

(CRUCI)FIX

THREE THESES ON THE FIX

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1 The fix is iterable

The fix, you say? There's no such thing. I mean, there is no "the" fix. No *one* fix. It's never a one-time thing. To fix means there's always more than one fix, interminable fixing. Once one gets the urge to fix, it's an itch that's forever in need of scratching.

That's because the fix unfixes as it fixes. It loosens even as it fastens in place. It can't fix without first unfixing, without unsettling what it will then decide on, put in place. And if it unfixes in fixing, it will always beget another fix. Never mind its fixity, it can't even nail down its unfixing, always undecidable between fixed, yet a moment ago broken, and something short of broken, still in need of a fix. Another hit. Another strike on the head of the nail. Another stigma. Another pierced wound. The stabbing rhythmic punctuality of fix fix fix. The I can't hear you! too noisy! onomatopoeic overpunctuated cha-ching of Tom Wolfe's Las Vegas (What?). Yes, the fix is something of a repeated, addictive injunction. It's imperative, but first let's nail that iterability. Fixing over and over again, hooked on fixing.

Let's take an example painfully close to home. There's no fixing universities, the Tories say, until we admit there are too many students looking for their credential fix. But that's just clutching at a fix for a broken economic system that's always looking for another spatial-temporal fix to calm its jittery contradictions. Another high, another plunge into crisis. But a quick fix is always tempting: Get rid of "low-quality" courses, stop the plebs getting too creative with their fixes, that'll fix all the problems we among the ruling classes wrought just so we could be the only ones able to claim we could fix them. Perhaps every politician's fix is an act of creative destruction that gives them something else to fix—and nail what's broken on their opponent, if they can make a mark of them.

Fix it up, fix yourself up, you're your own next fix, so keep hammering harder, stigmatize the lazy, delinquent, undeserving other—that was Thatcher's fix. But affixing penal populism to free-market liberalism was a recipe for a catastrophic unravelling. Nowadays the demagogic purveyors of quick fixes are everywhere, meaningful solutions scarce. The fix might look like an instant but it ushers in a temporality of infinite deferment: Patch it up all over again.

2 The fix is an imperative

Just get it fixed! That's your problem. I won't fix it for you. We try to fix others to put off fixing ourselves, or maybe because we're hooked on the idea that *that* would fix us. If only someone else's fix would do the interminable work of fixing for us, so we demand they fix fix fix.

All those x's make me think of a writer like Wolfe or DeLillo whose hurtling prose leaves no time to spot the breakages in its wake or to repair the injuries. Restorative justice, making amends, feels too slow for the urgent temporality of the fix. What do we want? Justice! When do we want it? Now! No time for the labour of listening, no time for hurt feelings, no time for empathy, no inner resource to give, no story to unfurl. Just get it fixed!

Barking demands is a defence against insecurity, against what needs to be fixed but, by its very logic, will never be. As such, the imperative to fix has no response, no satisfactory answer. Would it content itself were a fix to come back in its echo? But the answer to "fix," bombarded against a wall, is simply "fix" reverberating.

The fix is obsessional, neurotic, the morbid symptom of failed object cathexis—of some botched attachment that remains to be fixed. The fix, then, is the competing chorus of ego and superego vociferations. Give me the fix(ity) you never gave me! This one, this time, this will fix the bad object. But, no, you're the broken, unlovable one. If only you could have fixed yourself, you would have affixed yourself to the breast long and fast, the good breast, that'll fix everything. But be a man, fix it yourself. MacGyver it. Tinker, tamper, Mr. Fixit.

3 The fix is immobilizing

The fix is a hyperburst of activity that keeps up pinned to the spot, as if it had nailed one foot to the floor to keep us going around in circles. Just one more fix, that's the lie that keeps us tethered. Teachers, like therapists, suffer this pathology of the fix and the gratification of the "good" student. It's a fixation born of absent satisfaction. But that deprivation just is the fix that unfixes so it can fix once more. That's why Larkin saying they fuck you up, mum and dad, has got wedged in the popular psyche. The fix keeps us stuck, pinned down, cruelly attached to all that we pin our hopes on. It replays the scene of torture hoping for a happy end *this time*. The fucking *futur antérieur*, that's the grammar of the fix. Whence the fantasies of liberation: If only I could just fix this, it would start again, get moving, take off, break free into a bright future, feet no longer tied to the ground. What cruel optimism!

But breakdown awaits. The promise wilts. The good life, the good object—all evaporate as the post-war fantasy recedes into distant memory of generations past.

But fear not—another fix beckons. And we're off again, in circles, round the same spot. That's why the fix is a stigma, or it stigmatizes. For it sees the same where there is difference. It drives the nail in hard and fast in the face of all that would evade it, all the fugitivity, all the *maroonage* dodging the great colonial fix. Nailed to the post, and the marks of the nails never completely fade, always calling out for another fix while freezing one to the spot in fear. But that spot was marked for thee. The fix makes the globe spin around a Eurocentric compass, fastens it to its insecurities, like those buttons quilted onto mid-century sofas that sewed Lacan's world up in tight order, fixing the constellations of the patriarchal sky. The fixed star is riveting. It puts one in one's place, decides one's fate, gets one into a fix one can't get out of.

Among human beings and animals, the fix lines up, then does lines. And it marks a man Black, done for, over with, or white as the stallion the knight rides. It straitjackets, it tortures, it pierces, it brands—relentlessly. And then it labels this rhythmic punctuation the prize of liberty.

There's no one fix, no absolute fix, no ultimate fix that would be done with all this shit. If there were, the fix would have fixed itself, done away with the need for a fix once and for all. That would perhaps be its point: the end of the fix as the end of the fix. It would have broken itself beyond repair, fixed and hence unfixable at the same time. So every fix undoes its work at least a little, unscrews so it can keep screwing (with) us, keep us fixated on the stubborn refusal: I don't want to be fixed. I'll take the chance. Hit me.