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On Misanthropy (punk, art, species-hate)

Shane Greene

Man is not on this earth to be happy or honest. He is here to realize his powers and take what he wants. To obtain and destroy all obstacles (sic) and to surpass the stagnation in which the existence (sic) of almost all individuals drag on. . . . We must all except (sic) death within ourselves.

GG Allin

Anal obscenity, pushed to such a point that the most representative apes even got rid of their tails (which hide the anuses of other mammals) completely disappeared from the fact of human evolution. The human anus secluded itself deep within flesh, in the crack of the buttocks, and it now forms a projection only in squatting and excretion.

Georges Bataille

Introductory Thoughts on Misanthropy and Species-hate

I've been wrestling with this idea lately, trying to formulate some thoughts around some disagreeable sentiments and unpleasant circumstances really quite familiar to us. I mean us humans, complex as we are. I want to talk about our hateful side or possibly just the basic horridness of human existence.

I've decided I will call this "misanthropy" and I'm just getting started. I think the term has the potential to sum up the sad insignificance and stubborn self-destructiveness of the human being. In theory, it might speak to any number of things, emergent scientific projections about human extinction scenarios, old anthropological debates about the logics of self-destruction present in blood feuds or witchcraft accusations, or for my purposes some sort of generalizable



punk rock nihilism. I'm not the only one thinking what it might mean to stick "mis" in front of "anthropology" in order to ponder human endings or just the basics of species insignificance (cf. Farman, 2014). With zombie paranoia also on the rise, talk of the Anthropocene is in a state of displacement by declarations of the "misanthropocene" (Clover and Spahr, 2014). In fact, in the first—and the only necessary—of twenty-four theses on the "misanthropocene" Clover and Spahr declare: "First of all. Fuck all ya'll" (2014:3). Well, fuck Clover and Spahr for their California-based, bad-ass efforts at poetic hipsterism and so on and so forth.

To be clear: I'm starting my branch of misanthropology by arguing a particular punk performer is just one really bad example of an entire misanthropological phenomenon. I mean bad in the sense of truly awful (as Keith noted) and not in the sense of good or cool or sweet or awesome. "But what about the problem of scalability?" several people asked (Natasha, Keith, Gretchen). Someone suggested I think of this as a specimen inside a species approach (Katie? Craig?). That sounded good; so I'm going with that, though admittedly for any longer engagement I'd have to accumulate quite a few more specimens.

Zoom out for a second. Basically, my current curiosity makes me wonder if there is a universal tendency for humans to hate themselves, some sort of collective detestation of one's own kind that leads us toward (eventually) bitter ends—though regular anthropology always repeats the refrain: "Yes, there are universals but one must show how they manifest differently across culture." I think of "species-hate" as one possibly central concept in an emerging misanthropology, something relatable to but slightly different than the more individually psychological versions of self-hate one finds in DSM disorders. To the extent that there's a psychic dimension, I'd be inclined to relate it to Freud's death drive, part of some collective movement to return to the meaningless inorganic matter from which we came but placing more emphasis on overtly negative action rather than a collectively unconscious process. Maybe we move toward a collective death because we openly hate ourselves.

I also want to think of species-hate more like a social anthropologist would, as something involving collective practices and shared spaces, however much it manifests through individual psyches. Could we think of it as a less celebratory take on Durkheim's social fact? One facet of our *sui generis* human sociality is this collective conundrum of hating what we are, loathing what we do, lamenting why we do it, and hating others because they do it too. So, to make a slight adjustment to the above: Fuck all ya'll because fuck me too.

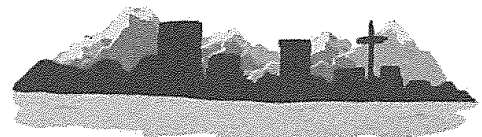
Though it will be impossible to fully separate misanthropology from misanthropy (you got me there, Keith), I'll insist that the latter rings more familiar

because it often highlights, if not explicitly fetishizes, a singular anti-social figure, often without making explicit how his or her misanthropology is collectively constructed. This familiar figure of the isolated misanthrope—e.g. the notable negativity of individual thinkers (Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Foucault), the farcical attitude of individual writers (Molière), or the radical self-deprecation of individual performers (Amy Schumer)—circulates more widely than discussions of “misanthropy” as a collective practice or shared space. So, my misanthropology here starts with a particular punk figure, only to expand outward toward the misanthropological collectives he was involved in constructing.

What might a misanthropology be good for anyway? For starters, it provides relief from long-standing humanist tendencies to “love” our species too much, a problem to which anthropology has contributed a lot. Use of the term “hate” sounds harsh and is likely dangerous. Yet, however much the etymology of the word points toward ill will directed at an Other, if directed collectively inward or if its objects are relatively indiscriminate, other possible interpretations arise. There’s even a certain kind of humility in so far as species-hate could be connected to some form of collective self-humiliation. There’s nothing more humiliating than a species bent on offing itself, whether via short aggressive bursts or just that slow, painless burn of extinction working itself out over devolutionary time.

Humanity surely has a general lack of confidence issue: Why can’t we ever solve our own problems if we’re supposed to be on the path to Enlightenment? Why the hell do we keep creating even bigger problems, most recently the likelihood of total ecological collapse and a mass extinction event involving our own kind? Ever notice how everywhere you go there’s some local version of an apocalyptic fantasy in which humans are destroyed once and for all? At the moment, one popular version involves a grotesque zombie take-over in which all attempts to resurrect human civilization fails. Instead, we are forced to hunt squirrels and bide time looking for the remaining bullets till, inevitably, we get devoured by the empty shell of our former selves.

As intrepid inheritors of Enlightenment humanism, some may not get on board with a misanthropology. It is directly counter to the gaggles of attention spent on presumably more “positive,” or at least achievement-oriented, human attributes: the rise of collective consciousness and diverse modes of sociality; the complex acquisition and development of language/culture; evolutionary adaptation to varied environmental contexts; the building of complex societies and struggles to move through history, presumably with forward motion; the material capacities for global expansion. But I am committed to finding ways to talk about



species-hate that avoid reducing it to random weirdos, cult-of-personality nihilists, or oversimplified accusations of the “you’re such a hater” sort.

If there’s an emerging opposition between species-hate and Marx’s species-being, it’s not entirely an accident. The latter presumes some seminal social seed buried within us that some day results in the full realization of our most awesome human potential. This is ironic since Marxism has really been more useful for demonstrating humanity’s extraordinary capacity to find better and better ways of alienating human social capacities and honing the human skill of exploiting the crap out of each other. With species-hate, I propose instead that it is really stupid to keep betting on any fantasy that involves a happy human ending; the faster we become comfortable with the idea of humans reveling in our idiocy until we self-destruct the better.

From the outset, I will flag some extremely thorny theoretical problems I am postponing, in part due to the restrictive space of this chapter and in part because I just haven’t had time to fully think it through yet.¹ The most obvious is how to separate species-hate—hate that is all-inclusive, points inward and not just outward, and is relatively indiscriminate in its object—from those other modalities of group hate that form such a tremendous part of human histories: racism, misogyny, classism, homophobia, xenophobia, religious prejudice, and so on. I’ll ask the reader to trust (or not) I am aware of the enormity of this problem, since much of my previous work has dealt critically with race and class in particular (as Marina noted). For now, I will say that most critical theories of race, gender, class, and so on presume these other manifestations of hate are directed at a particular social group for complex historical, social, and political-economic reasons. While these continue to be truly central anthropological concerns, surely our thinking should not be limited to *always* starting with these same sociological categories or assuming they must inform every analysis from beginning to end. That effectively limits the imagination, however real our social problems are.

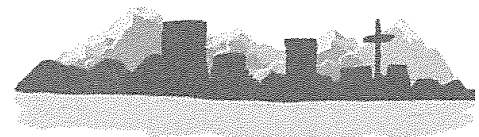
I want to think it is at least theoretically possible that a form of human hate exists that might be broadly shared across the human experience, rather than start from the assumption of what we already know, i.e. that there are many forms of group hate tied to specific historical, social, and political-economic structures and logics of “superiority.” In fact, however unpleasant it sounds, the species-hate I imagine is a collective dilemma of detesting ourselves to the point of wanting to bring about a collective human end. So, in the long run it is more of an equalizer.

As per usual, the tricky part is how a misanthropologist might go about trying to 'prove' species-hate exists. I've chosen a punk performer from the eighties and early nineties named GG Allin. I identify in his performances, and the collective spaces they constructed, a form of species-hate so visceral and with objects so indiscriminate, that one can't easily categorize it as group hate directed at a predictable Other (though admittedly Keith disagrees). In my understanding, GG Allin hated everybody equally, starting quite prominently with himself and those most immediately around him. This is despite the fact that he also melodramatically declared himself some sort of messiah, like in the "GG Allin Manifesto," a poorly written text he penned in prison in 1990 in which he sees himself as a central figure in the "real underground" of rock-n-roll (Allin, 2013). Rather, as I understand it, his performative space was really about embracing a specific collective ethos. It was an enactment of species-hate not as "spectacle" for an awed public, but as an open invitation to participate in the practice of hating oneself and everyone else equally, in concert with punk's do-it-yourself democratization principles and anarchic practices.

Part I: Not Accepting Jesus Christ Allin as your Savior

A lengthy biographical analysis is beside the point, but a bit of detail about the person behind the performance is required to understand how GG Allin emerged within the US punk scene and the collective spaces he belonged to within it. Originally from New Hampshire, "GG" is a nickname. It was presumably granted to him by his older brother, Merle. According to punk legend, Merle could only mutter those two syllables in place of his little brother's original birth name: Jesus Christ Allin. Yep, GG's father had a religious obsession so deep it compelled him to break the Anglo taboo of not naming children after the Christian messiah. His mother, the parent with more concern for social perception, changed it to the more ordinary Kevin Michael a few years later. She also took the boys away from the fanatical father.

Merle was also one of GG's most loyal band mates, playing bass in various punk groups that GG fronted. Among others, GG sang in The Jabbers, The Scumfucks, The Cedar Street Sluts, AIDS Brigade, and The Murder Junkies, his last band before he died. Merle still operates a minimalist operation that survives on GG's underground cult status decades after GG's fatal heroin overdose in 1993. In addition to more predictable subcultural paraphernalia (T-shirts, caps,



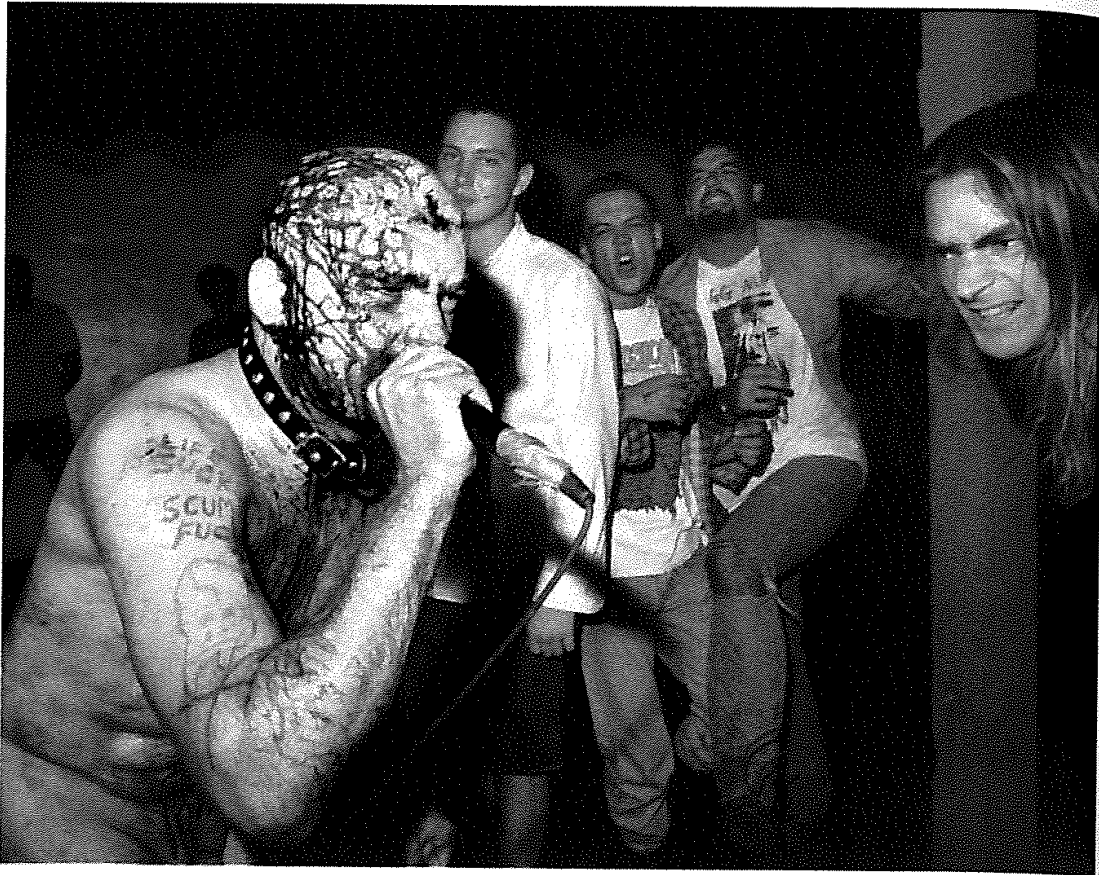


Figure 3.1 Allin in Performance Mode.

posters, etc.), Merle sells more symbolically charged items: old microphones that GG busted on his head; letters between GG and jailed serial killers; bloodied mannequins that GG touched at some point; a tattered, dingy dress GG wore on this or that occasion. Merle also still tours as The Murder Junkies and apparently needs cash, since he appears to be slowly selling off his small archive of the GG grotesque via a GG Allin Facebook fan page that has about 170,000 followers (including yours truly).

Although GG emerged in the late seventies amid punk's heyday, he never achieved anything resembling the notoriety of those acts that now constitute, however ironically, the punk "canon," e.g. The Ramones, Sex Pistols, The Slits, Patti Smith, Siouxsie and the Banshees, The Clash, Germs, and so on. He also never gained the visibility of the various hardcore bands that become emblematic of punk's DIY rebirth in the eighties, e.g. Black Flag, Dead Kennedys, Bad Brains, The Exploited, Fugazi (cf. Azerrad, 2003). There is more than one reason for this. His music is just really bad, even considering punk's low-to-no standards. Allin himself once described his music as "toilet shit" (*Maximum RocknRoll*, 1987) and

most would agree. His lyrics covered topics of extreme taboo and without any appreciable poetic intent or demonstration of cleverness. He went from the more tame message of Bored to Death (a Jabbers tune from the late seventies) to the extreme literalism of Sleeping in My Piss, Suck My Ass It Smells, Commit Suicide, and I Wanna Kill You (songs released a decade later on a solo LP titled Freaks, Faggots, Drunks, and Junkies). The only “mainstream” attention he ever received resulted from brief appearances on the scandal talk show circuit in the early nineties. He visited Geraldo and Jerry Springer to provoke shock, declare himself a savior for a sold out rock-n-roll, and be put on public display as a freakish moron present in underground rock culture.

By the end of the eighties, GG Allin shows consisted of the following: random brawling with any and all members of the audience, with no discernible martial skill and frequently resulting in his hospitalization; cross-dressing with the least ostentatious of drag outfits (e.g. non-descript, dingy dresses and clownish make-up); total nudity of a non-marketable body type (he was scarred, ugly, had primitive prison tattoos, and his masculinity was negated by the micro-penis he put on display); extreme self-mutilation, typically with the microphone or beer bottle at hand rather than any props brought on stage; sexual aggression directed at both women and men in the audience; taunting the public with the most taboo of bodily substances (see Figure 3.1). Don't worry, there's more on shit below.

By the close of the eighties, Allin also began declaring he would kill himself on stage in fanzines and at spoken word events. For example, in a 1987 interview in the punk fanzine *Maximum RocknRoll* he was asked if he was a masochist. His response was: “Pain is fucking life. It's great. I will kill myself on stage. Nothing fucking hurts when I'm doing it. I fuckin' bleed. I cut myself with broken glass. I beat myself black and blue. I eat my shit. I'm a total masochistic, self-destructive motherfucker.” (*Maximum RocknRoll*, 1987). The last few years of his life consisted of ill-fated tours interspersed with visits to the hospital (he was usually the one with the worst injuries) and stints in jail on charges of indecency and assault. After a more extended stay in prison following a sexual assault charge, filed by a woman that accompanied Allin's band to an after party in Michigan, he skipped probation to organize another tour at the suggestion of the young filmmaker Todd Phillips (then a student at NYU).

Phillips' documentary *Hated* about the final tour of the Murder Junkies is one of the only accounts to provide any nuance about Allin's role in punk subculture (Phillips, 1993). Phillips' extra footage also shows Allin's last performance on

June 27, 1993 at a small underground show in New York. The venue cut the electricity a couple of songs into the set and Allin ran out into the street naked and sullied, briefly provoking a street riot. The few dozen showgoers followed him into the streets and with the help of friends he eluded cops as sirens blared in the background. The next morning he was found dead of a heroin overdose that occurred at an after party.² At the time of his death, he was not in any obvious way a 'loner' hiding in a hole of isolated misanthropy. He was a guy with a past marriage, past jobs (he once drove a laundry truck), a band, a documentary filmmaker following him around, a current girlfriend (Liz Mankowski), and a small host of friends and admirers that hated everything right alongside him.

GG Allin's distinct lack of mainstreaming has not condemned him to total obscurity. One can check out the hundreds of thousands of hits on Youtube videos, peruse occasional rock journalism pieces that joke about him in passing, or contemplate how he still figures in the dark imagination of contemporary punksters.³ Yet, he clearly has never come close to "canonization" in rock-n-roll history and he has never been taken seriously within the more "serious" accounts of punk subculture, supposedly that last bastion of an explicitly subversive rock-n-roll (cf. Azerrad, 2003; McNeil and McCain, 2006; Marcus, 1989; Savage, 2002).

My question is this: Do GG Allin's extreme performances point toward a participatory and collective space filled with a hate indiscriminate enough to indicate this more universalistic problem of species-hate? Basically, yes. I think his public actively participated in constructing his extremity, viscerally engaging in it, not as a freakish spectacle but as a euphoric embrace of this pathetic, humiliating, and hateable human self. While still delimited by other social vectors—race, class, gender, and so on—punk has also always represented a participatory practice and anarchically inclusive space: in artistic terms (do it DIY everybody); in expressive terms (hey, everybody, say whatever the fuck you want); and in performative terms (the musical simplicity, like the stage dives, are a refusal of the divide between performer and public). As we'll see, Allin's particular practice of punk extremism allows us all to expose the shit we hate about ourselves.

Part II: Making Nothing out of Nothing

In 2013, the small punk merchandiser Aggronautix, better known for selling punk bobblehead figurines, published a book titled *My Prison Walls*. It represents

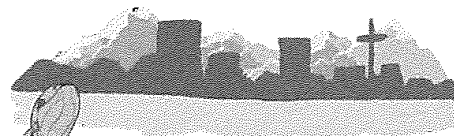
a posthumous compilation of the “collected works” of GG Allin: short rants about masturbation, rock-n-roll, alcohol withdrawal, desires to die, and wishes to kill; disturbed self-portraits done in blood, shit, and pen; and correspondence with jailed serial killers like John Wayne Gacy. It’s not exactly high culture.

Margarita Shalina (2013) published a review of the book in *The Brooklyn Rail*. In some respects it’s a serious commentary, asking open-endedly: What *does* Allin’s art represent? “Yes, art,” she insists, right after the first use of the word. This clarifies she is struggling to consider it as such because she knows the rest of the world does not and will not: hence, the need to insist.

She positions Allin as an irreplaceable icon of a gritty New York City, one that is now impossible to imagine thanks to the Giuliani “clean-up” period and all the gentrification that followed. She even pauses to consider Allin’s self-comparison to Van Gogh on the grounds that, like Van Gogh’s paintings, his punk performances are just misunderstood by the narrow-minded masses. Maybe he was a performer ahead of his time is the implicit message. Yet, to make it so, she is forced to cite from one of the prison letters in the book—this one to his brother Merle—in which the prose makes it clear he can barely construct sentences. Reading the rest of his prison diary, one realizes he can’t even spell the words that should matter to him most, “masterbation” and “enimies.”

For my purposes, the first line of the review is really the crucial one. “I never attended a GG Allin show because I’m not into poo,” she writes, later clarifying that she once declined when an old boyfriend invited her to do so. But why such explicit coyness with this term ‘poo’ when it is GG Allin’s shit that we must contend with? Her linguistic distancing mimics her stated aversion to stepping into Allin’s performative arena. Poo is playful. Shit, like Allin, is just fucking gross. Poo sounds babyish and it operates as a euphemism. Allin was intent literalness. His play with shit, however performative, was as viscerally disgusting as possible. Not only did he shit in front of his audience completely naked; he often came down from the stage and did it on the floor right in front of them. He also ate it and wanted to feed it to others. He not only smeared it all over himself but threw it into people’s faces.

The real problem in Shalina’s review is that it follows the impulse to translate Allin’s performances into the established explanations of “transgressive” or “shock” art, which often presume that certain artistic practices are “controversial” for their given moment but can be retrospectively explained as the work of an individual genius mastering the fine art of breaking taboo. Thus, she explains GG Allin by comparing his performances with other controversial artworks of



the eighties period, most notably *Piss Christ* by Andres Serrano (the photograph of a crucifix submerged in the artist's piss that raised the ire of conservative Congressmen and the religious right). Were the point to compare Allin to other artists, she might have foregone the emphasis on historical period and been more loyal to this central symbolic-cum-bodily substance. Back in the early sixties, Piero Manzoni placed calculated amounts of a substance, which he declared was his actual shit, into "tinned" cans and valued them in terms of their weight in gold. The critics said it was an ironic statement about human production (and its excessive byproducts) or, more confrontationally, a comment about the absurdity involved in producing artistic value. The work is still linked to a controversy about whether the contents are "real" or "symbolic" shit, since, in perfect ironic twist, the cans cannot be opened lest their "actual" artistic value be destroyed (Glancey, 2007).⁴

Of course, Serrano had National Endowment for the Arts funding and sought formal platforms of artistic recognition (e.g. *Piss Christ* first appeared in an art competition), hence all the political blowback from conservative state officials. Manzoni had a "Count" in his name by birth, exhibited in Italian castles, and his work went on to be acquired by modern art museums the world over. Just three decades after Manzoni produced *Artist's Shit*, Sotheby's was selling his little tins of shit for the hefty sum of \$67,000. As Miller (2007) notes, the work had outstripped its gold value by more than 70 times, even adjusting for the rise in gold's value. This was something Manzoni likely expected to happen; in fact, it was basic to his conceptual point that shit might actually prove more valuable than than gold in formal art circles.

Another way to explain Allin's extremism might be to consider him as just another "shock" music performer, an established tradition within certain popular music genres (e.g. rock, pop, rap). That sliding scale of consumable musical and performative transgression runs from Alice Cooper to Slayer to Madonna to 2 Live Crew to Marilyn Manson to Iggy Azalea.

Yet, to align Allin with other conceptual art overlooks the part where his performances were explicitly anti-conceptual, intended to be so literal as to go beyond the "performative." To see him merely as another shock rocker overlooks the part where he was either completely un-strategic or just clueless about how to "market" his destruction of taboo, his approach so disgusting that it is still beyond the bounds of consumable transgression. In the wake of Allin's penurious death, brother Merle has been reduced to selling T-shirts, posters, and used clothing for a few bucks to the small cult following that remembers Allin's

outrageousness. In short, GG Allin was neither a Van Gogh of the eighties nor did he convert into an icon of rock rebelliousness. He was just one guy who invited others to take punk's nihilist self-hatred to its literal extreme.

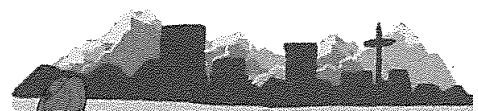
In Phillip's documentary *Hated*, there's an interview where Allin is sitting on a bed in a trashy dive hotel, wearing a black hoodie, and talking about how all his possessions fit into the non-descript grocery bag on the windowsill beside him:

You know the whole thing with society today is, you know, go to school, get a job, and get married, and have kids, and take out loans, and dig a fuckin' hole that you can never get out of. And to me that's just the way of the government chaining you down so that you can never get out of their grip. But somebody like me who can do whatever they want, I never have to pay taxes. I can fuck who ever I want. I can go here. I can go there. You know if somebody calls me I can go tomorrow. I don't have to think about, well, I gotta take care of this. It's like, I can just . . . go. And that's the only way to fuckin' live.

Not long after the interview, Allin dug a heroin hole he couldn't get out of and failed to carry out his public suicide, never reaching this purported performative climax. Brother Merle got to keep the contents of his paper bag. To the extent that Allin had a conceptual critique of the "whole thing with society" it was expressed through the most banal and transparent of lyrics, like for example in the song Abuse Me (I want to Die):

I wanna die, die, die, I wanna die
 Kill me, motherfucker
 I never died before
 Bury me under the floor
 Stick me in the heart, I ain't got one anyway
 Stick me in the ass, that's the best part of me
 Because I don't care if I live or die
 It just don't matter, kill me anyway.

References to his own ass are never incidental. Of all his queer stage antics, and all the excessive aggression and exhibitionism he displayed, it was always Allin's shit play that became his trademark. Eating his own shit, or smearing it all over his grotesque body, was one thing. Really it was running around with it, and throwing it at people, that clarified this punk space was not an individual spectacle of self-hate. Instead it was a collective moment of the human's negative effervescence, a visceral eruption of not Allin's individual anal obscenity but of



The rhetorical tone of the question is a bit like a textual version of that extraordinary image of the guy at Allin's last show, the one running around trying to stick his finger up Allin's ass while decked out in plastic to "protect" himself from GG's actual shit. Clearly, if you "like GG Allin and all," you are fundamentally interested in pondering your own relation to "cum/shit/vomit" and all it represents.

GG Allin's shared performative space, this shit-smearred arena of the worst aspect of our collective human selves, is not a tale of caution. It's not a narrative of alarm. It's not an analysis of individual artistic spectacle. The whole point is that it's a shit all the way down story. Bah, the humanity: incapable, pathetic, hateful, and hate worthy. Full of shit.

Says the misanthropologist, "What if we just stop trying to make something out of it?"

Conclusion

Myself, I think that line I wrote a second ago sums it up. And (yes, Katie) this is directed at every "smarmy do-gooder" that ever existed.

Notes

- 1 I also won't have space to substantiate any of this here (and who knows, maybe I'll write a book of general ethnological import someday). I suspect what I am calling misanthropology is not specific to Western modernity, even though much analysis in philosophy, literature, and art about "misanthropy" might implicitly or explicitly think of it as a result of the individualization, alienation, and general bad vibes that modernity tends to generate. Having done extensive fieldwork in Amazonia, and read a thing or two about acephalous societies across the planet, I am pretty sure the exotic romanticisms that position so-called "pre-modern" societies as an implicit critique of Western modernity's individualized alienation are operating on, well, romantic exoticisms. My "cross-cultural" assumption, or working ethnological hypothesis, is that you can find people hating on themselves in one way or another almost anywhere you go, no doubt manifesting according to cultural particularities. For example, blood feuds and witchcraft accusations, which manifest in diverse societies across the globe, have these internal logics of collective self-destruction. Contrary to some theories that they balance social/familial/material debts, they

- often demonstrate a tendency to illogically perpetuate aggressive human intentions in a total spiral downward.
- 2 As one might expect, particularly given punk's complex concern about authenticity as opposed to the presumed superficiality that accompanies the mainstream, this death by heroin instead of public suicide gave rise to heated debates about whether GG Allin was just another predictably self-destructive rock star wannabe rather than the radical "real thing" he purported to be. I have no opinion on the matter, since heroin overdose seems sufficiently self-destructive to me.
 - 3 Francis Bean Cobain (daughter of Kurt Cobain and Courtney Love) opened her first L.A. art show in 2010 with the title *Scumfuck*, a reference to GG Allin's arm tattoo that read simply "Life sucks scumfuck." The exhibition consisted of Bean's drawings of freakish and androgynous bodily figures and included a rendition of a classic GG Allin portrait (Hartog, 2010). Another example is a 2015 collection of underground punk fiction published in honor of GG Allin (Johnson and Richard, 2015). The writers imagine Allin in more fantastical scenarios, e.g. having a disgusting three-way with George and Barbara Bush, doing weird things with onion rings and John Wayne Gacy, battling mutants from outer space, etc. But they still basically speak to his actual performative repertoire.
 - 4 For that matter one can go back further to Duchamp and works like *The Fountain*, but surely alluding to bodily excess and actually handling it is a different matter.

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