

# Cosey and Maria talk about Linguistic Hardcore

MF (Maria Fusco): For you what's Linguistic Hardcore?

CFT (Cosey Fanni Tutti): I take it as it is. Hardcore first means more to me than linguistics, in that it has to be brutally honest. If you want to express that linguistically, visually whatever, it must be very honest. Brutal honesty could be expressed in sentimentality too though, not just violence. It doesn't have to be shocking in that respect, just very, very direct. It should just hit the part of you that more subtle methods might allow you to escape from, there's no way out, you have to connect with it. So Linguistic Hardcore would be something that forces you to connect with the message, deal with it and assimilate it.

MF: I'm sure you're really fed up talking about your name, but...

CFT: How I came to be called Cosey Fanni Tutti? I was first called... well, my christened name is Carol and when I first met Genesis years ago, he didn't know my name and he called me Cosmosis, and that was shortened to Cosey. I sent a postcard, a Mail Art postcard to a friend of ours, Robin Klassnick, and he wrote back and nicknamed me, Cosey Fanni Tutti, that was it.

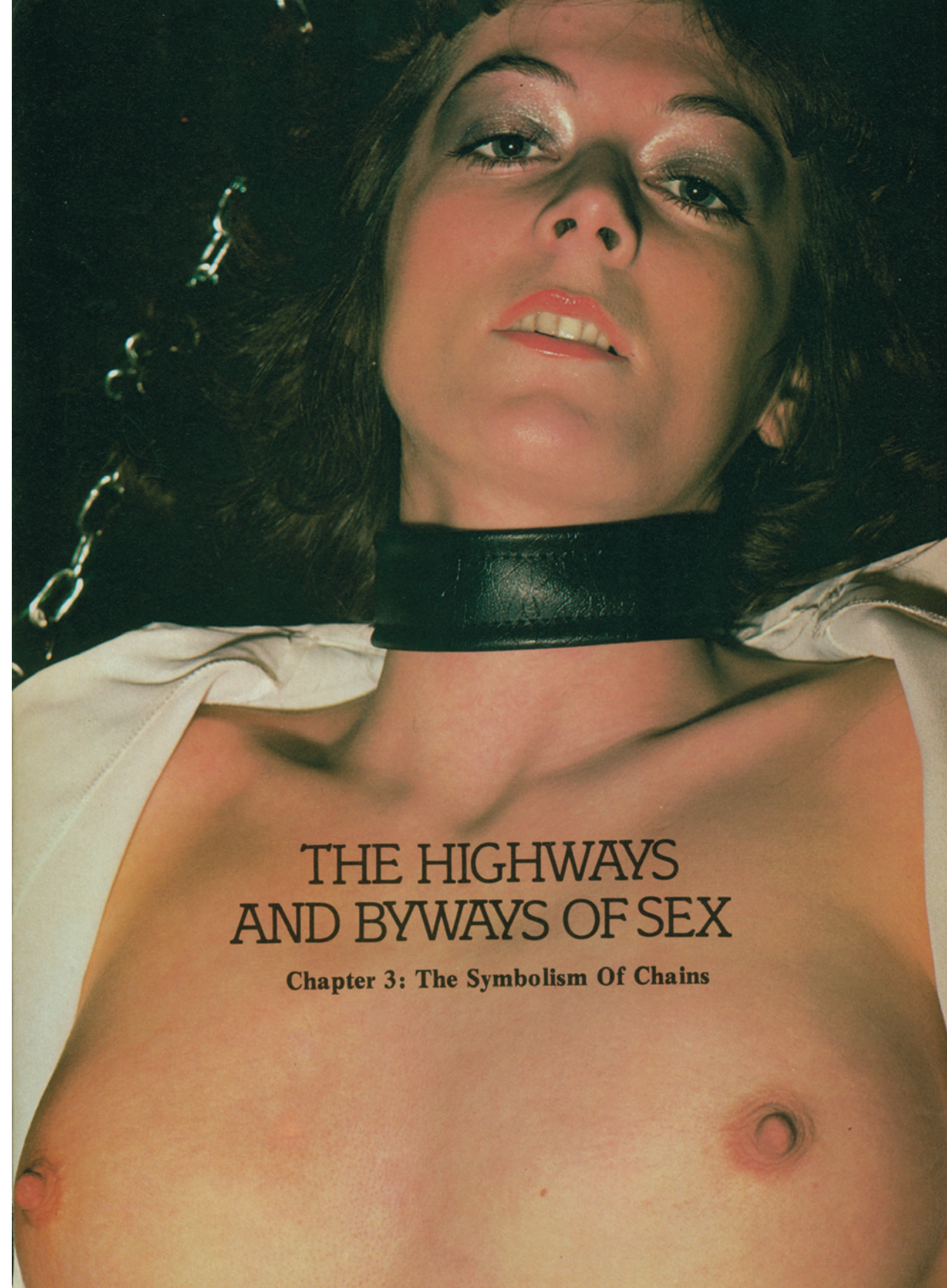
Later on, when I found out what it means, 'as all women should be', to me it was great. Not because I'd have to live up to it, but because I thought it was a nice idea because the name was actually given to me, as something that described me, by someone who knew me. So, it was a flattering thing to have said about me and then to be translated like that – both in terms of the language and the meaning – I've always kept it. I tend to write Cosey F. Tutti sometimes now, you know.

MF: Are you known by more than one name now?

CFT: I've kept Cosey as my legal name, but not the Fanni Tutti bit. I do have a bank account that's named Cosey Fanni Tutti. It's my artist's name, I use it for all my music and everything else. When I'm getting paid people often write cheques out assuming Cosey Fanni Tutti is my legal name, so I've been forced into keeping it like a business account, which is weird. Funny though isn't it?

MF: Your name's not quite a 'brand' but it does have a separate life from yourself.

CFT: Yeah, totally, yeah. Cosey is a concept.



MF: I like that. Paraphrasing a quote from *Finnegans Wake* Joyce writes, ‘Who gave you that numb?’ with the idea of being struck by your own name, that well, I suppose it petrifies you, or maybe it’s that you’re just stuck with it.

CFT: Very important. You either connect with what someone else has called you, or you don’t. When I was christened (I was actually christened Christine Carol) my father was hoping for a boy – he would have been called Christopher. I don’t know if my father couldn’t face the fact that I wasn’t Christopher or what, so he always called me Carol. My name has always had a kind of like weird thing about it for me, so when I was called Cosey I just didn’t even think about it, I just thought, ‘Yeah, okay’.

MF: Did you feel Cosey was numbing in a good way, rather than numbing in a bad way?

CFT: Good way, because it came, it tied in with, with me leaving... well, getting thrown out of home. So it was almost like a new life for me if you like, a new identity and one I was more comfortable with. It was, well it was free of everything that I felt I was sort of chained down by. Even when I look back to my childhood my closest friend, who’s like my brother really, he was called Lesley and we always changed his name to either Lez with a Z or Lilly when he decided he was gay and he wanted to be a bit softer. So we’ve always messed with names, I’ve always messed with names, even from being under ten years old. It was always Caz for me, not Carol, Caz and Lez – he still calls me Caz. Then it got to Cosey, and when I was stripping it was Scarlet. I’m Carol to my sister, she does know me as Cosey, but she just still calls me Carol. I did a talk on my magazine work and everything in Hull, she came along to it and that was quite a revelation for her and a big thing for me. I warned her what would be there, because she’s older than me, and she’s not in the arts or anything. But she was like totally blown away by it. But it still didn’t make her call me Cosey. Some days I wake up and I forget who I am!

MF: Must have allowed you a nice ordering system in a way too, when it works well, because you can decide who are on any particular day. Do you think that names make you freer? I’m obsessed by class you know, an important aspect of what we’re discussing is about your nomenclature – it’s outside of, it exists outside of class, because it’s not, well there’s nothing average about it, is there? Cosey doesn’t exist outside of language, it’s not a squiggle, it has a form and can be written down (even on cheques!), but still it’s outside of normal naming structures. A weird existence all of its own. Very direct.

CFT: It is who I am and what I do. It’s not just my name. It’s something totally different.

MF: I have a quote for you from Elaine Showalter from her essay, ‘Towards a Feminist Poetics’, on what she called Gynocriticism, I think it could be interesting here: ‘A woman is producer of textual meaning and in that including the psycho-dynamics of female creativity, linguistics and the problem of female language.’ I don’t know if everybody feels like this, I certainly do – does Showalter mean that one feels constricted or fixed in that place that your name is a representation of?

CFT: It’s funny because I don’t, I don’t feel fixed anywhere now, even when I go back to Hull, if I go back I have all the smells and the physical structure of the place is still there, it’s all still

there, so that is familiar to me and it has certain... it evokes certain feelings in me, but I can’t relate to who I was then.

MF: Let’s talk about your music a wee bit now. Am I pronouncing this properly: Luchtbal?

CFT: Ah, Luchtbal yes.

MF: There are some tracks in there from *Music Fantastique*, is that right?

CFT: We pulled together some of the classic tracks for that album, because we were moving from one place to another, that name thing again. We had been Chris and Cosey, but we were becoming CARTER TUTTI.

People had got to know us with certain song structures and sounds and everything else, and we felt that we’d moved so far away from that, you know, that we could... it was quite dishonest to put Chris and Cosey on something that really wasn’t Chris and Cosey, it was definitely something else now and we just felt it would be good to have to CARTER TUTTI not because the work had matured exactly, that’s the wrong word for it, but it had gone to a different level completely.

MF: And it needed a new name...

CFT: And it needed a new... yeah, a new umbrella name for it, so that people knew immediately what they were getting.

MF: I love some of the track titles – Apocalipzo, Spectrofeelya, Fantasteek – the sound of them, freaky aggregates of words and spellings...

CFT: That’s right, we’ve always done it, because we’ve had *Exotica* and we did – what was the one you just said on there? Spectrofeelya, yeah and we had a thing about doing that, that was from the Martin Denny sort of thing that we like, you know, he did all those sort of things. It twists the idea of the word, Apocalipzo, an apocalypse is something really drastic and if you just put that on the end you can have more fun with it.

We like to put things together that conflict, that’s what basically represents our music, because we put a swing in it but the lyrics can be quite hard although they sound simple, when you actually read them you think, ‘Oh that’s not very nice’. A pretty icing on the top so that you get seduced into it, while what we’re really saying is hardcore, Linguistic Hardcore really. You have to go in, you go into it and then you’re suddenly dealing with something different. You might think it’s a love song, but in fact it’s about rape. Because in life that’s what things are like, isn’t it? You get seduced into situations you can’t deal with, or you just get thrown into them against your will – that’s what the music’s like for us.

MF: Then both you and your audience have the chance to come round to another type of understanding later on.

CFT: Well, we did a track called Misunderstandings, and Illusion was all about that too. It’s not a literal thing of course, it’s taken at face value or you can start getting inside it. I know that



a friend of mine, a Japanese scientist, is researching how our eyes can actually see more than we see now, it's just that the way we've evolved we don't see what's between me and you in the air. You know, well you might see it if you're on acid...

MF: Ezra Pound talks about how accuracy of meaning is the sole morality of writing, taking morality very loosely here. Thinking about that in relation to the new words you've created for your songs, finding the right tools for the job. So you might have the actual track as an entity, a very carefully crafted entity, but one that doesn't have a name to it. The title both opens and closes it to the audience? I find that interesting, thinking about not only how you're using the titles based on what you've said there, but also in terms of thinking... thinking across your range of practice. How do you choose what form is right for which ideas, they must share a lot in common?

CFT: Well, depending on whether it's the obvious thing, visual or sound, that's the first thing to consider. But even then that crosses over because we do, we do visuals to go with the sound that we make, and when we play live we have visuals behind us. What I don't actually impose on myself is any kind of method, so when ideas come through, I let them sort of run themselves through me and then out into whatever...

MF: Do you produce quickly or does it percolate about a bit and then come back to you?

CFT: With music sometimes it's really quick, other times it can take a couple of weeks just because the kind of sound that we want, like you were saying, the accuracy is really important, sounds have their own kind of language, like names. There are so many presets that people use to make music that as a maker you can get bombarded, if you're familiar with a certain kind of sound, even if it's a violin, there's a certain kind of sample of violin that you hear a lot. That's not right for us, we prefer to find different sounds so that they're unique to what we do. I know it's quite anal but that's just the way we work.

MF: Well, it's precision isn't it?

CFT: It is precision. I don't want a kind of sound that's on an advert for a Volkswagen Beetle on my album...

MF: Unless of course you want...

CFT: Unless I want that reference, yeah. So I would change it and that's why we never use presets for that reason. Our music has its own language.

MF: Presets aren't precise enough.

CFT: No. They're not our language or what we want to say.

So going back to how, how I decide about how my work should find form. When I work with the photographs that Szabo took of me, I'll be scanning his slides and then doing some prints and see which size works, and I'll get the right feel – which selection of images work well together



leather dog-collar right through to illustration 10 presenting a detailed presentation of the contrasts between the softness of vaginal flesh and the glittering hard steel of the chains, we are talking about *adornment* not sex-under-duress.

The male partner will derive more pleasure from looking at the lady posed in, say, illustrations 3 and 9, than from actually doing anything about

it.

And the subsequent consummation of their foreplay might well be all the more mutually satisfying for the pantomime presented by his willing partner.

Of course it is not merely the chains that provide the pantomime for they are ably supported by the skilfully worn erotic apparel so prominent and provocative in illustrations 5

and 8.

Likewise the wise woman eager to please (and conscious of the greater sexual joy that might lie in store for her as a result of her efforts) will only too rapidly acquire the skill of *posing* well to highlight the 'charms of chains'. Illustrations 7 and 2 provide particularly good examples of the pose being almost as important as the props!



Ever since cave men have been depicted dragging womenfolk off the scene by their hair, the idea of domination and sexual enslavement have haunted both male and female minds.

Chains, since they were very first forged, in particular have always played a big part in creating this type of fantasy. In modern times, one only has to be a regular cinema goer to know

that literally thousands of memorable scenes are based on this particular theme, and image.

The reason is fairly obvious. There is undoubtedly something ▶



or in conflict with one another that kind of thing. So there has to be a conversation, I don't want a definitive response or meaning to anything, that's one thing I definitely don't want, I've never had that in my life and I don't agree with that, because everybody's different, but I would like to give off the... if I give off the genuine feeling of how it really was then, maybe people will receive that, assimilate and understand it and give meaning to the work in their own way. Then I'm happy, because I've given them something that is honest, my work is based on total honesty, people can run with that, you know.

MF: Does that honesty ever drain you?

CFT: No, the opposite, I find it very hard to conceal things from people. I have real difficulty playing games, I've never ever subscribed to that because I just think it's a waste of time and energy and emotion, you know.

MF: [LAUGHS] On that note, I've a flyer here for a performance that you did at the Zap Club in 1986, you wrote: 'There was a time when all images crossed and pursued their separate lives. From the one person came many, one 'being' to some and a totally different perception to others. Now is the time for all to realise the many sides were indeed the one person and it is this person who needs to be seen as a whole and not as a fragment of her personality.' There's a cousin quote to go with it, from Hélène Cixous' book *Coming to Writing*, have you read it? It's brilliant, I'm trying to get her to do something for the next issue, someone told me that she only likes to communicate via wee handwritten letters.

CFT: Oh I've got... a friend of mine does that and I save all these envelopes he sends me, because they're really nice. It's like that red envelope there, can you reach over?

MF: This one? Oh yeah, where does he live?

CFT: Lincolnshire. So he addresses it like that, all over the envelope... And his return address is like that.

MF: Oh that's lovely.

CFT: It's Robert Wyatt, you know Robert Wyatt?

MF: Yes! Do you know, I went to see him a couple of weeks ago at the Purcell Rooms, I was actually thinking about him when you were talking about compound-ing song names... But I digress, back to Cixous, 'The text is always written under the sweet pressure of love. My only torment, my only fear, is of failing to write as high up as the Other, my only chagrin is of failing to write as beautifully as Love. The text always comes to me in connection with the Source. If the source were dammed up, I would not write. And the source is given to me. It is not me. One cannot be one's own source. Source: always there.' So she's got this idea of vacillation between self as source and material but also self as other. 'The source is given to me it is not me' and your words 'a person who needs to be seen as a whole and not a fragment' has a direct relationship...?

CFT: Well, it's very relevant actually. The name Cosey Fanni Tutti had become synonymous with nudity and a certain kind of performance. I wrote that flyer text because I wanted to challenge all that, I wanted to start saying, you better forget about it, because I'm not going to continue, you know, with this kind of work forever. I hadn't found a formula that I was going to stick with, like a lot of artists, I wanted to move forward, I wanted to say that if it's only the nudity you're into, then forget it. I can't remember what I did in that performance, I don't think I stripped off in that one. I think that was one of the first ones I didn't strip off in.

I can't remember which venue it was, but I had a lot of the images of myself that were known, from the ICA and so on, from Chris and Cosey and all those things, they were all hung up around me and I destroyed them all. I wanted to show the audience that this is literally what was happening then, what to connect with. It was as simple as that.

MF: You were talking earlier about how over time one creates new significance or works are reinvigorated in different ways. Thinking about time, certainly maybe when we're reading or listening to music, on one hand it's so very experiential, the maker is asking the reader or the listener for their personal time, a very precious commodity. But on the other hand, it's not about the moment at all is it? We're asking our audience to travel across time in some way, to bring their own material to our material. Now thinking about that in relation to your track *Driving Blind*, the sounds on that are so elongated and striated, the song feels like someone got hold of it and stretched-pulled it, it seems to suggest a long journey, because of its textual surface. There's also an idea of a bigger time-frame set around sound somehow, how is it remembered? Does that make sense?

CFT: I know what you mean, this is why working with sound is really, really good fun. You can make it do, express all kinds of things that you can't express visually, it has a universality about it, so you can trigger responses in people with sounds. I'm not talking about subliminals, which we have done before, but just regular sounds and tones and that sort of thing.

Because neither me or Chris write music anyway, it's all done, you know, just as we feel it. So we feel our way through everything and in that respect we're our own guinea pigs, you know. Because you know, when a sound is wrong it doesn't give you that feeling, it's not quite right – not low enough, it's too high, it's got a little bit of a waver in it – after three seconds it just does that little thing that's really irritating and every three seconds that will drive you nuts. People listen to things in different ways.

MF: So it's listening habits as well, isn't it? It's like how some people, well my partner you know, has always listened to a lot of music and he listens to the same track over and over and over and over and over and over again, like he's trying to learn it, in a way. I think people maybe try to learn the one track for that reason that you've just expressed. Perhaps they have an intuitive knowledge or memory of it that is activated in the act of listening. Then after listening that knowledge will brew for a while, maybe popping up again later. I wonder if this is how creativity functions too?

CFT: Interesting, creativity is something that you just can't explain. I have an artist friend of mine come to see me and she said – she's a lot younger than I am, only a few years older than our son –

and she asked me 'What's your practice?' I didn't know what she meant at first. I suddenly thought, well that's quite an alright question, but it's not something that's part of my vocabulary, because I don't have a practice, well, I've not labelled it as such, but I suppose there is that kind of thing with a lot of people where they have a specific methodology. When I have an idea, I have to research it, then take it through these different stages before it becomes manifest, but sometimes, suddenly it's there, within 30 minutes it's there. So methodology is useless to me because it's completely always changing.

MF: Isn't that a problem sometimes?

CFT: I wouldn't want a methodology, I really wouldn't want it. And yet sometimes if something has to be precise, I suppose there is an argument to say there should be some kind of methodology imposed on form, but only in so much as when it comes down to fine tweaking. But not at the beginning, not in the actual creating, not at all.

MF: Thinking about methodology in relation to your work *Magazine Actions*, along with these ideas of experiential time-lines and histories and again textual editing. That piece pulled all these strands together. I like the materiality of paper, I like the idea of the transportable nature of magazines and books, moving across time, if you see what I mean. There's a different kind of space in there though, a sensuous text (when I say text here I'm not just thinking about words, *Driving Blind*, is text too in this context) can you tell me about the ordering structures you put in place for *Magazine Actions*, after all you must have so much material, and you're not into methodology as such.

CFT: I didn't want to make any sense out of it, not my sense anyway, because the whole point of the project, was that it was what had made sense to the sex industry. I surrendered myself into that industry to be used as they use any other girl, but I didn't let them know who I was or anything or why I was doing it, otherwise it would be pointless, because I wouldn't be treated the same way. What I wanted to reveal was the, the thinking of the industry and how different magazines were for different markets. Like you were saying, magazines are so portable, little pocket-size, so people can potentially have them with them all the time, this gives the industry a head start. What was exciting to me, and what I wanted to show, was the differences and the different kind of varied customer-led images that the publishers wanted, even down to the certain positions, the clothing... You'd get the top end, very glamorous ones, like *Men Only* and *Penthouse*, which remove a lot of reality away, so that it becomes very much fantasy. But in a different way to the fantasy of the small pocket-size book that's in black and white with just a couple of colour pages, more or less 'Readers Wives' kind of photographs, as if it was the woman next door and the reader is looking through the keyhole. If that was what they were going for, then they'd bring someone who looked like that in and put you together, to do whatever you do together, you know. So that interested me a lot, very specific.

MF: A vernacular in a way?

CFT: Absolutely, even in so much as each genre of the sex magazines had their own kind of advertisers in them, because they fed a particular readership. So you would have sports cars and expensive things in *Penthouse*, cheap hardcore films or like soiled pants in the more downmarket one and in the middle, it would sort of crossover in between into sort of like massage parlours... when you think about it it's quite class based, isn't it?



MF: Yes, yes, yes.

CFT: The language in some of those magazines was sometimes quite shocking. There was one phrase in a magazine I did some work in *The Piccadilly*. So the whole 80 odd pages were framed up in three frames, a real eye-opener, at the end of one of the magazines and it said 'Does she stink?' and then there was like an open crotch shot. To me was just like so insulting and really what they were saying, I mean it was a double meaning obviously, but what they were saying was, 'Is she any good or is this one better, whichever one you decide we'll put here in the magazine next month.' But to see it, 'Does she stink?' it was just absolutely horrible, and it wasn't like the lowest of the lowest genre by any means.

MF: Maybe the opposite of Linguistic Hardcore then?

CFT: Maybe. That's the base kind of instinct they're publishing for their readership, tells you exactly how they feel about the girls.

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Cosey and myself had an interesting chat on the way to her house (before the Dictaphone was recording) about how much we both love swearing. We agreed that it was a treasured part of our own idiolects, culturally specific of course, Cosey is from Hull and I'm from Belfast.