and more radically by undergoing multiple cosmetic surgeries in order to physically resemble one another. Lady Jaye suddenly passed away in 2007 due to cancer-related complications; thus, Genesis was forced to shift how this project was to be lived and expressed, much of which culminated in “Try to Altar Everything.” With slogans appearing in Pandrogeny manifestos such as: “Destroy gender. Destroy the control of DNA and the expected,” it is perhaps easy to see how much of what is written about Genesis, both academic and non-academic alike, is devoted solely to issues

¹ “In their effort to transcend gender binaries through the practice of Pandrogeny, Genesis and Lady Jaye Breyer P-Orridge adopted a set of creative and inclusive pronouns for self-identification: s/he and h/er. In speech and in writing, Genesis Breyer P-Orridge refers to h/herself as “we,” in reference to the continuation of her union with Lady Jaye (and a play on the British royal plural pronoun), and accepts the gender neutral plural pronouns ‘they’ and ‘their.’” Genesis Breyer P-Orridge and Beth Citron. *Genesis Breyer P-Orridge: Try to Altar Everything*. (New York: Rubin Museum of Art, 2016). I will use these pronouns for the duration of the essay when discussing all activity after the two began the experiment.

surrounding gender identity. Yu-Chien Wu has examined the Pandrogeny experiment (among other transsexual projects) in order to demonstrate the importance of reconsidering skin as a site for the “unmaking of gender identity.” Elsewhere, Krista Miranda provides an excellent reading of the Pandrogeny experiment combining queer and feminist theory with psychoanalysis, although she concludes that the experiment does not provide “a trans-formative logic to identity in general” and that the practice is paradoxical in how Breyer P-Orridge “simultaneously disregard and instrumentalize the body.”² While I find these readings to be useful, what I will be contending is quite different. This essay conceives of the Pandrogeny experiment as art that performs religion. There is more to this artistic project than the blurring of gender-related distinctions. The performative expression and created material objects within the experiment of Pandrogeny are largely concerned with questions of being, identity, and existence. This case study will give us a glimpse into how a twenty-first century artist blurs traditional religious boundaries (sacred/profane, devotee/object of devotion, spiritual/material, creator/creation) while also contributing to conversations on religion’s relationship with contemporary art. The challenge of developing definitions of religion, spirituality, metaphysics, or even art for that matter, will not be the task here, but by examining this artist’s life and work I will take seriously h/er own evolving of these concepts. And as we will see, Genesis’s self-conscious reflections, often through a blurring or loosening of conceptual understandings, are expressed in performative ways. A suggestive piece of evidence supporting this interpretation appears in a photography volume published in 2013 where Genesis reflects:

No matter what anyone might think about thee unorthodox, frivolous, or attention grabbing life we’ve led, behind all of it, always, is a spiritual journey both for my

² Yu-Chien Wu, “Tearing and Wearing Skin: Negotiation Beyond Genders,” *Platform* Vol. 6, No. 2, Representing the Human, Summer 2012: 28-41; Krista Miranda, “DNA, AND: A meditation on pandrogeny,” *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory* Vol. 20, No. 3, November 2010: 347-353.

enlightenment and hopefully to contribute in some small way to thee enlightenment of thee species.³

Bearing this in mind, the task of this essay will be to uncover these “spiritual” aspirations (even if they seem to be obvious) and interrogate them from a religious studies framework.

I will examine select objects from the “Try to Altar Everything” exhibit to unpack the importance of religion in their creation as part of the Pandrogeny project. In turn this will give us a vantage point from which to examine the performative dimensions of living Pandrogeny from its earliest expression, through the collaborative project with Lady Jaye, and the shift that occurred with h/er death. I will then return to the “Try to Altar Everything” exhibit in order to discuss the subtle presence of religion in museums and the general culture of public display. But first, I will provide a brief history of Genesis’s life as an artist.

2 HISTORY

Although most of the attention in this essay will emphasize and focus on the latter twenty-five years of Genesis’s life and the projects in which s/he has been involved since meeting Jacqueline Breyer, it is important to recall moments in former periods to demonstrate that this journey carries spiritual significance for Genesis. Being able to point to an historical trajectory of thought leading into Pandrogeny will allow for one to see the devoted and self-conscious reflection that runs through this life-altering project. Simon Ford’s 1999 publication *Wreckers of Civilisation: The Story of COUM Transmissions & Throbbing Gristle* provides, in

³ Genesis Breyer P-Orridge and Mark Paytress, *Genesis Breyer P-Orridge* (London: First Third Books, 2013), 334. Genesis explains that his use of “thee” began when experimenting with alternative spellings and writing a novel with a non-linear narrative: “‘I set myself certain parameters like not to use the word ‘the.’ It’s how my use of ‘E’ [instead of ‘I’] and ‘Thee’ began.” Simon Ford, *Wreckers of Civilisation: The Story of COUM Transmissions & Throbbing Gristle* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 1999), 1.15.

startling detail, much of the biographical information on which I will draw, starting with Genesis's birth and extending to the early 1980s. For later biographical material I consulted the autobiographical sections found in the compendium *Thee Psychic Bible: Thee Apocryphal Scriptures ov Genesis Breyer P-Orridge and Thee Third Mind ov Thee Temple ov Psychic Youth*, published in 2010. I will highlight moments that are important not only for demonstrating that the Pandrogeny project is performed religion, but also because they have been overlooked in the above-mentioned scholarship.⁴

Genesis P-Orridge was born in 1950 as Neil Andrew Megson in Victoria Park, Manchester. As the son of a traveling salesman, Megson was forced to move around the country, attending various schools before settling at a private school in Solihull, West Midlands. Simon Ford informs us that during his teenage years, Megson's interest in art came about as solace from bullying. It was during this period, between 1964 and 1968, that Megson also "crystallized [his] hatred of authority, the British class system, the Royal family, privilege, hypocrisy, cruelty—the entire bag of tricks."⁵ This combination of hegemonic structures as a singular means of control would, for Genesis, later include the Church of England. However, this suspicion of hierarchical authority did not negate his abiding interest in religion; in fact, one of Megson's hobbies at school was serving as secretary for the Christian Discussion Circle. Genesis, in 1974, recalled of this appointment:

I said I'd do it but I think it should be comparative religion not just Christianity. I even managed to get a member of the British Communist Party to speak. I was basically saying that beliefs are beliefs and fanatics are fanatics and I got away with it... 'Know thine enemy' I quoted. I think these were my first successful actions.⁶

⁴ Religious Studies scholar Christopher Partridge, however, did write a chapter in *Pop Pagans: Paganism and Popular Music* (2013) utilizing a term coined by Genesis ("occulture") as theoretical starting point in which to view Genesis as a "subversive example of contemporary Paganism." While our informational sources certainly overlap, Partridge devotes brief space to a discussion of Pandrogeny.

⁵ Simon Ford, *Wreckers of Civilisation: The Story of COUM Transmissions & Throbbing Gristle* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 1999), 1.5-1.6.

⁶ Ibid.

This questioning of authority and the Church not only established a pattern of thought for Genesis's individual relationship with religion, but it was also largely indicative of the changing milieu of the post-war generation in England. Eileen Barker asserts, "It would be surprising if this increasing individualism and questioning of authority, undoubtedly fostered in the English education system, were not related to a general withdrawal from the traditional, establishment religion."⁷ It was in this four-year period that Megson intensified his love for art, writing, and music. This occurred simultaneously with his increasing aversion to authority and established religion. A comingling of social, political and religious exploration with a subversive attitude further coalesced after suffering an asthma-related illness, which found Megson in the hospital "consid[ering] his future: 'It was at that point that I decided I wasn't going to do what was expected of me... I very consciously decided that I was going to do what I really wanted in life, which was to become involved with writing and art."⁸ In 1969 he adopted the name "Genesis."⁹ It is not entirely clear why Megson chose this name; Ford informs us that it was a nickname at school. Ford is clearer on the choice of "P-Orridge" as a "distinctive spin" on the artistic pseudonym tradition. Whereas one may choose a glamorous name when forming a new identity, Genesis was to "choose a particularly unglamorous *nom de plume*," inspired by an unglamorous food.¹⁰

In 1969 Genesis also founded the musical group cum performance art collective COUM Transmissions after purportedly having a disembodied mystical experience in which he "saw the

⁷ Eileen Barker, "The Post-War Generation and Establishment Religion in England," in *The Post-War Generation and Establishment Religion: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, eds. Wade Clark Roof, Jackson W. Carroll, and David A. Roozen (Boulder, CO, USA and Summertown, Oxford, UK: Westview Press, 1995), 19-20.

⁸ Simon Ford, *Wreckers of Civilisation: The Story of COUM Transmissions & Throbbing Gristle* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 1999), 1.7

⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.10. In the May 1969 edition of the Hull Student Union magazine *Torchlight*, Megson is referred to as "Genesis N. A. Megson."

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.4.

COUM symbol and heard the words ‘COUM Transmission’.”¹¹ Inspired by his earlier involvement with the art collective Transmedia Explorations Group, and in addition to this “alteration of consciousness,” Genesis set out for Hull to establish and promote what would become his new art group. Situated within the effervescent counter-cultural milieu of pressing for radical social change, Genesis, along with COUM, fed a desire to disrupt the championing reign of “the heroic individual artist” by promoting collectivity and collaboration in all realms of social interaction, especially artistic creativity.¹² This attitude was not only critical to Genesis’s artistic exploration at the time, but set the stage for much of his later work. In its various iterations, with fluctuating participants and deliberate escape from generic classification, COUM Transmissions aggressively attracted attention through antagonizing and propagandizing forms of musical, material, and performative expression. One such performance “involved the enactment of a catalogue of taboo acts using bodily fluids such as urine, blood, vomit and milk, combined with abject acts of defecation, urination, self-mutilation...” This action, titled *Cease to Exist No. 4*, publically explored the boundaries of the body in its experience of pain and pleasure. Explaining what these types of COUM actions meant to him, Genesis states:

Doing these things in actions gives me a deadline at which I must face up to my obsessions and fears. So also in public I am giving witness to my beliefs... The other thing that fascinates me is the blurring of the definition between real and manufactured pain and horror created largely by TV and newspapers.¹³

Something important to remember later on in this essay is evident in this reasoning: Genesis is heavily interested in using the body as a performative site on and with which to test and blur boundaries along with questioning the influence of authoritative institutions.

¹¹ Ibid., 1.16.

¹² Ibid., 1.16.

¹³ Ibid., 6.32-33.

Between 1970 and 1976 COUM Transmissions would find itself both attacked by authorities for obscenities (while provided with funding from government aided Arts Councils) and forced by pressure from authorities to relocate from Hull (while simultaneously being invited to perform in large festivals around Europe). Continuously evolving, either by curious explorations or under pressure from Arts Councils in order to continue receiving funds, COUM remained interested in transcending the boundaries of taboos, transgressive actions, and conventional sexualities and gender roles. In an interview conducted in 2012 with the *Contemporary Theatre Review*, Genesis reflectively explains COUM Transmissions' motives: "Who benefits from social norms? Is there a valid reason for government intrusion into the privacy of our individual physical bodies? An artist's right to choose how they use and abuse their flesh was an important issue. Towards the end of COUM Transmissions the work was almost entirely about gender roles as we tried to destabilize them."¹⁴ Also to this end, Genesis ended up standing trial in 1976 for one of COUM's "strategies of antagonism," eventually marking the end of COUM Transmissions.

Returning to musical performance, Genesis founded the band Throbbing Gristle (TG) with fellow COUM members (Cosey Fanni Tutti, Peter "Sleazy" Christopherson, and Chris Carter), making a debut appearance on July 6th, 1976. Considered to be the originators of "industrial" music, Throbbing Gristle ostensibly created a new and experimental genre. Simon Ford describes "classic TG" as "a slow journey through an alien landscape accompanied by meandering guitars, throbbing basses, deep electronic drones, simulated bird song, tape samples of heavy breathing and police sirens."¹⁵ A more than favorable review of a Throbbing Gristle

¹⁴ Dominic Johnson, "Positive Surrender: An Interview with BREYER P-ORRIDGE," *Contemporary Theatre Review*, Vol. 22(1), 2012: 134-166.

¹⁵ Simon Ford, *Wreckers of Civilisation: The Story of COUM Transmissions & Throbbing Gristle* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 1999), 7.8.

live set found them hard to categorize or describe, defying comparison yet still burgeoning with potential.¹⁶ Existing primarily from 1976 to 1981, Genesis and Throbbing Gristle released records through their own label, Industrial Records.¹⁷ After their initial disbanding, Genesis went on to form the band Psychic TV accompanied with an occultist network Thee Temple of Psychick Youth (TOPY). As described in the fold-out jacket of *Thee Psychick Bible* (a collection of the network's texts, illustrations, and photographs), TOPY "will be remembered for its crucial influence on youth culture throughout the 1980s, popularizing tattooing, body piercing, acid house raves, and many other ahead-of-the-curve cultic flirtations and investigations."¹⁸ It is difficult to say exactly whose memory this is intended to reflect; however, it points to what Genesis believes their network to have contributed to subcultures across Europe and the US. Heavily influenced by Aleister Crowley, Austin Osman Spare, and The Process Church of the Final Judgement, TOPY utilized communal practice in exploring ritual magic, in particular sex-magic. Because of Genesis's interest in Aleister Crowley, it is likely that this practice of *magia sexualis* stems from Crowley's own philosophy, which Hugh Urban describes as a "complex melding of both eastern and western traditions." "Through these occult manipulations of impure substances, such as semen, blood, and excrement, he (Crowley) claimed to have unleashed a magical will that could fulfill any spiritual or material desire."¹⁹ For roughly ten years Psychic TV and Thee Temple of Psychick Youth was the central site for Genesis' cultural production and all of his artistic expression was fed through the communal practices of the TOPY network.

¹⁶ "Ultimately, they maybe sound like a straight band trying to play a song while taped sound checks of all the aforementioned people [Suicide, Pere Ubu, Hawkwind, Gong, John Cage, Brian Eno, Donna Summer] are played over the PA and someone fiddles with a radio in the background" Ibid, 7.10.

¹⁷ Throbbing Gristle would return in various iterations beginning in 2004.

¹⁸ Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, *Thee Psychick Bible: Thee Apocryphal Scriptures ov Genesis Breyer P-Orridge and thee Third Mind ov thee Temple ov Psychick Youth* (Port Townsend, WA: Feral House, 2010).

¹⁹ Hugh Urban, "Magia Sexualis: Sex, Secrecy, and Liberation in Modern Western Esotericism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, September 2004, Vol. 72, No. 3: 695-731.

In 1991, Genesis and his first wife Paula, along with their two daughters, traveled to Nepal to work in soup kitchens feeding refugees, beggars, and lepers. In February of 1992 Genesis received word that Scotland Yard was raiding their home for allegedly perpetuating satanic beliefs and practices. “It [*The Observer*] reported that they [Scotland Yard’s Obscene Publications Squad] had a film of a ‘bloody satanic ritual’ which they passed on to the police.” No charges were ever formally filed, and apparently someone involved with the Channel Four program reviewing this and surrounding incidents admitted to “inconclusive research, misleading identification and entirely fabricated testimonies.” Genesis, still in Nepal and afraid of arrest, sought advice from Tibetan monks who worked the soup kitchens as well. Their answer: “Go to America. A Hindu Aghori Baba said the same thing.”²⁰ Genesis and his family ended up in Northern California.

Within a few years of living in the United States, Genesis would divorce his wife and then meet a young woman named Jacqueline Breyer while visiting friends in New York City. He first saw Jaqueline walking at the top of the stairs to a dominatrix dungeon where Genesis often slept, seeing for the first time someone who would exert a profound influence on his own ever-evolving body of work. “Entranced” by this woman, Genesis prayed, “Dear universe, if you find a way for me to be with this woman, that’s all I want. I’ll stay with her forever.”²¹

Genesis and Lady Jaye Breyer P-Orridge (Figure 1) married in 1995 and at some point began the collaborative efforts of Pandrogeny. This experiment would ultimately involve both Genesis and Lady Jaye undergoing a series of cosmetic surgeries (breast implants, facial augmentations and tattoos, etc.) with the intention of physically resembling each other, thus

²⁰ Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, *Thee Psychick Bible: Thee Apocryphal Scriptures ov Genesis Breyer P-Orridge and thee Third Mind ov thee Temple ov Psychick Youth* (Port Townsend, WA: Feral House, 2010), 426-428.

²¹ *The Ballad of Genesis and Lady Jaye*, directed by Marie Losier (New Yorker Films, 2011), DVD (New Yorker Video, 2012).

creating the “Pandrogynne,” a “third being” they would refer to as Breyer P-Orridge.

Alternatively referred to as “Breaking Sex,” the experiment is described by the two as follows:

In our quest to create the Pandrogynne, both Genesis and Lady Jaye have agreed to use various modern medical techniques to try and look as much like each other as possible. We are required, over and over again by our process of literally cutting-up our bodies, to create a third, conceptually more precise body, to let go of a lifetime’s attachment to the physical logo that we visualize automatically as ‘I’ in our internal dialogue with the SELF.²²

The term “cutting-up” is a creative adaptation of an artistic technique popularized by Brion Gysin and William Burroughs. The “cut-up” technique is a form of collage applied to words, where a page of text is literally cut up and rearranged to explore new meanings and to question the authority an author has on her or his own written words. The section entitled “Cut-Ups Self-explained” within *Brion Gysin Let the Mice In* (1973) elucidates the process, urging one to try the technique for themselves: “Take your own words or the words said to be ‘the very own words’ of anyone else living or dead. You’ll soon see that words don’t belong to anyone. Words have a vitality of their own and you or anybody can make them gush into action.”²³ The technique came about as a way to challenge the normal forms of writing, to allow writing to “catch up” to painting (in breaking with formalism; i.e. surrealism). It also establishes a call to collaboration between artists in various media. The collaborations between Burroughs and Gysin that resulted in this text were in fact (according to them) the products of a “third mind.” To them, the “superior mind” and “unseen collaborator” is ever-present when two minds work together. Thus, Genesis and Lady Jaye applied this technique literally to their bodies, collaborating bodies who create the “third being,” or, the “Pandrogynne” (thereby also blurring the boundaries of

²² Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, *Thee Psychick Bible: Thee Apocryphal Scriptures ov Genesis Breyer P-Orridge and thee Third Mind ov thee Temple ov Psychick Youth* (Port Townsend, WA: Feral House, 2010), 444.

²³ Brion Gysin, William Burroughs, and Ian Sommerville, *Brion Gysin Let the Mice In*, ed. Jan Herman (West Glover, VT: Something Else Press, 1973), 11.

art/artist). In creating this “third being” Genesis and Lady Jaye adopted the collective identity of “Breyer P-Orridge.” When reading texts written by, or interviews with Breyer P-Orridge, we note that they each refer to themselves as the plural pronoun “we.” In October of 2007, a week after suffering a seizure in their apartment, Lady Jaye again collapsed suddenly. Genesis explains how s/he attempted to perform CPR, “and s/he [Lady Jaye] actually breathed h/er last breath into my mouth.”²⁴ Even after Lady Jaye’s sudden death, Genesis continues the practice of referring to h/erself as “we.”



Figure 1 Genesis and Lady Jaye Breyer P-Orridge, 2007. Photograph by Laure A. Leber

The philosophy behind this experiment is multifaceted. For one, it is a rejection of “the binary systems embedded in society, culture, and biology (that) are the root cause of conflict, and aggression which in turn justify and maintain oppressive control systems and divisive hierarchies.”²⁵ Breyer P-Orridge find that stark binaries set in place by authoritative institutions are a divisive ploy to disrupt contrary ways of life. It is, as well, a commentary on what Breyer P-Orridge sees as a step in evolution, paradoxically, a “rejection of any and all *imposed*

²⁴ *The Ballad of Genesis and Lady Jaye*, directed by Marie Losier (New Yorker Films, 2011), DVD (New Yorker Video, 2012).

²⁵ Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, *Thee Psychick Bible: Thee Apocryphal Scriptures ov Genesis Breyer P-Orridge and thee Third Mind ov thee Temple ov Psychick Youth* (Port Townsend, WA: Feral House, 2010), 445.

evolution.”²⁶ They state in the aforementioned interview, “When you refute the control of DNA we felt you can begin to embrace a rejection of any limitations to the mutability and possibility of evolution.”²⁷ Ideas such as this have seemingly always been lurking in the background, if not always explicit, in Genesis’ various artistic explorations. The difference between the former and “Breaking Sex” is that the artists themselves became the performative field on which the art was inscribed. When questioned about the term “Live Art” Genesis had this to say:

Living Art implies some form of being alive as opposed to dead. The art is active and filled with potential and still evolving. From the artists’ perspective it clarifies an important distinction for Breyer P-Orridge, namely the insistence that *we are living art* constantly without any separation between creation of art objects, installations, films and any other useful medium available, and what are normally seen as ‘domestic’ activities in daily living.²⁸

Living the art project of Pandrogeny did not end with Lady Jaye’s death, nor did Genesis’s spiritual journey. With that in mind, and with this brief overview of Genesis’s life, I will now present an analysis of the Pandrogeny experiment that highlights its religious valence for Genesis Breyer P-Orridge.

3 “TRY TO ALTAR EVERYTHING”: PANDROGENY AND RELIGIOUS HYBRIDIZATION

The objects on display in the exhibition of “Try to Altar Everything” offer a retrospective of Genesis’s life as an artist, while also offering exciting new perspectives that accord well with my own interests in the Pandrogeny experiment. We still see many of the same dispositions as noted above (i.e. interrogating dualisms, subverting control structures, blurring boundaries) but much of the work is now more explicitly centered on religious dimensions. Just how this

²⁶ Dominic Johnson, “Positive Surrender: An Interview with BREYER P-ORRIDGE,” *Contemporary Theatre Review*, Vol. 22(1), 2012: 143, my emphasis.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 141, my emphasis.

refreshed perspective is achieved, and what religion has to do with it, is what I will explore in this section. I will examine specific sculptural works by Genesis in *Begging Bin-ESHE* (2012) and *Alchymical Wedding* (1997-2012), a custom-made rug that appropriates Hindu iconography, as well as essays written by curator Beth Citron and Genesis h/erself published in the exhibition program. From there I will move to examine the performative components of Genesis's work in order to concretize my contention that Pandrogeny and its surrounding productions are best understood as art *doing* religion.

One of the more interesting things about this exhibition, and something that makes it stand out from past gallery and museum exhibitions involving Genesis, is the space in which it was displayed: the Rubin Museum of Art. As this preeminent museum's mission statement reveals, "The Rubin Museum of Art is a dynamic environment that stimulates learning, promotes understanding, and inspires personal connection to the ideas, cultures, and art of Himalayan Asia."²⁹ Their permanent collection houses 3,800 objects spanning 1500 years and primarily consists of scroll paintings, sculptures, masks, and textiles. In the variety of hybrid objects on display by Genesis, influences and aesthetics are also evident from African Vodun traditions (in itself a hybridized aesthetic tradition) and Christian iconography. Through objects that signify Genesis's attempts to blur traditional religious boundaries, s/he asks the audience to question their own preconceptions regarding life and death and/or the sacred and profane. This engages the existing blurring of male and female that s/he is purported to embody with religious themes. In doing so, Genesis signifies the spiritual within the material, sacralizing the project of Pandrogeny. This stage of the Pandrogeny project can be understood as religious "hybridization," a process that Courtney Bender and Wendy Cadge identify as one "wherein

²⁹ "About the Museum," The Rubin Museum of Art, accessed August 11, 2017, <http://rubinmuseum.org/about>

religious groups and individuals live and experience their own histories and religious selves through dynamic engagements with religious others.”³⁰ I find this definition to be useful in that it focuses on interaction and appropriation, two modes of communication that play important roles in understanding religious lives.

As mentioned above, Genesis first traveled to Nepal in 1991 with his first wife Paula and their two daughters. While this would be a trip that would mark a life-altering experience (set in motion by a self-exile to the United States), there are a couple of other points that should be mentioned. For one, although this was at least a couple of years before he met Jaqueline Breyer (and facing “ever more rigorous collaborations”), Genesis was already thinking about, and in unspecified ways, practicing, Pandrogeny. In an interview from 1989, Genesis states the following:

Paula and I function as a symbiotic team when we do rituals, and that is the Third Mind—the results we get are definitely the Third Mind. We become infused as an androgynous being, or as we call it, *Pandrogynous* being: P for Power, Potency, and also for the Positive aspects of being blended male-female. And also because it then makes it Pan, and Pan is also a good concept. Pandrogyny is one of my on-going investigations...³¹

The conceptual “blending” of masculine and feminine characteristics was an important practice for Genesis upon his arrival in Nepal as he recognized the positive power in collaboration of a sexed whole. The other point of interest about this first trip to South Asia is that Genesis became heavily interested in the practices of the Hindu sect of Aghori *sadhus* (even heeding their recommendation to find refuge in the United States). Part of this enthusiasm came about because he felt that their practices lined up with what he had been transgressively exploring from COUM

³⁰ Courtney Bender and Wendy Cage, “Constructing Buddhism(s): Interreligious Dialogue and Religious Hybridity,” *Sociology of Religion*, 2006, 67 3 229-247.

³¹ Genesis and Paula P-Orridge, interview by Andrea Juno and V. Vale, *Modern Primitives: An Investigation of Contemporary Adornment & Ritual* (San Francisco, CA: Re/Search Publications, 1989), 171.

to TOPY. The Aghori sect are sometimes unpopularly deemed a sadistic cult with little to no religious or spiritual components due to their unconventional practices (i.e. consumption of alcohol and marijuana, ritualistic intake of human flesh and feces, etc.). However, as Rochelle Suri and Daniel B. Pitchford note, “The feature that pronounces the Aghori’s practice to be spiritual in nature is the monistic or non-dualistic approach to life.”³² This is one lesson Genesis took from the Aghoris he encountered that also fit in line with his own explorations: the “path of no distinction.” From Genesis’s own understanding: “The point is that they’re the same [chicken and human shit]. They taste the same to the Aghori Baba. Everything is the same. There is no judgment, there is no moral standpoint or perspective in terms of the implicit nature of things.”³³ Years later, in 2003, in the “Breaking Sex” manifesto written by Breyer P-Orridge, the moral judgments that arise from binary systems embedded in society, culture, and biology would be attacked, offering Pandrogeny as a solution: “Pandrogeny is not about defining differences but about creating similarities. Not about separation but about unification and resolution.”³⁴ Whilst this connection is not explicit in Genesis’s own terms, I would suggest that the devotional practices of the Aghori are reflected in the evolving ideology of Pandrogeny that resists duality. As Aghoris “offer themselves up to the vagaries of charity in order to devote themselves to a divine quest,” Genesis and Lady Jaye devoted their selves to a divine quest of becoming one, generating the third, Breyer P-Orridge.³⁵ This connection continued into 2015 as Genesis, along with curator Beth Citron, returned to Nepal in preparation for “Try to Altar Everything.”

³² Rochelle Suri and Daniel B. Pitchford, “The Gift of Life: Death as Teacher in the Aghori Sect,” *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 29(1), 2010: 128-134.

³³ Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, *Thee Psychick Bible: Thee Apocryphal Scriptures ov Genesis Breyer P-Orridge and thee Third Mind ov thee Temple ov Psychick Youth* (Port Townsend, WA: Feral House, 2010), 340.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 445.

³⁵ Genesis Breyer P-Orridge and Beth Citron, *Genesis Breyer P-Orridge: Try to Altar Everything*. (New York: Rubin Museum of Art, 2016), 16.

Several pieces from the exhibition directly address the practices of the Aghori as well as the iconography of their principal deity Shiva. One such piece is a sculpture of an enlarged begging tin (Figure 2), referencing the tins that Genesis saw Aghoris carrying around collecting alms. The bin is decorated with serpentine imagery in reference to Shiva's adornments. Placed inside of the bin is a collage of Genesis's nude body, made to appear multi-limbed, another reference to Hindu deities.

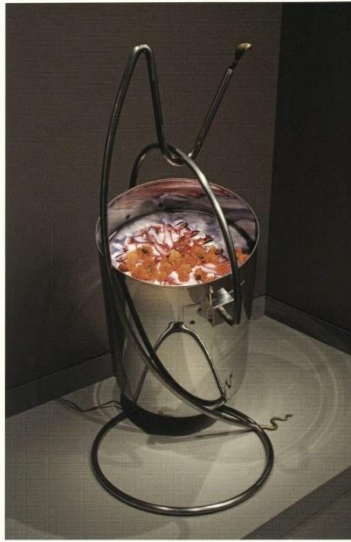


Figure 2 Begging Bin-ESHE, 2012. Photograph by David De Armas

In h/er essay “Try to Altar Everything: Cults of No Distinction in Nepal,” Genesis explains the connections s/he discovered in the creative act, as experience leading to transcendent wisdom, to the devotional practices of the Aghori, while also differentiating Western society from Nepalese society on the level of spiritual experience. Genesis finds that spiritual experience in Nepal, even within the commonplace, is not limited by binary systems maintained by a “pyramidal authority structure.” It was revelatory for Genesis to find that in Nepal many denominations of deities and various belief systems are shared and that spiritual practices pervaded the day-to-day functions of many s/he encountered. Conversely, in the West,

binary systems are built by power structures that inhibit expansive spiritual experience, “a divisive process of separation that maintains the status quo and consensus reality as continuous and inflexible.” To combat the potential of reaching “spiritual inertia,” Genesis creates. In this sense, and in h/er own words, “the making of ‘art’ in any medium... is a holy act.”³⁶ The material object of *Begging Bin-ESHE* was thus created as a holy act and it reflects the devotional and ideological implications of Pandrogeny. Just as Aghoris devote their lives to a spiritual quest relinquishing material attachments, Genesis and Lady Jaye were devoted to relinquishing the control that DNA had on their material bodies. This denied attachments to the individual self in order to create an immaterial, third, and “conceptually more precise body.” The goal was “to let go of a lifetime’s *attachment to the physical* logo that we visualize automatically as ‘I’ in our internal dialogue with the SELF.” Denial of a certain “self” in the creation of another, for Genesis, is understood as a positive, sacralizing process. Concluding h/er essay, Genesis seems to reflect on the Pandrogeny experiment by, again, connecting h/er philosophy to the practices of Aghoris. If through denial of either/or distinction and detachment from materiality Aghoris “erase reality indoctrination,” Genesis’s take away was implied in the process of Pandrogeny: “to recognize ourselves as fictional so that we too can rewrite our identities from what we choose to have in common.”³⁷ This process is further exemplified in another piece in which the Pandrogyne *becomes*, in image, a god/dess.

Specific to this exhibit is a rug that Genesis had custom-made while in Nepal (Figure 3B). The image on the rug depicts Genesis and Lady Jaye as the half-male, half-female deity Ardhanarisvara. This image adopts certain iconography pertinent to the image of Ardhanarisvara, although, as we will see shortly, not without discrepancies. As interpreted by Beth Citron, “The

³⁶ Ibid., 15-19.

³⁷ Ibid., 19.

rug reflects an amalgam of Shiva iconography—the figure holds a traditional trident and wears a tiger skin—with symbols specific to Breyer P-Orridge’s practice, including a psychic cross and the number twenty-three in the upper-right corner.”³⁸



Figure 3 Left: Genesis during the Listen Here site-specific performance with rug in view. Right: Detail of custom-made rug of Genesis and Lady Jaye as Ardhanarishvara. Photographs by David De Armas

This adoption is again purported to reflect a Pandrogeny ideal through what Genesis h/erself understands Shaivite cosmogony to provide for the creation of Breyer P-Orridge. Citron informs us that Breyer P-Orridge looked to this image as inspiration for Pandrogeny and that they were also concerned with this image’s representation of “creation through cosmic union rather than through progeny.”³⁹ This is also the path Breyer P-Orridge took. I will return to this point shortly. What is interesting about this hybridized image is that Genesis is finding Breyer P-Orridge to be “mapping their story onto Shaivite mythology.”⁴⁰ This act has moved beyond an understanding of one’s own religious self through relations with religious others (such as with

³⁸ Ibid., 63.

³⁹ Ibid., 13.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 13.

Aghori *sadhus*), to a creative act where Genesis has had an image made that creates a new being from h/er own religious self and an ancient, divine image. It is in this regard that the image, in form and function, is best understood as Genesis's hybridized understanding of Indian iconography. In form, as a rug, the image provides an aesthetic of the aforementioned "mapping" of a Pandrogynic narrative of creative union. In function, at least for the exhibition, the rug lay near Genesis's favorite chair from h/er apartment, creating a domestic sphere within the exhibition space as part of a site-specific performance in which Genesis would answer phone calls in the gallery (Figure 3A). It does not seem to me that Genesis is concerned with likeness in function, in a traditional Indian sense of yogic practices, between the Pandrogynic representation of this ancient image; but rather the likeness in form so that it communicates Pandrogeny through an ancient mythological narrative. The importance of union in this image not only addresses Genesis's spiritual understanding of the process of merging an identity with Lady Jaye while she was still alive, but also recognizes the spiritual threat that is posed for Pandrogeny by existent dualities. The overcoming of this part of the process of Pandrogeny will be addressed in the final piece I will discuss from "Try to Altar Everything."

Less prominent in this presentation of particularly Himalayan art and culture, but very prominent still in Genesis's creations, is an appropriation of African Vodun aesthetic.

Christopher Partridge, in a chapter on Genesis and Esoterrorism, tells us that in 2013 Genesis was a recent convert to a Santeria cult.⁴¹ Partridge does not provide a citation, but elsewhere Genesis tells us that Lady Jaye was also a practitioner of Santeria.⁴² Apparently, then, both

⁴¹ Christopher Partridge, "Esoterrorism and the Wrecking of Civilization: Genesis P-Orridge and the Rise of Industrial Paganism," in *Pop Pagans: Paganism and Popular Music*, eds. Donna Weston and Andy Bennet (Durham, UK: Acumen, 2013), 189. Web. 13 April 2016.

⁴² Genesis Breyer P-Orridge and Beth Citron, *Genesis Breyer P-Orridge: Try to Altar Everything*. (New York: Rubin Museum of Art, 2016), 26.

Genesis and Lady Jaye were interested in the traditions of this religious system. This becomes evident in several pieces featured in “Try to Altar Everything.” One of the more profound pieces is titled *Alchymical Wedding*. The exhibition description tells us:

Alchymical Wedding contains the hair, nails, and skin of Genesis and Lady Jaye Breyer P-Orridge. While the container on the left holds only Lady Jaye’s bodily elements, and the right one contains only Genesis’s, the middle container holds a combination, representing their union. Through their interest in African Voodoo (Vodun) traditions, the artist believed in the spiritual power of bodily elements, and they would collect and save them. The mixture of Genesis and Lady Jaye’s hair, nails, and skin is symbolic of the melding of their bodies that the artists sought through the practice of Pandrogeny.



Figure 4 *Alchymical Wedding*, 1997-2012. Photograph by David De Armas

Early on in the practice of Pandrogeny, Genesis began getting h/er hair cut at the same salon as Lady Jaye. Between 1997 and 2007 they collected each other’s hair from said visits, in addition to finger/toenails, dead skin, teeth, etc. *Alchymical Wedding* saw completion originally for the exhibition “IM/MORTALITY” at Invisible Exports Gallery, installed after Lady Jaye’s death. The piece reflected upon commingling the distinctions of what it means to be present (alive/mortal and dead/immortal). This ultimately represents, to Breyer P-Orridge, a collaboration between the material and immaterial worlds. Lady Jaye, having “dropped her body” five years before Genesis realized the completion of *Alchymical Wedding*, reminds us that

all of their art contains them both, stating in 2003, “the work is a melding of both of our ideas which we would not have had singly. Both of us are in all of our art. That third being, Breyer P-Orridge, is always present.”⁴³ If this is truth to Breyer P-Orridge, the exhibition description quoted above is inaccurate. *Alchymical Wedding*, and its mixture of elements, is not just *symbolic* of the melding of their bodies, it is a melding of residual pieces of their bodies. This piece is not a three-dimensional representation of Pandrogeny, it is an alchemical medium of the spirit of Pandrogeny. Furthermore, contained within these fetishized bodily elements is a “presence” purported to transcend materiality. Genesis accepts on “aesthetic faith” and belief that residual energy is stored in objects, providing for the present an experiential line of communication with the history of the objects.⁴⁴ This saving of material objects and imbuing them with “magickal” properties through collaging, according to Genesis, is an historical practice: “It’s an instinct and one to be honored and explored.”⁴⁵ Genesis finds h/erself then to be participating in an historical process of ritual creation. Perhaps even intending to use Pandrogeny as a shift in this evolutionary process: “‘WE ARE BUT ONE...’ becomes less about individual gnosis and more about the unfolding of an entirely new, open-source, 21st-century myth of creation.”⁴⁶

⁴³ Invisible-Exports. “Breyer P-Orridge: I’m Mortality.” Accessed July 27, 2017. <http://www.invisible-exports.com/exhibitions/im-mortality/>.

⁴⁴ Genesis Breyer P-Orridge and Beth Citron, *Genesis Breyer P-Orridge: Try to Altar Everything*. (New York: Rubin Museum of Art, 2016), 26.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁴⁶ Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, *Thee Psychick Bible: Thee Apocryphal Scriptures ov Genesis Breyer P-Orridge and thee Third Mind ov thee Temple ov Psychick Youth* (Port Townsend, WA: Feral House, 2010), 445.

4 “THEE PROCESS IS THEE PRODUCKT”: PANDROGENY AS PERFORMED RELIGION

I turn now to the performative side of the experiment. In doing so, I will demonstrate the significance that the lived expression of Pandrogynic “ideals” has had for Genesis’s spiritual journey. While the creation of material objects is in itself a performative act, in this section I will focus on the embodied practice of Pandrogeny as well as the narrative utterances Genesis employs in h/er experience of Pandrogeny. As we have seen, blurring distinctions, interrogating dualisms, and subverting hegemonic control structures have been some of the driving forces behind all that Genesis produces as an artist, especially *as* the art embodied. When stating that Genesis embodies art in Pandrogeny, my intention is to view this as an artistic practice that connects corporeality to spiritual matters of being and experience. Recall that the collaborative efforts between Genesis and Lady Jaye are said to be the products of the Burroughs-Gysinian “third mind,” and in Pandrogeny, generative of a “third being.” Therefore the procession of outcomes through elective surgeries and various behavioral modifications can be read as *the* work of art. Living as one-half (one-third?) of the “Pandrogynne,” Genesis, to this day, embodies the aforementioned dispositions as one who wanted to “consume” and be “consumed by” h/er other half, one living as a “purposeful hermaphrodite,” and one who wants to “destroy the control” DNA has on identity and perception. These utterances are all part of a larger narrative that Genesis desires to express through the practice of Pandrogeny. Unfortunately, the process was interrupted by the sudden death of Lady Jaye, yet Genesis remains steadfast in living Pandrogeny, finding new ways to express and experience its creative potential.

One of the first ideals that is expressed in the narrative surrounding Pandrogeny is, simply, love. But the love between Genesis and Lady Jaye would not rest on traditional

expression. For Genesis, it is perhaps that s/he already experienced the journey of parenthood having had two children with h/er previous wife. But s/he tells often that with Lady Jaye, their outward and creative expressing of a union would not be through progeny. In fact, these are two artists who later would attempt to defy DNA, the very substance that carries all genetic information in biological progeny. They decided that in being “madly in love” they would devote themselves to becoming one, attempting to physically resemble one another. “In 1993 we decided that we were so in love that we wanted to become each other. We didn’t want to be separated in anyway, anymore.”⁴⁷ Furthermore, “Instead of having children... what if we made ourselves the new person instead? So it began as very romantic, about love.”⁴⁸ In this sense, there are different and creative ways in which one can generate a new person other than physiologically. In the traditional yet oversimplified sense, an offspring embodies the merging of genetic material from two individual parents. In Pandrogeny the “offspring” is born through a process of resisting physiological processes that occur with sexual reproduction and instead using each individual body as a site on which to inscribe a new body that is ideally self-same with the other and generative of the third being. A resistance to the processes of sexual reproduction here should not be viewed in a negative sense; this is a positive (“POSITIVE-ANDROGENY”), reflective endeavor that creates anew and demonstrates Genesis and Lady Jaye’s proposition that “There are more than one of you./ Maybe hundreds to chose from.”⁴⁹ The only choice to make is which process to consider and what to bring forth. For Genesis, what h/er soul brings forth is a reminder “of this possibility that you really can share and be someone

⁴⁷ Adelaide Festival. “Genesis Breyer P-Orridge on love at Adelaide Festival.” Online video clip. YouTube. YouTube, 7 March 2012. Web. 9 August 2017.

⁴⁸ *The Ballad of Genesis and Lady Jaye*, directed by Marie Losier (New Yorker Films, 2011), DVD (New Yorker Video, 2012).

⁴⁹ Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, *Thee Psychick Bible: Thee Apocryphal Scriptures ov Genesis Breyer P-Orridge and thee Third Mind ov thee Temple ov Psychick Youth* (Port Townsend, WA: Feral House, 2010), 450.

else.”⁵⁰ This suggests the positive aspects of radical transformation that Breyer P-Orridge asserts with religious fervor.

In arguing that Pandrogeny is an exploration of being and how Genesis is religious, its practice is a resistance to boundaries of traditional religion in the West. Meredith McGuire has come to recognize the importance of the everyday religious expressions of individual’s lives to “understand the full range of religion as practiced and experienced by ordinary people.”⁵¹ Paramount to this understanding are expressions through the body that address spiritual concerns. I find two of McGuire’s concepts helpful in my own argument: broadening our conception of religion as “how people make sense of their world—the ‘stories’ out of which they live;” as well as her concept of “embodied practice.” She utilizes the latter to “emphasize those ritual and expressive activities in which spiritual meanings and understandings are embedded in and accomplished through the body.”⁵² I will turn to performative expression shortly, but first want to stick with this aspect viewing Pandrogeny as a story that Genesis is living out, finding expression through the body.

Since Pandrogeny has both “ideals” and an “open-source” myth in mind, it becomes a multifaceted narrative that continuously unfolded as Genesis and Lady Jaye saw fit. As mentioned above, one of the earliest efforts to mesh their bodies was to simply visit the same salon, receive similar hairstyles, and dress alike, etc. These seemingly mundane activities were the beginnings of merging their individual identities and Genesis and Lady Jaye found these activities to be a meaningful part of the process. In 2004, Genesis wrote of the Pandrogynne as

⁵⁰ Adelaide Festival. “Genesis Breyer P-Orridge on love at Adelaide Festival.” Online video clip. YouTube. YouTube, 7 March 2012. Web. 9 August 2017.

⁵¹ Meredith McGuire, “Embodied Practices: Negotiation and Resistance,” in *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives*, ed. Nancy T. Ammerman (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 187.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 187-188.

“divine metaphor” for their artistic project in that it is creative of Breyer P-Orridge, the “third being” who would now constitute their collective identity. How this was achieved then was through these bodily, often mundane, practices. Furthermore, part of the mythos of this project and its creative capabilities is a narrative of resistance. McGuire elucidates the relation of resistance to creative spirituality: “The practices through which creativity is developed, focused, and expressed are, thus, nearly always forms of resistance to control by authorities (religious and political).”⁵³ What Genesis and Lady Jaye purportedly focus their resistance on is the ego, seen as a control structure in itself. The internal “I,” according to Breyer P-Orridge, is a fictional assemblage residing in a body. Therefore, in order to reassemble the internal self, the body must be reassembled. They state: “We have discovered that how we look does relate very directly to the internal dialogue that describes us to our SELF and to each other.” How does one reassemble their body in the twenty-first century? Genesis and Lady Jaye agree in furthering the process with “various modern medical techniques.” In this process, one which “no aspect... is separated from another,” Genesis and Lady Jaye have elevated the status of mundane practices to spiritual levels. The process of using “cosmetics, cosmetic surgery, tattoos, identical clothing and hair and mirroring each other’s behavior” as linking material concerns with spirituality resists authoritative religious boundaries.⁵⁴ The above-cited manifesto is accompanied along with “PRAYERS for SACRED HEARTS: *Prayers For Pandrogeny & Breaking Sex*,” which announces the gender and sexual concerns of Pandrogeny along with an invocation of the first Genesis creation account: “In the beginning all were perfect./ The first man was the first woman./ The first woman was the first man./ UNTIL the whispering began.../ EVERY MAN

⁵³ Ibid., 191.

⁵⁴ Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, *Thee Psychick Bible: Thee Apocryphal Scriptures ov Genesis Breyer P-Orridge and thee Third Mind ov thee Temple ov Psychick Youth* (Port Townsend, WA: Feral House, 2010), 318.

AND WOMAN/ IS A MAN AND WOMAN.”⁵⁵ Although this reference is perhaps a wry invocation given Genesis’s past attitudes towards Christianity, its placement within an announcing of Pandrogynic ideology can also be read as a self-manufactured cosmological foundation on which Pandrogeny erects a new phase of evolution.

Breyer P-Orridge utilize the concept of evolution in the sense of survival of the species, maintaining that “dualistic societies have become so fundamentally inert, uncontrollably consuming and self-perpetuating that they threaten the continued existence of our species.” A strategy of survival, for Breyer P-Orridge, that has been hampered is the “infinite diversity of expression.” Again this restates the importance of positive, collaborative resolution that Pandrogeny manifests. Therefore, Pandrogeny is a cosmogonic strategy in which a return to the “perfect” beginnings, where “EVERY MAN AND WOMAN/ IS A MAN AND WOMAN,” promotes a culture in which diversity of gendered expression is evolutionarily imperative.⁵⁶ If we take these utterances seriously as cosmological claims, this will mark a space for us to view the artistic project and process of Pandrogeny as creative performative expression.

Genesis proclaimed in 2013 that “at first we thought we were dealing with art, but in the end we realized that it was all about evolution, religion, belief, philosophy, the meaning of being here.”⁵⁷ I do not think this undermines the importance of viewing Pandrogeny as artistic still, especially given its devotional aspects. This will be key in understanding Pandrogeny as creative, performative expression. It may be obvious by now, but these two artists never shied away from conducting these explorations publicly, or for anyone who was interested. Therefore, Breyer P-Orridge dictate not only the content of their communication but also the method. I have already

⁵⁵ Ibid., 443-451.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 450-451.

⁵⁷ Adelaide Festival. “Genesis Breyer P-Orridge on love at Adelaide Festival.” Online video clip. YouTube. YouTube, 7 March 2012. Web. 9 August 2017.

briefly discussed these practices as employed by Genesis and Lady Jaye as mundane, embodied practices that are elevated to spiritual heights, but how this is achieved in their point of view has yet to be examined. Genesis offers an interesting perspective on art that will give us a vantage point with which begin:

If thee aim is less than to becom free from physical existence, less than coumfortable co-existence with our planet, less than achievement ov infinite consciousness it is not “Art,” only decoration or diversion. INTENTION IS THEE KEY. Evolution towards Being, towards being HumanE beings.⁵⁸

This passage, although written in 1985, informs us of the importance of intention in the Pandrogeny experiment. A good deal of the language used in the above passage later appears in Pandrogeny manifestos, and we can point to several intentional outcomes of the experiment. But, in choosing one, we can demonstrate the performative aspects of this expression. When Breyer P-Orridge performatively utter that they are to “create a third, conceptually more precise body,” this is a speech act that achieves its aim through the speech act itself. This creation is their intention and the illocutionary statement is the *doing* of this intention.⁵⁹ But this act is regulated by the constitutive practice of modern medical techniques of cosmetic surgery. We can assess the legitimacy of surgical procedures on whether or not they were done professionally, the successful outcomes of, say, breast implants, etc., but these rules do not constitute the intentions of Genesis and Lady Jaye’s creation of a third being. Their intended outcome, as the effect that we can evaluate, cannot be assessed in the same ways we validate surgical success. Even if we evaluate the relative success of the two actually physically resembling each other when they were almost twenty years apart in age, it wouldn’t affect their intentional claims. Genesis shares

⁵⁸ Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, *Thee Psychick Bible: Thee Apocryphal Scriptures ov Genesis Breyer P-Orridge and thee Third Mind ov thee Temple ov Psychick Youth* (Port Townsend, WA: Feral House, 2010), 127.

⁵⁹ I am here invoking notions originated by John L. Austin and built on by John R. Searle as utilized by Stanley J. Tambiah in his chapter, “A Performative Approach to Ritual,” appearing in *Readings in Ritual Studies* (1996).

a story that when the h/er and Lady Jaye were on the recovery tables after receiving breast implants, s/he awoke and in holding Lady Jaye's hand uttered "These are our angelic bodies."⁶⁰ Does this mark the procedures as a success? From Genesis's point of view it seems to have been, and not because the procedure went as planned without complication, but because they achieved a step in a devotional practice that reflects their cosmological view of merging identities and "breaking sex" (a claim that should be noted as strictly subjective belief).

Since the Pandrogeny experiment is a collaborative process, a major issue to consider is: what occurs when one-half of this project about living and being dies? I have mentioned the phrase in passing above, but Genesis refers to the passing of Lady Jaye as when s/he "dropped her body." This simple utterance is packed with meaning that Genesis has continued to use while s/he also seems to have developed varying approaches to death in the ensuing decade. Within this phrase is the Pandrogynic ideal that the ego, the SELF, or the "I," is a separate entity, one that was to be rewritten through a reconstructing of the material body. Therefore, Lady Jaye has lost h/er material body, but has also successfully collaborated with Genesis in creating the "third being" Breyer P-Orridge, which lives on. I have already noted Lady Jaye's thoughts about collaboration in creating material objects; the both of the artists are *in* their art. In material objects created after the dropping of Lady Jaye's body, Genesis feels collaboration from the "other" realm, "Genesis representing it [Pandrogeny] in this world and Lady Jaye representing it in the beyond."⁶¹ Genesis even goes so far as to name the "beyond" (at least for a set of art pieces created in 2010) as "Pandrodise." To reiterate a point made above, Pandrogeny is an embodied practice that deals with spiritual matters. I have attempted to highlight the importance

⁶⁰ *The Ballad of Genesis and Lady Jaye*, directed by Marie Losier (New Yorker Films, 2011), DVD (New Yorker Video, 2012).

⁶¹ Genesis Breyer P-Orridge and Beth Citron, *Genesis Breyer P-Orridge: Try to Altar Everything*. (New York: Rubin Museum of Art, 2016), 47.

of the spiritual aspects of this bodily experiment, and Genesis h/erself seems to support this claim, doing so most comprehensibly after Lady Jaye's death. Genesis states, "It [Pandrogeny] was to be so integrated mentally that we would be able to find each other's consciousness beyond thee body. And because consciousness is just a form of energy, we would be able to blend and truly becoum one."⁶² In this regard, Genesis still feels spiritually connected to Lady Jaye, even recently attempting to communicate with h/er.⁶³ This is not without the expected reactions to losing h/er "other half": "It's still traumatic. We grieve everyday."⁶⁴ As a project where each artist was a living canvas, it would appear that with Lady Jaye's death, the death of one-half of the canvas, paved the way for Genesis to be more explicit with h/er spiritual claims. In this evolving experiment we have traced Genesis's desire to get beyond the individual self in favor of a more collaborative one, a whole rejecting gendered dualisms. This turned into a desire to become one with Lady Jaye, only to return to thinking in terms of dualisms yet still apprehensive of their concrete boundaries. The experience of Pandrogeny then, as embodied practice, ultimately returns to matters beyond the body itself, namely spiritual matters. As one aspect of Pandrogeny, the altering of bodies, Genesis self-consciously reflects on this process as sacred by "altaring" it in 2016.

5 RELIGION AND ART: SOME CONCLUSIONS

If there is any merit to the claim that the modern age would mark a shift away from adherence to traditional religion in the west, it is not that we have become less religious but,

⁶² Genesis Breyer P-Orridge and Mark Paytress, *Genesis Breyer P-Orridge* (London: First Third Books, 2013), 290.

⁶³ Genesis is the subject of a 2016 documentary titled *Bight of the Twin* in which s/he and filmmaker Hazel Hill McCarthy III travel to Benin to explore the origins of Vodoun. While there Genesis partakes in a ritual attempting to "activate" Lady Jaye's soul into a doll replicating Lady Jaye's physical presence. The film has yet to receive a wide release.

⁶⁴ Genesis Breyer P-Orridge and Mark Paytress, *Genesis Breyer P-Orridge* (London: First Third Books, 2013), 307.

rather, finding ways to be *differently* religious.⁶⁵ As I have hoped to argue, Genesis and the practice of Pandrogeny provides us with such a case. So far in this interpretation I have examined the traditionally religious territories of image (in embodied practice and material objects) and text (in manifestos and narrative utterances). To conclude I will return to the “Try to Altar Everything” exhibition to discuss the relation of religion to museums, as religious space. This may not directly involve the project of Pandrogeny, per se, but as I mentioned above the museum became a site in which many events were held that communicated the spiritual ideals of Pandrogeny to visitors. The title of the exhibit itself promotes a belief that “every person and thing can be made sacred.”⁶⁶ Genesis, in perpetuating the idea that objects carry “magical properties,” invited museum visitors to bring an offering that s/he would incorporate into an installation. Objects that s/he found particularly “potent” or interesting would be placed in a centralized cabinet (i.e. a G.I Joe action figure of the character “Lady Jaye”). H/er invitation reads:

During the exhibition “TRY TO ALTAR EVERYTHING,” you are invited to create or bring a fetish object, a talisman that you believe has energy with it; that contains devotion on your behalf. These will be displayed in the exhibition as they are brought in. There are slots in the gallery especially for your “sigils” or “energy batteries.” If your piece is large, there will be some space for it too. But small is best. Bless you all.⁶⁷

In this sense the museum itself became a space through which visitors could participate in the exhibition themselves, encouraging religious encounters. Through visitors adding their own devotional offering, a communal environment was created and envisaged in an evolving

⁶⁵ Christopher Partridge, “Esoterrorism and the Wrecking of Civilization: Genesis P-Orridge and the Rise of Industrial Paganism,” in *Pop Pagans: Paganism and Popular Music*, eds. Donna Weston and Andy Bennet (Durham, UK: Acumen, 2013), 191. Web. 13 April 2016.

⁶⁶ Genesis Breyer P-Orridge and Beth Citron, *Genesis Breyer P-Orridge: Try to Altar Everything*. (New York: Rubin Museum of Art, 2016), 58.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

installation, and Genesis became the mediator of a form of religious communication in the form of artistic arrangement. Elaborating further on h/er understanding of the significance of “altaring” objects in the present, Genesis explains that the origins of art began with encoding meaning into “the detritus of the process of aesthetic nourishment and protection,” evolutionarily speaking. Genesis may not explicitly make this claim, but others have argued the origins of art simultaneously came about with the origins of religion.⁶⁸ Furthermore, religion often takes form in objects that we now broadly consider to be art forms. What Genesis has attempted to address in this exhibit is agreeable to these claims, and Pandrogeny has taken form in material objects. S/he admits to have had a revelation when familiarizing h/herself with the Rubin Museum of Art’s space:

Unconsciously, for decades of making devotional art we [Breyer P-Orridge] had been creating objects, images, and sculptures that reveal the presence of shamanistic opportunities and practices that are a direct continuation in form and function of the ancient tools and ritual objects found all over the world.⁶⁹

Perhaps then it was h/er intention to make this temporary exhibit at the museum one ripe with spiritual interest for its visitors.

With this in mind, the exhibition “Try to Altar Everything” has illuminated the importance of religion and spirituality for the project of Pandrogeny. Genesis and Lady Jaye were explicit with their subjective claims to be testing the boundaries of feminine and masculine bodies, using their bodies as the site in which to do so. But by probing a bit deeper into the various dimensions of this project, particularly with its evolution since the death of Lady Jaye,

⁶⁸ “The spectrum of human consciousness thus became an instrument of social discrimination—not the only one, but a significant one. Its importance lay in the way in which the socializing of the spectrum gave rise to image-making. Because image making was related, at least initially, to the fixing of visions, art (to revert to the broad term) and religion were simultaneously born in a process of social stratification.” David Lewis-Williams, *The Mind in the Cave: Consciousness and the Origins of Art*. (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2002), 196.

⁶⁹ Genesis Breyer P-Orridge and Beth Citron, *Genesis Breyer P-Orridge: Try to Altar Everything*. (New York: Rubin Museum of Art, 2016), 27.

we see that many more material and conceptual boundaries were tested, all of which have religious derivation. One tested boundary that Pandrogeny obscures, but not fully examined here, is between private and public. As artists, Genesis and Lady Jaye shared publicly this intensely intimate journey; and as we've seen, Genesis imbued h/er material creations with the spirit and intentions of Pandrogeny. In this sense, I find Genesis Breyer P-Orridge to sit somewhere between an artist concerned with the spiritual and a religious thinker concerned with art.

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