

***The Starbucks thing hit me harder than I expected.*** *I've been brooding for days. On the face of it, it's inconsequential. It is certainly inconsequential in direct comparison to the "newsworthy" horrors we are used to. No one was shot. Nobody died.*

*It happened on an ordinary day in an ordinary place. But that's also the reason it stings: precisely because of that ordinariness. Show of hands: who's ever been to a Starbucks? It happened in Starbucks, with their overpriced faux-Italian drinks, to people like us, doing the things we do, waiting for a friend to arrive before ordering.*

*Keen-eared Professor Iyer notes that playing overhead during the arrest was Dizzy Gillespie's Salt Peanuts. A compact contemporary history of public space could be written with the title "Black Music, Yes! Black People, No!"*

*We are not safe even in the most banal place. We are not equal even in the most common circumstances. We are always five minutes away from having our lives upended. Racism is not about actively doing stuff to you all the time—it's also about passively keeping you on tenterhooks. We are always one sour white away from having the cops arrive. And the cops! The cops are like a machine that can't stop once set in motion, what Fela called "zombie." When the cops arrive, the human aspect of the encounter is over.*

*This is why I always say you can't be a black flaneur. Flanerie is for whites. For blacks in white terrain, all spaces are charged. Cafes, restaurants, museums, shops. Your own front door. This is why we are compelled, instead, to practice psychogeography. We wander alert, and pay a heavy psychic toll for that vigilance. Can't relax, black.*

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#socialemergency**