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NEBULA

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Note on contributors

Samirah Alkassim

Samirah Alkassim is the Director of the Film Program in the Department of Performing & Visual Arts at the American University in Cairo. She is an experimental documentary filmmaker and is currently working on a documentary about Palestinian artists in Jordan, while developing a Multi-Media Center for the Royal Film Commission. She has published articles on experimental video in Egypt and Egyptian cinema. Samirah's contribution to Nebula 3.1 is a timely and rare piece of critical work, tracing the genealogy of experimental video in Cairo.

Mary Lyn Broe

Dr. Mary Lynn Broe is Professor in the College of Liberal Arts, Rochester Institute of Technology, where she has just completed a term as Chair for the Department of Language and Literature. She has taught at Grinnell College, holding the Louise Rosenfield Noun Chair (1986-2002), Binghamton University and the University of Notre Dame. Her books include *Protean Poetic: The Poetry of Sylvia Plath* (U of Missouri, 1981); *Women's Writing in Exile* (U of North Carolina, 1989); *Silence and Power: A Reevaluation of Djuna Barnes* (Southern Illinois U, 1991) and *Black Walking: Letters of Djuna Barnes to Emily Holmes Coleman, 1934-38* (Wagenbach, Berlin, 2002; Archinto, Milan, 2004 and forthcoming in English). She is working on a creative non-fiction memoir about keeping an Alzheimer's mother at home—*Sweeping up the Heart*. Among the courses she teaches is Maps, Spaces and Places, a look at literature through the lens of the new cartographies. A recent paper (EACLALS, Malta, 2005) was on the geographical imagination of Michael Ondaatje. She raises

Irish setters and trains them in agility work. Broe's contribution to Nebula is an "Xtreme Makeover for Academics" which attests to the awkwardness of the body both corporeal and metaphysical.

Grayson Cooke

Grayson Cooke holds an interdisciplinary PhD in the Humanities from Concordia University in Montreal. He is employed as a lecturer in Multimedia at CQU Bundaberg Campus. He has exhibited works of interactive art and photography in Australia, New Zealand and Canada, and has published in various journals including *Culture Machine*, *M/C Journal of Media and Culture*, and *Transformations*. Cooke captivates us with a first person narrative which reveals an acute critical eye and which explores concepts of the post human, post industrial and post modern ontology.

Kathy Hughes

Kathy Hughes received her B.A. in English/creative writing at Creighton University in Omaha, NE (2004). She is currently a first-year graduate student at Creighton. Kathy Hughes offers us a critical reading of Kathy Acker's *Blood and Guts in High School*, probing the uncomfortable subject of child sexual abuse.

Teresa Jones

Teresa Michael Jones received her PhD in English and Creative Writing (1997) and her masters (1993) from Georgia State University (U.S.).

She is currently acting as Assistant Professor at the University of West Georgia. She has acted as assistant editor for *Five Points: A Journal of Literature & Art* and has published previous works in *The Writers' Chronicle*, *Image: A Journal of the Arts & Religion* and *Thicket* (Alabama). Jones's short story is endearing, its characters are believable yet caricatures, allegorical and yet also literal. Exploring the cultural and political rift between third world and first, Jones's characters are at once attracted to and repulsed by each other, oscillating throughout a highly allusive narrative.

Nicole McNamara

Nicole McNamara is an undergraduate student at the University of Sydney (Australia). She is deeply interested in the written word, particularly in its relation to musical composition. In her contribution to *Nebula*, McNamara reveals the delicate sensibility of a developing poet who speaks almost unconsciously, of feelings, sensations, fears or traumas to which many are able to relate.

Nicolas Mansito III

Nicolas Mansito III is a Cuban-Colombian-American scholar, writer, and translator. He earned his B.A. in English from the University of Florida and his M.A. in English with a specialization in Creative Writing from the University of North Florida. He is currently working on his doctorate in Cuban Studies with a specialization in Creative Writing at Illinois State University. His work has appeared internationally in *The Arabesques Review* and is forthcoming in *The Rio Grande*

Review—both online and in print. Mansito's contribution comes in the form of a frank and much needed assessment of institutionalized scholarship, its failures and potential reparative procedures.

Guido Monte

Guido Monte is an Italian writer with a bent for the international. He has published several works and translations in Italian, including those published by Nuova Ipsa, Rubbettino and Ed. Della Battaglia. He currently teaches Latin and Italian literature. His most recent works have been featured in *Words Without Borders* and *Litterae*.

Maria Cristina Nisco

Maria Cristina Nisco is a PhD candidate at the Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale" (Italy). She is currently working on the black female body represented through literary as well as visual works. In previous research, Nisco has focused on the construction of identity in relation to the white creole woman and the black colonized man in the West Indies. She has also published an article entitled "Islands and Beyond: George Lamming's Theory of Postcolonial" in *Ecloga* the journal of the Dept. of English Studies at the University of Strathclyde, Scotland. Nisco introduces *Nebula* readers to the confronting and emotive work of African artists such as Saartjie Baartman and Ingrid Mwangi.

John Parras

Dr John Parras received his PhD in English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University in 1996. He was awarded the National Endowment for the Arts Literature Fellowship for fiction writing in 2004. His novel *Fire on Mount Maggiore* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2005) won the Peter Taylor Prize at the Knoxville Writer's Guild in 2004. Dr Parras has published creative and critical works too numerable to mention. His latest critical work "Literary Theory in the Composition Classroom," was published in the *Journal of Teaching Writing* (Fall 2005). While his latest creative work is forthcoming in *Painted Bride Quarterly* and *Sulphur River Review*. John contributes to *Nebula* 3.1 in the form of a critical analysis of the uses of form and structure in Joseph Conrad's most celebrated work, *Heart of Darkness*.

Rodney Sharkey

Rodney Sharkey is a professor of English Literature at Eastern Mediterranean University in Cyprus. His research interests are primarily in the work of Beckett and Joyce, and in Popular Culture Studies. He occasionally produces creative writing and was once Irish Young Playwright of the Year, but finds that theorizing for a living and writing fiction no longer mix. Sharkey shocks and horrifies us, as he has always intended to do, in a brilliant and highly relevant ficto-critical piece on the "uncomfortable" images and realities of cannibalism and postmodern culture.

Joshua W. Suddath

My name is Joshua W. Suddath. I was born in a small town in Tennessee in 1981. After graduating from high school in 1999, I enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps, eventually serving for four years and six months in a variety of locales including Okinawa, Japan; Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; Iraq; Thailand, and Albania, among others. Since soon after my discharge I have enrolled East Tennessee State University, where I am currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in History. This is the first piece of writing I have ever submitted for publication. I wrote most of it while traveling around the United States on a (quite) extended road trip. Suddath's unnamed U.S. Marine Corps naval officer is as delicate as the title of this piece, revealing the wounds of the post 9/11 America and those who suffer on behalf of an entire nation and a political agenda.

Michael Angelo Tata

Michael Angelo Tata received his M.A. in Creative Writing/Poetry from Temple University, his M.A. in Liberal Studies from the New School for Social Research, and his Ph.D. in English Literature through the CUNY Graduate Center. His poetry and criticism have appeared in the journals *LinQ*, *Nebula*, *M/C*, *Ugly Couch*, *Lit*, *Lungfull*, *eye: rhyme*, *kenning*, *Bad Subjects*, *Found Object*, *Rhizomes* and *to the quick*, as well as the Critical Studies compilation *From Virgin Land to Disney World: Nature and Its Discontents in the USA of Yesterday and Today* (Editions Rodopi, 2001) and the Madonna Studies anthology *Madonna's Drowned Worlds: New Approaches to Her Cultural Transformations* (Ashgate UK, 2004). His first chapbook of poems, *The Multiplication of Joy into*

Integers, won Blue Light Press' 2003 poetry prize. His poetry has also appeared in the collections *This New Breed: Bad Boys, Gents and Barbarians 2* (Windstorm, 2004) and *Bordered Sexualities* (San Diego State, 2006). Michael Angelo Tata's second contribution to Nebula is as intriguing, well articulated and burdensomely researched as the first. In tune with Cooke's contribution on the cyborg, Tata takes a less introspective look at the concept as it appears in *Warholian Machinehood*.

Jesse Zonavich

In December of 2005, Jesse Zonavich graduated from Central Connecticut State University with a B.A. in History and a minor in Biology. He is shortly due to begin his Masters program in Historic Preservation at the University of Vermont. Zonavich became deeply interested in the lack of attention devoted to the multifaceted drug problem affecting Afghanistan, during his undergraduate studies. In his remarkable contribution to *Nebula*, Zonavich looks at the ethical and economical crises facing a country so highly reliant on its poppy plantations.

Xtreme Makeover For Academics

By Mary Lynn Broe

Check out the pose:

Arms out, gentled, supplicant

Repositioned (y)ears

|tilting toward the tenure transition

Stronger, less defiant chin

softened by battles fought, but
not worth it.

Liposuctioned venom

Those love handles of the body vindictive.

Souls enlarged

Brows lifted

Smiles, for once, connected.

A personal trainer works the lumpen new compassion

Wardrobe experts shop for a bright cloak of generosity

This is the kind of cosmetic makeover only those

Wealthy of spirit can afford.

O, sweet danse of laser, knife and scalpel

Slice into all that benign inhumanity.

“This is my Body; Take this all of you and have some fun with it!” Reading *Rock DJ*.

By Rodney Sharkey



Right, it's Robbie Day! Where's that video?

I pull it from the shelf and head down to the basement where my impending class of young and lethargic minds text their way towards the morning's first coffee break. Yesterday I tried to explain to them how all of their thinking was either/or, and how they needed to try and think outside of dualisms such as bad/good black/white true/false and so on. To this end I instructed them to read Levi-Strauss on nature/culture and his treatment of the raw and the cooked as part of a sign system and I tried to show them how this was binary thinking. I also gave them “Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences;” Derrida's alteration to Levi- Strauss's shapely little machine, in which Derrida suggests “bricolage” as a way to break free from binary thinking. I compared and contrasted these writers' approach to nature and culture, and the students slept. Well, they didn't all sleep; the disinterested dozed on semi-conscious auto-pilot and the interested, struggled. They wanted to know, they wanted to understand, but the two French intellectuals challenged assumptions buried so deeply in the students' belief system that for the latter to grasp the ideas of the former meant questioning everything they ever took for granted. That's why I've got Robbie Williams under my arm; there are more ways than one to skin a cat, or even a likeable little English lad from Stoke.

For those who have never seen the *Rock DJ* video, a brief summary. Whereas once music video was a

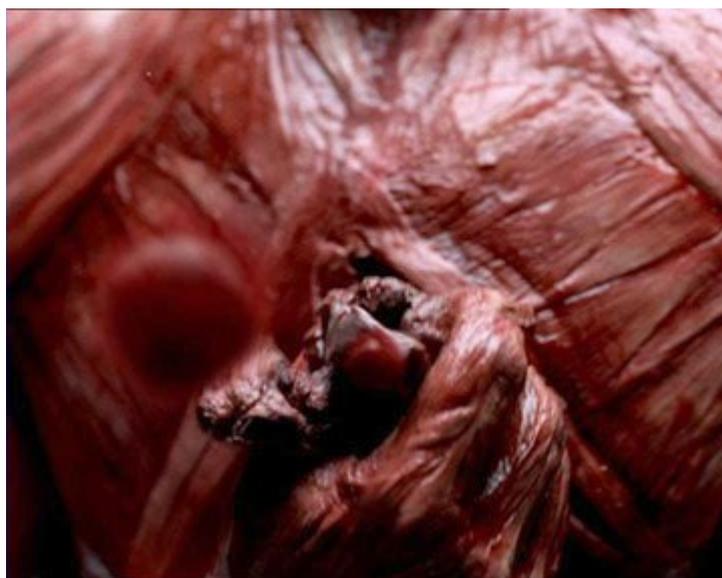
narrative ordeal, precipitated by Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, it is now pretty much an exercise in eroticized bodies. That women shake their booty by the truck load as the new wave of hip-hop rakes in the Benjamins. The song *Rock DJ* appeared as an exemplar of mainstream irrelevant fodder. Even Williams triumphantly proclaimed the lyrics "a load of nonsense about nothing" when receiving a Brit Award for "Single of the Year" in 2001. But as a mainstream pop video, *Rock DJ* is different because it first satirizes the allure of the buffed male body, and then deconstructs it as flesh gives way to organs and bones. This literal skin strip takes place as Robbie Williams dances in what may be referred to as a post-modern roller disco. He is ignored by aloof young women and a female DJ, all of whom only begin to pay attention when he peels off his skin and throws them his flesh.



The video concludes with the nubile women chewing on Robbie right down to his bony little "ego"-skeleton, while the DJ descends from her box to dance with this digital version of Boney Marone.



The reason I am carrying the video down to class is that I have a suspicion it might constitute alternative food for thought. Of course I have this suspicion about everything that is banned. In any case, I will show it to my class for two reasons: to help illustrate the nature/culture paradigm at the root of the proposed critical exercise, and to contextualize notions of cannibalism in order to bear witness to the trace of Marx. In effect, can a pop promo with a bit of bite in it make us more wary about intellectual masturbation such as when academics blithely announce that nature is all culture? Could it remind us, as Michael Stipe once did (a long time ago) that when we drift off to sleep, we still have our teeth in our mouth? Oh, and there is a third reason. I'm also using the video to provoke the students to read some books, to watch some decent films, to listen to some decent music, to consider some quality painters, and generally think about the politics of living. I've got fifty minutes.



I run the video and the students watch it. I watch them. Although it makes many of them uncomfortable, only the most anally retentive and, frankly, retarded of them, are horrified. They definitely wince when some internal organ is whipped out squirming, and they laugh uproariously when the Ford Catalogue on roller-skates start to scoff him with gusto.

And, predictably, before we can address the visuals, there has to be some nudge nudge analysis about the double entendres:

“Sir, when Robbie says that the DJ is keeping him ‘up all night’ does he mean that she’s making him horny?”

“Yes, I think that’s implied.”

“Sir, that’s why he says ‘I don’t wanna rock’. He means a rock in his trousers.”

“Yes, that’s one meaning but it could also be a reference to cocaine. A rock of cocaine would keep you, in directly inverse proportions to your penis, up all night, which might be why he asks Ground Control can it ‘hear’ him, because he’s high on drugs. This by the way is a series of references that Williams has quarried from Major Tom, - David Bowie’s *Space Oddity* character - who turns up in *Ashes to Ashes* over twenty years later having progressed from being a pot smoker to a junkie. As always, be careful out there kids.”

“Who’s David Bowie?”

“One of the most intelligent musicians in the history of popular music. Try listening to anything between 1967 and 1980.” I write album titles on the blackboard but there is a conspicuous absence of scribbling. It’s too early yet even for the committed to start contemplating study.

“Sir, when he sings ‘Babylon’s back in business’, what’s Babylon?”

“An ancient, magnificent city in Mesopotamia famed for its debauchery and decadence. Its ruins are said to lie about 50 miles from Baghdad, which is very interesting. It is linked in the mythic consciousness to the tower of Babel.”

“Babel?”

“Ancient peoples tried to build a tower that would rise to Heaven but when God saw what they were at, he waved his magic wand and they could no longer communicate with each other because they now spoke in different tongues; this is the mythic explanation of diverse languages.”

“Aahh.”

“Now, do you see how we have already identified three different meanings to the lyrics; sex and drugs and space travel? It could also be about simple love of the music the DJ is playing and the need to dance to it. This shows that any one language, never mind multiple languages, has many meanings which we silence in order to make one of its meanings function. How is this possible, four meanings coexisting in the same lines?”

“Metaphor” they drone in monotone unison.

“Exactly. And metaphor works by one meaning substituting for a first meaning but retaining the primary meaning in order to allow for the secondary meaning to signify, which itself can be replaced by another metaphor, retaining associations of the secondary meaning. So we have a chain of language substituting centres for centres. How do we stop this chain, albeit artificially?”

More monotones, “transcendent signifiers”.

“Such as?”

“God. . . . Truth. Origin.”

The droning response is designed to signal that they know the answer because I have repeated it to them mantra-like for a month, which means that they don’t necessarily understand it.

“Any sign of God in this video?”

Momentary pause, shaking of heads, “No”.

At this stage I produce a nice A4 print of the *Tower of Babel* by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, painted in 1563, and scribble details about when and where it came from on the board.

Now *I* do a double take. I expect to have a hum-dinging debate about the morality of cannibalism, but I don't expect them to blank its presence completely.

“OK, Freud is here! In the classroom. Repressed desires are in the air. This video quite clearly features cannibalism and you're denying it! Could this be because, unconsciously, we desire to eat people? Freud's return of the repressed, the desire for the prohibited? You're well versed in Freud, after all.”

Unexplained truism Number 1: Arts students love Freud.

“No way,” they say. “It's funny, that's all. It's not really cannibalism. It's just a bit of fun.”

“Fun? Why is the image of a young man being devoured by attractive women appealing to you, both male and female alike? I propose that there is a repressed, collective desire here, perhaps a Jungian archetype revealing an innate cannibalistic urge and therefore repressed?”

“It's just *funny!*”

“Ah, but isn't the laugh the release of the pressure cooker environment controlling the prohibited memory?”

“No way, there's nothing funny about cannibalism, it's disgusting.”

“Why?”

“Because human beings have souls. You can't eat people.”

So much for any real conviction that 'God' is just a transcendent linguistic signifier.

“So you wouldn't eat a person?”

“No way!”

“But what if you had to, to stay alive, like the Rugby team, in 1972, up in the Andes; these people didn't want to but they did.”

“Yeah, a rugby team! Not really surprising.”

“If you were forced to eat someone else to survive, would you?”

At this point, a few say they would, a few say they would not, and a few say they wouldn't know unless

they were in that position, and then go back to studying their finger nails. So I discourse about tradition and the Fore tribe in New Guinea and about how the elder is partially eaten to retain his knowledge. I point out to the students that they wouldn't eat another person as a mark of respect, and that the Fore ate each other as a mark of respect, and that these differences are essentially cultural, not natural; both tribes do what they believe is right because of their cultural conditioning.

“They do it for the same reason that you don't do it, respect, and perhaps it's better than being buried like Elvis, out in the back garden!”

At this juncture one of the traditionally quiet students speaks up firmly and with conviction.

“Sir, you are completely wrong, it's unnatural, and people who do such a thing, like that German man recently on the news, they get punished.”

“Issei Sagawa, he didn't get punished, did he? He ate his Dutch girlfriend in Paris in 1981, got extradited back to Japan, got off, and had a hugely successful career as a Japanese national celebrity. The Rolling Stones even wrote a song about him! How is that punishment?”

She's irate. “Well, then punished in the afterlife.” “By God?” I enquire.

“Precisely” they say. She is now supported. “What do you do on Sunday?”

A disturbing number of them go to mass.

“And do you not have a nibble on the son of God every Sunday?”

Most have no idea what I am suggesting but one generally bright spark observes “but that's figurative. It's a metaphor.”

“No actually, it's a central tenet of your Roman Catholic faith, trans-substantiation, when the priest does the dingalingaling thing, he has the power, invested in him from on high to turn the wafer, the thing that continues to taste suspiciously like a wafer, into the body and soul and blood, and *ouns*, of Jesus Christ. It is not then a metaphor but a literal transformation; indeed it flies in the face of the metaphoricity of damn well everything else. That's why it's supposed to be a miracle.”

“NO WAY!”

“Yes way.”

And now, thankfully, it begins to come together. One of them in her own informal way is running the cognitive software. Her eyes light up as she says “so the girls eating Robbie is quite like Christians eating

Jesus!”

“Yep, this is my body, take this all of you and eat it. The video is a metaphor for Christian divine regeneration, death and resurrection. Robbie is scorned while human,

he is outcast despite his positive demeanour and his best efforts, so he sacrifices himself and is reborn and in return the women eat him. He is the new messiah of the twenty-first century.”

At this point one habitually astute cynic says “but how do you know that the wafer just tastes like wafer, it could taste like a person? You’d need to know what a person tasted like to know that a wafer doesn’t taste like a person.”

Eyes arch around the room, a judiciously placed question; they’re good at this. Does he know what people taste like? Throw it in there quickly and we might catch him off guard.

“Well, I did eat a bit of my finger!” I hold up the mangled remains of the little finger on my left hand, thin, broken boned, emaciated, with clear circular rivulets of skin illustrating where it had been de- and then reattached. In truth, it was chewed upon by fifteen feet of spiked corrugated iron when I misjudged the jump on a school mitch 25 years ago.

“What the hell did you do that for?”

“To see what it tasted like.” This a line I remember from urban myth, or fact? A school kid somewhere, propped up his leg on a stool, packed it around with cushions, placed the house phone nearby on the table, shot himself in the thigh and then rang an ambulance. When asked why he had mutilated himself thus, his response; to see what it felt like.

They stare at me in disbelief, and then start laughing, heartily. Necessary tactics, keep them entertained, do a bit of stand up, greater chance that they’ll listen and follow the argument.

“OK, talk to me about Robbie’s body in the video.” “Well fit” giggle a gaggle of girls.

“Very tasty?” I offer.

“Very tasty” they concur, oblivious to the semantics. “Been in the gym hasn’t he?” “He’s got good tattoos” a chap with Arabic script on his forearm interjects.

“Tell me about the tattoos.”

“He’s got that design on his shoulder, like the New Zealand Rugby team, you know, that New Zealand tribe that have the tattoos on their face.”

“Yes, the Maori.” “Did you know that it is alleged by historical sources that the Maori once engaged in cannibalism?”

“What are you suggesting? Does Robbie Williams know this? Is that why he got the tattoo?”

“The sign of a cannibal, perhaps?”

“But Robbie Williams is not a cannibal?”

“Perhaps not intentionally, but given that all art is intertextual and we’re caught up in a chain of meaning, oh yes he is! For a start he’s cannibalised myth and popular culture. I just showed you how he has reconfigured the Christ archetype to write himself into the myth as a new manifestation. He also cannibalizes popular culture. He said himself that the video is ‘just carnage pieced together from 80’s pap to make some 2000 pap’ but he didn’t say what pap. If I had time I’d show you two old 70’s films, *The Warriors* and *The Wanderers*, because this video has borrowed images from both, the gangs on roller skates and the clothes, so he’s mistaken about the decade, although the Eighties are there in the stage set which echoes the underground world from *Total Recall* with its giant fans and claustrophobic closeness. So both the archetypal, quasi-mythic religious signs and the popular culture references are rehashed as ostensibly new signs signifying the same thing; everything here is a reworking of the past. Just as the trace of ancient human sacrifice and possible cannibalism was transformed in the Roman Catholic ritual into transubstantiation, so too we have this post-modern cultural cannibalism where Robbie Williams is a new God of rejuvenated entertainment signs, including religion. In effect we have religion as popular entertainment. And when you think about it, where - to give you just one example - would the old biddies get their kicks if there were not half a dozen novenas to attend of a morning? Whether it is bingo or the boy from Bethlehem, at one point or another it becomes a form of entertainment. And, let me say at this point that we have reached this juncture in our debate through using bricolage, the conjunction of apparently unrelated details. You remember? The idea I was trying to explain to you yesterday. Derrida’s way to try to think outside of binary oppositions. We’ve just moved from Breughel to a boy band icon to cannibalism. Are you getting it?”

They begin to nod in unison. Things are starting to connect and then suddenly the little God lover is back on her feet, running interference.

“But all this is metaphoric cannibalism. It’s not real cannibalism. It’s not the idea with blood in it.”

“Ok” I say, happy to concede, “what then is real cannibalism?”

“Eating people” she asserts with firm conviction.

“Like fellatio or cunnilingus?”

“NOOOOO” rings out as a collective howl of pseudo-scandalized objection from around the room, but Mother Teresa stands firm: “Swallowing parts of them.” “Sperm, blood loss from a period, placenta, these are parts of people that are swallowed.” Some are now doubled over in what might be mirthful convulsions, others are glaring at me, and some are so red they may yet explode.

Yet she will not give up without a fight: “Ok ok, chewing on them, with your teeth.”

“Love bites?”

She pauses, jaw clenched in concentration until . . . “OK, causing them pain by eating their flesh.”

“Thank you” I holler loudly and applaud her. “PAIN. Causing them pain, that’s it, isn’t it? The pain factor. The perceived possibility of pain to either party is the primary working definition of cannibalism. Truth is, when it comes to cannibalism you put the mockers on it because it might involve having to think of pain, or suffering, or dying. That’s why you won’t even recognize cannibalism as a hypothetical starvation antidote, because contemplating starvation involves contemplating pain, and possibly death. Like Terry Eagleton says, students today are all for analysis of the eroticised body, but not the starving body.

“Did you really try to eat your finger, sir?”

“No, Andrew, I didn’t, can you keep up with the direction we’re taking, please. I suggest to you all that we are afraid of cannibalism, like starvation, because it involves pain and so both are displaced, forgotten about, ignored. There’s a great black hole at the centre of our modern urban experience about starvation, pain, suffering and consequent death.”

“Are you saying that Africans should practice cannibalism to avoid starvation?”

“Absolutely not, because that’s what colonial powers said they were doing 100 years ago, and because Africans and other tribal societies have been previously misrepresented in such a way it’s no longer possible to talk openly about cannibalism because it’s now framed in the sign system of western imperial morality. This is why I said ‘allegedly’ in relation to Maori cannibalism because it may not have ever been so. The history of western civilization is also a history in which organized religion frames the pagan, and distinguishes itself as superior through moral criteria, chief among which is this problematic idea that savages will devour their own children. Meanwhile, we sit around and discourse on the eroticized body because we have fast become pampered, self-indulgent neo-bourgeois twats.”

“No we have not.”

“Eagleton says you have.”

“Well, he’s wrong.”

“Disprove him then.” “Ok, where?”

“After Theory.” I scribble the publication details on the board.

“We’ll read it.”

“For next week?”

“Ok.”

“The whole book?”

“OK.”

And we’re off on the “catch me if you can and I’ll read it” routine.

“Further in relation to that point I was making, you don’t have to go so far from home to find comment on the imperialist attitude to the self-consuming savages. You know a famous Irish author once suggested that hungry Irish people should eat their children.”

“Well, he was a sicko.”

“Actually he was an influential member of the clergy!”

“Well he obviously had mental problems.”

“He believed all Irish people, including himself, had mental problems. He referred to Ireland as the world’s largest open-air mental asylum and he donated a sizable proportion of his last will and testament to the building of a mental hospital right here in Dublin, name of Saint Patrick’s. Can you identify the author?”

“Samuel Beckett?”

“No, but interestingly there is a Beckett ward in Saint Patrick’s, which, given his novels, particularly *Murphy*, is a delectable irony when you consider that they probably just named all of the wards after famous Irish writers. You should read *Murphy*, it’s a riot, in fact if you read it and don’t find it funny, I’ll go and get a job in an asylum, sorry, a psychiatric institute. The lunatics have erased the asylum.”

I scribble the publication details of *Murphy* on the board and continue talking: “The author in question is Jonathan Swift and he wrote *A Modest Proposal* about how the English were devouring the Irish, metaphorically of course, so the Irish might as well eat their children too, metaphorically of course.”

“So it’s a metaphor?”

“Yes a delicious metaphor, one that is so powerful you can taste it.”

“Can you taste a metaphor sir?”

“The very word ‘taste’ is a metaphor for cultural choices determined by economic privilege, hence ‘you’ve got good taste’ because you’ve got a horrendously expensive handbag, you see? Which is why Peter Greenaway’s *The Cook, the thief, his wife and her lover* is so finally, well, wanky.

“What’s that?”

“Wanky? Or the film?”

“The film.”

“Ah, you don’t want to see it.”

“Why not?”

“Because it’s by this director who thinks he’s the Renaissance personified, civilization personified actually, and he’s got this movie where the bad guys are evil, utterly amoral, for no other apparent reason than that they are working class and concomitantly boorish, and they like to scoff good food, really meat in teeth and farting and belching, almost as good visually as Joyce’s description of lunch in the Ormond hotel is textually. What I mean by that is that Greenaway does on film what Joyce does in words, but the difference with Greenaway is that he presents cannibalism as the repressed desire of the uncultivated swine, whereas Bloom alludes to it as our mythical inheritance, neither bad nor good, simply there. Ultimately Greenaway appears to be suggesting that we are in stages of development and the poor are the least developed and therefore culturally inferior. After all, in the film the forefather of the celebrity chef offers up cooked reality in the form of the lover who has been murdered and the ruffians are really torn about whether to eat him or not, until finally repulsed by their own actions, cannibalism is averted. In the end, Greenaway can’t separate the metaphors in ‘taste’ because he probably believes that the concept of cultured taste is genuine. In Greenaway’s world th -”

“They try to eat a cooked man?”

“Yep.”

“In the film?”

“Yep.”

“What’s it called again?”

I scribble details on the board, and add the “Lystragonians” chapter from *Ulysses* as a point of linguistic comparison.

“But sir, can’t you taste food as a literal thing, your sense of taste, and have tastes in music, literature, even tastes in food?”

“Good question. My point is this. In reality, and insofar as ‘reality’ is language, language is a chain of signs, metaphor for metaphor. Put it this way. When you eat food and someone asks you how it tastes you undertake a metaphoric substitution where language replaces or stands in for the eating experience. It was ‘delicious’ or it ‘tasted like Heaven.’ Wine is the best example. Taste the wine, how does it taste? Like chocolate and strawberries, and cherries, and barnyard floor, or whatever. Now there’s a clever film called *Sideways* in which the description of the wine becomes a description of the people describing the wine. They are defined by their drinking habits. The drinking is replaced by the description, and the description becomes not only of the drinking but of the drinker. This shows that the metaphoricity of language is potentially very powerful, and that language can replicate both subtle and overwhelming experiences in words. So when Swift writes that Irish people should eat their kids, and Peter O’Toole reads it publicly to a lot of rich Irish people at a charity fund-raiser to save a theatre, and everyone in attendance is outraged, the metaphoricity of language comes close to reproducing the shock of the act of cannibalism, and by definition the shock of the act of exploitation which produces the cannibal motif. After all, Swift was satirizing those blind to the poverty of their unpaid labourers. The politics of starvation disturbs the comfortable and forces them to focus on the existence of starvation, in a theatre where precisely this type of challenging confrontation is supposed to take place! Like John Lennon said to the rich seats ‘don’t applaud, shake your jewellery’ meaning ‘what the hell are you doing here anyway?’ Now, at the same time language might be a series of metaphors standing in for experience but that doesn’t stop bodies starving and people dying, and we shouldn’t hide from it in language, or in art. We should confront it like Nick Cave.”

“Who’s he?”

“The most confrontational popular musician of the age. Songs about the electric chair, about starvation, and murder. I believe that one criterion for art is that it should bite your fucking head off. Listen to *No More Shall We Part*. Cave sings about his piano with “all its teeth bared,” and there is the suggestion throughout the songs that the narrator, the speaking persona, has murdered his wife. In fact, perhaps he ate her?”

They take down the details about the album quickly; they’re always keen for a bit of music.

“The difference between someone like Nick Cave and Robbie Williams couldn’t be more acute. I suggest to you that Robbie Williams is popular culture cannibalizing cannibalism for entertainment, because there is no real pain or gore, or sickness in it. There isn’t any shock value beyond a shocking image in

an unexpected medium which is quickly neutralized by all the other signs which define the medium as unobtrusive. “But we’re unshockable now in any case” one of the sharp ones announces, “that’s the effect of post-modernism”.

“Oh no you’re not.”

I write the details for Chuck Palahniuk’s *Haunted* on the board. I tell them to hold their breath and I recount the plot of “Guts” in which the narrator describes an incident where he masturbates while sitting on the water filter in a swimming pool because it stimulates his anus. However, the suction causes his rectum and lower intestines to prolapse and become entangled in the filter so that he has to eat through his own intestines in order to avoid drowning. Somewhere around the prolapsing most of them exhale in horror, but some persevere as far as the chewing and then gasp and splutter their disgust all over their neighbours.

“So are you shocked, or are you really impassive post-modern casualties?”

My in-house Torquemada has had enough: “But all this, your story, cannibalism, it’s against nature, you appal me, I think you do this to us on purpose. It’s unnatural, you’re unnatural.”

With that, she ups sticks and leaves. In her wake I attempt to nail the hour.

“OK, let’s address this nature business. What’s natural?”

“Beauty.”

“Plastic surgery, next?”

“Inner beauty?”

“Oh for fuck’s sake, what else?”

“Nature, that’s natural inn’it?”

“Well, not really, the world is now littered with genetically modified crops and a whole host of simulated environments. Monsanto, the corporate devil incarnate, are trying to patent the pig, I kid you not, and the metaphoric capacity of legal language may allow them to eventually own the pink lads.” I scribble details of the GreenPeace web site so they can go and see details of Monsanto’s project for themselves.

“Besides, Darwin proved that nature isn’t fixed, it changes in order to survive, nature is not an inviolable rule, its fluid, aspects of it may last millennia but it changes. Your insistence that ‘nature’ has an inbuilt prohibition that protects you from the fact that cannibalism is relative doesn’t necessarily stand up to scrutiny. I think it’s more a case of being shielded from the realities of slaughter.

“What do you mean?”

“Who likes steak?”

Many do.

“I had a colleague once who had a panic attack, fainted, and had to be hospitalized because she went for a side street walk during Bayram in Istanbul and happened to see a sheep get its throat cut. If I slaughtered a cow in front of you, skinned it, fried it up quickly, and gave it to you to munch on, might you be repulsed?”

“Maybe?”

“So, you accept that part of the revulsion to cannibalism is meat immediacy. It’s the unmediated immediacy of the act of slaughter, including human slaughter. Ultimately we’re hiding from pain, from slaughter, and from the reality of on-going widespread starvation.”

The bell rings.

“Sir, tell us a joke”.

“Why?”

“So we can resist having to think about pain, starvation and cannibalism!”

“OK then. Paddy Englishman, Paddy Scotsman and Paddy Irishman are stranded on a desert island where they are discovered by a local tribe. The local tribe stoke up a big pot and ask Paddy Englishman if he has any last request. He announces that he would like to drink tea while reading *The Times* so the tribe consult each other and then three of them jump into a canoe, paddle to England, pick up *The Times* and some Earl Grey tea and paddle back to the island. Upon arrival, they make the tea, give Paddy Englishman his paper and watch him as he sits back, sips, and reads. After what seems like a relatively civilized interlude, they pounce on him, cook him, eat him and use his skin to make a canoe. They turn to Paddy Scotsman. He announces that he wants a “bottle a’ whisky and me bagpipes.” Exasperated, a new trio paddle to Glasgow, go round to his house, pick up his pipes, stop off at an off-license and paddle back, wherewith Paddy Scotsman treats them to a blast of “Flower of Scotland” downs the bottle in one go and jumps into the pot; cooked, eaten, they use his skin to make a canoe. They turn on Paddy Irishman. He announces that he would like a pitchfork. The tribe are bemused. From amid the tools in one of their sacks, a tribesman produces a pitchfork and hands it to Paddy. Taking a deep breath he turns the prongs towards himself, repeatedly plunges them into his chest and declares

“You’re not makin’ a fuckin’ canoe out ‘a me!”

Some laugh; most mirror the tribe's reaction to Paddy's Pitchfork request.

I ask a laugher "what do you think of that?"

"Funny."

"Yes, a funny, tastefully tasteless response to imperialism."

They scuttle off towards tea and coffee and discussions about my sanity. As they leave I look at the black board with its things to read, see and listen too:

Breughel

Eagleton, *After Theory*

Beckett, *Murphy*

Swift, *A Modest Proposal*

Greenaway, *The Cook, the thief, his wife and her lover.*

Alexander Payne, *Sideways* "Lystragonians" from Joyce's *Ulysses* Nick Cave, *No More Shall we Part.*

Palahniuk, *Haunted*

Not bad for 50 minutes. I am acutely aware that some will read little or nothing, most will scan some of it and perhaps relish something, but a few, a minority, will devour the lot.

Job's a good 'un.

Image Credits.

Rock DJ featuring Robbie Williams is a Clear Post Production production. Dir. Vaughan Arnell. Based on an original idea by Godman Production Company, 2001. See http://www.audiomotion.com/news_archive.html for full details.

The images utilized in this essay are available at www.clipland.com and the full video for “Rock DJ” is available at www.robbiewilliams.com,

The *Tower of Babel* (1563) and other works by Pieter Bruegel the Elder can be viewed at www.artnet.com

Human - 1 / Cyborg - 0: A Personal History of a Human- Machine Relation.

By Grayson Cooke

In 1995, when I began my doctoral studies on what I then called ‘cyborg theory’, it seemed as if I had found a new ‘outcast’ to champion. The shifting border and contamination between what I referred to as ‘humanity’ and ‘technology’, seemed like a suitably fresh and adventurous border-crossing for the skirmish I was planning. In the manner of all good budding academics, I had been searching for, and thought I had found, my ‘area of specialization’, my ‘object of study’, the cultural figure or character I was going to rescue from the margins of academic and cultural discourse. The cyborg. Perhaps here I could ‘make my mark’. Here I would take my stand.

I also knew that this object of study was simultaneously something out there - in the world, in discourse, in culture - as well as in here, within me, my own becoming-cyborg, the marks of my pre-occupation with technology. It appeared that I was already marked, and this in some way seemed only fair; why be tricked into thinking your studies don’t relate to your self? What foolishness that would be; of course I was a cyborg, it was too late to turn back and I didn’t want to anyway, I had already seen what Terence McKenna so baldly describes as “the wiring under the board” (McKenna).

It was a heady time. Cyberpunk was well into its reign as the subculture *du jour*; I had spent the previous few years in Wellington, New Zealand, going to warehouse parties, bathing in, and contributing to, the noise of heavy guitars, throbbing bass and trash-can drums. Bands like *Laibach* and *Einstuerzende Neubauten* had left the indelible imprint of European techno-nihilism in me. A visiting scholar to Victoria University of Wellington, Timothy Luke, had earlier introduced me to the work of Bruno Latour and Deleuze & Guattari, who together presented a worldview in which humans and machines co-existed in a networked symbiosis of meshing limbs and gears; a cyborg theory for a cyborg world. At numerous gigs around Wellington I played my drums and, under the lights, in the midst of sound, in the middle of rhythm, always in between one time or another, I theorized my relation to the drums, my becoming-rhythm, the abstract-machine of player, stick and skin, my self as purely a conduit for other phyla.

In popular culture, the cyborg frequently appeared as the much-maligned figure of ‘technology out of control’, the offspring of some Promethean delvings into the unknowable, or some Faustian bargain with the devil in the machine. Like many others, I had basked in the apocalyptic musings of Japanese filmmaker Shinya Tsukamoto in the cult classics *Tetsuo: Iron Man* (1989) and *Tetsuo II: Body Hammer* (1992). Metal shards projected through bulging flesh, the grimy muzzles of weapons emerged from bloodied wrists. I watched, fascinated and enthralled, as the cyborg became a mechanism through which cultural attitudes to and fears of technology were expressed, romanticized and purified, frequently being projected onto scapegoat figures of a dubious rhetorical status. *Robocop* (1987), *The Terminator* (1984) *Terminator II* (1991), and more prosaically but of equal importance, *Cherry 2000* (1987); a horde of shiny figures erupted across our screens, both feeding and allaying concerns about the increasing technologization of everyday life.

The predominant attitude among academic theorists of the time was that the figure of the cyborg heralded a grand new era of emancipatory and transgressive posthuman subjectivity. A renegade in the halls of subjective power, the cyborg was touted as a border-crossing figure, a new form of outcast needing to be brought in from the cold – Donna Haraway, N. Katherine Hayles and others put forth the rallying cry to take note of the cyborgs all around us, and within us. The Extropians and the Children of Mind were reveling in their newfound status as unlikely seers of an uploaded future, a stark or glorious future (depending on how you chose to look at it) in which human beings left behind the ‘meat’ and uploaded their brains to live in the miasmas of the Net. I remember the calculated cool of these Extropian meat-haters, raised on an ascetic diet of William Gibson and Marvin Minsky; the debonair abandon with which they shucked off all that the rest of the human race held so dear; their bodies, their flesh; salt, sweat, scent. How little did they hold these fundamentals of existence, that they could so blithely, and with such futurological certainty, speak of a time to come when bodies would be ‘immaterial’ – that is to say, when bodies as physical things would be both irrelevant, and ‘virtual’ (in the pop-culture understanding of the word at least), re-fantasized on the other side of the cyberspatial divide, brighter, brainier and (*quelle surprise*) with bigger muscles and dicks.

The cyborg was touted for some years as the ideal figure around which many of these transgressive and posthuman figures could crystallize. With the advent of what has popularly been referred to as ‘virtual reality’, ‘virtual’ communication and the internet, the cyborg as a hybrid of human and machine seemed the perfect ‘mechanism’ through which the array of technologically-mediated subjectivities could be theorized and thus ‘actualized’. The cyborg became some kind of saviour from the strictures of identity and identity politics; fluid, changing, malleable identities fast became the principle conduits of exchange in ‘virtual’ realms.

After a few years in this mode of study, I put my studies on hold to pursue experience in the IT and Web industry. The debate was still going strong. The process of bringing cyborg studies to the fore of cultural studies was well under way; theorists from many disciplines and inter-disciplines were finding the cyborg a useful figure through which to describe the hybrids appearing almost daily in our magazines, newspapers, screens, bodies and lives. Bruno Latour’s *We Have Never Been Modern*, a highly important text of its time, begins with an account of the profusion of hybrid subjectivities and forms encountered during a simple read of a daily newspaper:

On page eight, there is a story about computers and chips controlled by the Japanese; on page nine, about the right to keep frozen embryos; on page ten, about a forest burning, its columns of smoke carrying off rare species that some naturalists would like to protect; on page eleven, there are whales wearing collars fitted with radio tracking devices; also on page eleven, there is a slag heap in northern France, a symbol of the exploitation of workers, that has just been classified as an ecological preserve because of the rare flora it has been fostering! (2)

Like Latour, I too saw hybrids everywhere. The medical industry, the biotechnology industry, the pharmaceutical industry, the beauty industry, the fashion industry, the computer industry; all these industries and many others proliferated what I saw as cyborgs and forms of hybrid being at an astounding rate. The recognition that ‘we are all cyborgs’ became my catch-cry, my way of showing that ‘humanity’ and ‘technology’ were never as simple and monolithic as the larger commercial and media powers would have us believe. The recognition that humankind has always lived in relationships of reciprocity with technologies and machines of many sorts became the founding understanding for my emerging ‘cyborg theory’, because it allowed me to in some way work around the dominant ideology of the ‘human’ and all that this concept has been used for. Indeed, the cyborg seemed to promise the end of the human, the apocalypse of the human, and many scholars took this promise at face value and began to theorize a ‘posthuman’ world.

A small problem soon arose: Now that we are all ‘cyborgs’; now that the ‘human’ has been so elegantly gifted a postmodern end, what does it even mean to be a cyborg? What does it mean to use that term to encapsulate all that we are, to have found something we can all be, to attempt to install the cyborg in the place of the human? Has anti-totalizing thought not turned back on itself and re-totalized? Now that the cyborg has been brought to the fore, now that it appears it was always there, that ‘humans’ have always been ‘cyborgian’, to what use can we put this figure? And more importantly; in the interest of *who* or *what* does the ideology of ‘we are all cyborgs’ work?

It was at this point, this ontological impasse, that I put my studies on hold, and began working with a web and multimedia design company. I wanted to experience a life lived inches from the screen, as if I could somehow manifest the cyborg within, bring it to the fore, experience it at the core and on the surface of my being, and in so doing, gain some fundamental insight into what it might mean for us all to be cyborgs. Enough of this writing, enough of this reading! BECOME what you see around you, find out what it does to you, how you will be re-written, how your body and mind will be re-shaped. Live the code, touch the pixels; life at 72dpi. This was 1999, the height of the dotcom boom. In fact, it was almost past the height, the balloon was nigh to bursting, the fruit rank and overripe, the fantasies beginning to crumble. The VC funds were drying up, the big investors were cannily jumping ship and leaving the small investors to squabble over an eternally deferred return, which predominantly took the form of debt.

Friday the 14th of April, 2000, the day the tech bubble finally burst. Wall Street experienced its biggest ever fall in one day, ending a week in which the market lost over \$2 trillion in what was briefly known as ‘value’. Ironically, I have no memory of that day because I never experienced it. As Friday the 14th of April unfolded around the terrestrial world, I was in an aeroplane bound for New Zealand, adrift in that

characteristic no-time of 30,000 feet; I spanned 3 calendar days in this fashion, returning to earth on the 15th. I should, perhaps, have taken this as some kind of omen, for as it turned out, I wasn't a very good cyborg. I didn't like the other cyborgs I met and I didn't like doing business with them. Like a tin-man trapped in the lion's den, I didn't have the heart for it. I was also concerned for the state of my brain; I began to wonder whether my own obsession with technology, and with this vision of myself as the dutiful dotcomborg beetling away in my dotcomborg world, wasn't so much anything particularly deep, any cataclysmic ontic shift, but was more a matter of fashion, a matter of certain narratives of technological transcendence and nihilism. What was the nature of my love-affair with technology, and did this have anything to do with my desire to 'merge' with it in this fantasy of a civilized capitalist cyborgian future? To what degree did my obsession with technology and the technological lifestyle play into the hands of an ICT industry that functions on the exploitation of such obsessions? From this standpoint, my motives began to look a little suspect.

Returning to my chosen 'object of study' after a hiatus of a few years, I found the landscape much changed. Early in 2003, when conducting online searches on 'cyborg theory' or 'cyborg identity', I uncovered page after page of dead links; cyborg resource pages long dead and gone, Trans-Human and Extropian dot-orgs folded, having fallen out of favour with the digi-telligentsia. The Web had morphed irrevocably, leaving the tiled-backgrounded, bullet-pointed, Times-New-Roman-fonted, plain-text-edited 'Cyborg Links' page twitching pointlessly in the margins of the screen. My own 'Cyborg Pages', once hosted at the address provided for me by my university, poorly constructed using a text-editor and my feeble 640x480 monitor as testing environment, were but a scrap of archival webjunk simmering quietly somewhere in the cramped bowels of the WayBack Machine at Archive.org; images missing, links all broke, tables misaligned. The fantasy of uploading one's consciousness had been replaced by the far more 'egalitarian' lowest-common-denominator fantasy of downloading someone else's consciousness from Amazon.com, or having your own consciousness pre-determined there in stripped down, agent-led shopping-preference form. The cyborg, that gleaming herald of a posthuman world, had lost the sheen it once had, no longer a worthy vehicle for encapsulating the fears and fantasies of a culture enmeshed in a global technological becoming. Imagine; cyborgism *was* about capital after all! Let us not forget; *Terminator III* was a *bad movie*.

Thinking there may be hope yet, I boldly keyed in the URL for Cyborg.com. Surely by now, in this glorious age of futurological speculation and rampant cyber-squatting, some canny soul will have identified the powerful connotations of such an address and will be holding it in reserve, keeping its excess in check, awaiting the true coming of the defining hybrid of our time, the hybrid that will lay waste to our feeble hold on ontological and phenomenological distinctions once and for all. Surely the name, the proper name itself and its rightful property, will have been claimed by its rightful owner. Surely the progeny and progenitor of the postmodern, late-capital, bio/techno/logos will have stood up to be (bean-)counted?

As of this writing, Cyborg.com is the URL for a Human Resource management tool called eCyborg, an offshoot of Hewitt Associates, "a global HR and outsourcing consulting firm" (Hewitt Associates). I searched for some time, but could come up with no concrete explanation of what was particularly cyborgian about Hewitt's eCyborg application – even the page entitled 'Why eCyborg?' was strangely silent

on the question of ‘why e-Cyborg?’. “Hewitt’s eCyborg HRMS combines an unparalleled administrative foundation with the latest collaborative, Web-accessible technology. As a result, we enable our customers to leverage the power of their most important asset—their employees.” Ironically, this is probably the purest and most honest expression of the cyborg I went looking for in 1999; steeped in the platitudes of the private sector, humanistic at the same time as it is completely technical, networked, web-savvy, and thoroughly vapid. The cyborg is now so harmless, so lacking in revolutionary fervour or transgressive power, that ‘global’ HR companies have been able to harness it for its brand-potential. The cyborg is tech-talk, sign value. Let us be brutally honest: the cyborg is bullshit.

Like so many other deaths; like so many of the ‘ends’ and ‘posts’ critical theory has proliferated during the past hundred years, do we now have on our hands the death of the cyborg? What has happened to our glorious enquiry? It has gone from speculation to autopsy.

In some way, the cyborg was ‘killed’ by becoming so cleanly imbricated into the concept of the ‘human’. Humanity has an incredible ability to incorporate new forms of being into its matrix. So much that has at one time been considered beyond the pale, outside the realm of the human ‘true’, has now been incorporated into popular knowledge of what ‘we’ are; it has been brought inside, domesticated, domiciled, nomologized. And yet ‘we’ remain a ‘we’, and ‘we-ness’ remains unthreatened as the structure of consciousness and being, and thus of power. By now, it should almost go without saying that the concept of ‘humanity’ has been far too frequently co-opted by powers of various sorts with an interest in peddling and producing their own version of ‘the human’. Far too many deaths, far too much exclusion and far too much suffering has already been caused in the name of the ‘human’, which has frequently served to obscure or stand-in for a much more conservative vision of white, male, Western, Christian, heterosexual middle-class being; the ‘human’ was and continues to be a ‘supplement’ (a dangerous one at that) of and for a vast number of Western ideals.

Perhaps that has always been the point. The human as a semiotic category has always served as a normative device, a rhetorical sorting technology designed to weed out difference, marginality, and monstrosity and either ‘brand’ it with the stigma of the non-human or, like *Star Trek*’s Borg, incorporate it in order to grow. This act of substitution, whereby the external, technological object becomes internalized, purified and in so doing ‘humanized’, marked the death-knell of the cyborg as any kind of politically useful vehicle for examining the power relations of technoscience, biotechnology and global capital. Biotechnology, as the most public face of the becomings-cyborg all around us, is so far into its ascendancy that any serious questioning of the bio/techno relation is uneconomic, retrogressive and, frankly, passé. As Donna Haraway notes, “[t]he capacity for multisided, democratic criticism and vision that fundamentally shapes the way science is done hardly seems to be on the political agenda in the United States, much less in the R&D budget of universities, in-house government labs, or industries” (94). Cloning and stem-cell research may be currently considered contentious *avant-gardes* of technoscientific possibility, but they are contended on the basis of ethical and religious concerns, both of which have to do not with ‘what is human’ but ‘what is *right* for humans’.

The cyborg, as the ‘end’ of the human and as the possibility of the ‘post’-human, was always going to be subject to the same obsolescence as any theory of the end. Endings are notoriously dangerous things to theorize; after a brief turn under the forgetful academic sun, they generally come back to bite the theorist on the hand, admonish them for their naïveté, their bad faith, their failure to believe in the impossibility of endings. There are no ends, no endings. The imagination of the cyborg is part of the imagination of the end that apocalyptic fantasies are the primary example of. Endings are land-grabs, apparatuses of theoretical capture, and they are ‘virtual’, not ‘possible’, they find their truest manifestation in the expectation that fuels investment, not in arrival. Endings are not postulated in order that they will come and someone will have the glory of having predicted them; they are postulated in order that they never come, that they are always yet to come, that they come by not coming, and that someone is there to capitalize on this *revenant*, this apocalyptic *revenue*. Thus it is in this economy that the cyborg and the posthuman, quite simply, lack value, for they have come and gone. To announce the posthuman; to track its progress; to state its arrival, its distribution through the populace; this is at the same time to announce the absurdity of such a concept, for it is to obviate the necessity of any kind of investment which would then allow for a return.

I also suspect, as I mentioned, that the cyborg simply went out of fashion. Certain words, phrases and concepts exhibit immense staying power in culture; often they signify concepts that change, Proteus-like, as they need to. For example, the sign of ‘science’ has, since its inception, denoted widely differing fields, knowledges and understandings. In the medical field, it has encapsulated the Hippocratic theory of the humors, blood, phlegm, black and yellow bile, speculative substances which governed the ease and dis-ease of the body. It has encapsulated theories of the body as a clockwork mechanism, which in turn have echoed visions of the universe as a vast clockwork, stars attached to rotating spheres just waiting for the unlikely event of a comet to tear through their fragile bonds and expose them to the cruel light of an emerging Copernican logic. Understandings of ‘nature’, too, have at times encapsulated such mechanistic visions of the world, combining simultaneously the biological and the mechanical (Roach 60). More recently science, within the field of molecular biology, has come to represent the body, and thus humanity and life itself, as a function of the information-processing and inscriptions of DNA and RNA (Mackenzie 178-179). Science survives, it lives on, as does capital, as does humanity. The cyborg was never going to be such a stayer, always too speculative, never able to throw off its science-fiction cloak, always returning to paddle in the shallows of Hollywood blockbuster entertainment. In some way the cyborg was always going to be destroyed, re-incorporated into the human, rolled back into some future-retrogressive model. Temporally troubled, the cyborg lived in the past and the future at the same time; nostalgia for the cyborg, would be nostalgia for the future.

Having sketched out the realm of the cyborgian domain as involving such contested ‘things’ as human, machine, biology, technology, organic, non-organic, living and non-living, it should also be made quite clear that not all of the aforementioned oppositions describe the same ‘things’, or represent exactly the same enquiry. These pairs cannot always be mapped evenly onto each other, they delineate overlapping but also distinct fields, like so many Venn diagrams escaping each others’ borders. All that is technological does not contain all that is non-human, although the technological can also be considered non-human. All that is human does not contain all that is biological, although the practices and processes of technoscience

may represent a viewpoint in which the former is to be treated simply *as* the latter, that is, as biological *matter*. This same problematic also haunts any political or economic *use* of these things, whereby attention turns to what is at stake in their relation. The economic concerns of a for-profit biotechnology industry necessitate certain elisions of the physical boundaries understood to exist between things, as well as a legal apparatus to police what is done both with these things, and in the name of these things. Confusion reigns in the realm of the relations between such unruly things as human, machine, biology and technology.

Furthermore, this confusion makes it difficult to even speak of these things. How can we speak of a cyborg as a hybrid of human and machine when it is not clear that humanity is not already part machine, or in part technical? How can the cyborg cross the human out at the same time as it relies on the human for its own formulation? How can we speak of what is biological when the writing machine of Intellectual Property and patent laws allow for the patenting of living entities or elements as ‘inventions’, and thus technologies? Our language, in such an enquiry as this, is always delimited by language itself, cannot entirely break free of the way in which language returns us, always, to domains already inscribed in prepared forms and modes of thought. Thinking a radical exteriority to language, an outside of thought or the concept, then, is a thought that has much the same difficulty as thinking a radical destabilization of the human and the machine; there is an aporia of thought here, just as there is an aporia of being, and the cyborg all too easily slips or even dives into this abyss. Indeed, it is perhaps this fundamental unnameability or constant disappearance that has contributed also to the cyborg’s demise. The cyborg is, despite its name, the being that has no name, the being that is not a being, that which *is* by being *not*, or *not yet*, or even *never*. So maybe the cyborg was killed before it even began to live; perhaps we are not at the end at all, perhaps we can begin again on this enquiry, indeed perhaps we *must* begin again; perhaps we have never been cyborgs, we have always been human, and we always *will* be human.

While I would argue that the cyborg as a *term* has had its day, as a *concept* or as a signal towards a mode of enquiry, the cyborg remains of vital importance, and has perhaps not even begun. During the time of its ‘reign’, the cyborg sat at the centre of a range of enquiries and discourses, all concerned with the border wars or apparent oppositions between what has variously been described as human and machine, biology and technology, human and non-human, living and non-living, organic and inorganic, animate and non-animate, “who” or “what”. Tied up with these oppositions have been concerns regarding the understanding of *tekhne*, technics, technique and technology, each term bringing with it a different orientation, a different history, different nuances depending on the language and culture it appears in. Although the cyborg may no longer hold the cache it once had, the pseudo-objects of these enquiries have not gone away.

The realm of the cyborg; the realm of questions about the role of technics and technology in human lives and in lived experience, the *technological life(style)*; the realm of the understanding or *doxa* of biology and biological systems and of technology and technological systems; the realm, therefore, of systematicity, calculation, information, and programming in general; the realm of the complex apparatuses of power that oversee the use the human race makes of technology; the realm of the evolution of technics

and co-evolution of the human, and the role of writing in this, writing as anticipation, as memory support, and as archive; all of these realms remain vital centres of enquiry for thought in the twenty-first century.

While terms such as cyborg or posthuman or hybrid will come and go according to the various fashions, academic or otherwise, under which they were spat out, the larger economic, technological and cultural contexts into which they were born retain their status as the symbolic order within which life, for many, is lived and defined, both now and in the future. We – humanity, the world, the West, the East, the minority world, the majority world – continue to think about who we are, and this thinking of who we are continues to stabilize and destabilize against what we think we are, or are not, and against what we are, or are not becoming. We continue to research, to develop, to progress, to innovate and to capitalize, and must therefore bring our attention to, and keep watch over, these processes. We go to market, we bring ever more complex ‘things’ to market, and in doing this we bring ourselves to market also, for we act in the name of these things. We multiply forms of property, and these forms of property – these proper forms – are structured in the economic, political and literary fissures between humanity and its others.

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Petals in the sand.

By Joshua Suddath

June '05. Navajo Indian Reservation.

Somewhere outside Shiprock, New Mexico.

I never considered the idea that there could be a place like this here. In America. I've been exposed to poverty before, in varying degrees. Albania, Iraq, Thailand, Liberia, etc. But I expected it there. That's where those charity commercials on TV say all the poor people are at; those are the faraway unfortunates we should all feel sorry for. I have, of course, heard of the urban ghettos in all of our major cities, although I cannot honestly say that I have physically been in one long enough to even begin to understand them. From an outsider's perspective though, those places have a much more oppressive quality in their appearance than this one – the buildings are taller; the people and life in general seem much more crowded and unlivable. But here, in this vast desert emptiness, all the little houses (government issue, I can't help but think) are quite far apart, many of them completely out of sight of their nearest neighbor. The completeness of solitude I feel reminds me that Mother Nature is calling. I pull my truck off the road and onto what appears to be either a gravel turnaround or a heavily littered scenic overlook. They drink a lot around here don't they?

I finish, stretch a little, and think about what I've seen today. Not much really. A ribbon of burning asphalt stretching out to eternity through shimmering waves of heat. More blue sky than I will ever be able to comprehend, much less recollect. A lot of rocks. Desert stuff. And hitchhikers, dozens of them, none of whom I've picked up. (Don't look at or think about them and they disappear behind you as fast as you want them to.) As I climb back inside and shut the door behind me, I think about an observation I made early this morning in front of the campfire. I pick up my journal and write a few simple little lines about it. Time apparently flies by. I look up from the blinding whiteness of the paper, refocus my eyes on the endless highway in front of me, and see yet another hitchhiker, who seems to have appeared magically from nowhere. He's only a couple of hundred meters ahead, walking toward me on the opposite side of the road. From this distance I can see only the off-white color of his shirt and the blue of his jeans. As he comes nearer, I slowly begin to become anxious for a reason I can't explain. Very quickly I open my road map and turn it to the New Mexico page. After a minute or so, I look up again and see the old Indian, now almost beside me, staggering and stumbling through the blazing noon sun. Obviously Drunk. As he walks, his old cowboy boots kick up the bone dry dirt and create little puffs of powdery dust among millions and millions of glittering beer, wine, and liquor bottle fragments. Very Drunk. I watch him for a moment, until he slowly turns his head my way. His empty eyes. I look down and pretend to study my road map. I try to feel ashamed, but feel lost instead.

Shiprock. A truly magnificent rock formation. - Aptly named, since its jagged spires vaguely resemble the sails, masts and riggings of some kind of nineteenth century wooden sailing ship. It apparently was created when the sandstone that surrounded a magma pipeline eroded away millions of years ago, leaving the much harder igneous rock behind. Geologists call it a volcanic neck. I just think it's beautiful. After watching it grow steadily larger on the horizon for at least half an hour, I have resolved to get a closer look. I apparently miss the main road that leads to this sacred giant, if one exists at all. After a good deal of searching, I find a Navajo road that seems to point in the appropriate general direction. Ten unimaginably bumpy minutes, and perhaps a chipped tooth later, this "improved" road peters out to four dusty tire tracks through the scrub— two on the right, going toward my goal; two on the left going toward nothingness. More hesitant this time, I continue. The road then proceeds to fork again— and again— and again. "Enough," I finally decide, and put the truck in park. Shiprock appears no closer than it did nearly an hour ago. I step out, stretch and reach into the cooler, reaching through tepid water and finding a warm beer. I open it. "Maybe a little closer," I reassure myself.

The sun is sinking lower on the horizon. I don't think I can make it back to town before dark. I don't really care to anyway. Hopefully the Navajos won't mind if I trespass for the night. I build a small fire and heat a can of pinto beans. Not yet satisfied, I dig through the black abyss of my pack, hoping to find some other form of sustenance in there. A small can of tuna. "What would mom say?" I wonder, as I drink the juice from the can.

Fuck. It's almost dawn. I imagine rolling over and snoozing for another hour. Then I think of the inferno that is to come shortly. The fear of being cooked awake in my sleeping bag wins out this time over my inherent laziness, so I opt to get moving while it's still cool. Within a short time the fire is rekindled, and a quart of water simmers over it. Enough to wash my hands and face, and to make some coffee— not necessarily in that order. Speaking of hygienic issues, my nose tells me that my current pair of wool socks has begun to change colors from black to a silvery, salt crystal grey, color. Time for a change. I turn on my flashlight with a click, climb into the bed of my truck, open the tupperware container I keep there, find a clean pair, and put them on. After returning my boots to my now cold feet, I continue to work my way toward the bottom of the container. As I do, I glance at the covers of some books I have brought along for the trip. *The Stranger*; *On the Road*; *For Whom the Bell Tolls*; *Desert Solitaire*; *World Almanac and Book of Facts*; *Far Side Gallery: Vol. 5*. That's when I spot one I haven't read in quite a while. An unhappy story, unremarkably told, as I recall, about some long ago war in some far off place. I haven't thought of this book in, well, I really don't know; it's been a long time. I don't even remember packing it. Without really thinking about why, I pitch it to the ground. It lands with a dusty plop. I jump down, and rejoin the campfire, which has brought my pot of water to a steady boil. I shine my flashlight into my pack and

quickly find a small glass jar of instant coffee. Anything that tastes as terrible as this garbage, which they somehow find the nerve to call Taster's Choice, is easy to find in there. Were it a container of regular (not poison tasting) coffee I'd have to dig and search for an hour just to locate it. I dump a tablespoon or so into my old blue mug and add water.

About halfway through my second bitter cup I begin to feel myself slowly emerging from my typical grouchy, unapproachable morning exoskeleton. I survey the landscape around me, and in the silvery pre-dawn light, find it just as beautiful and ugly and desolate as it was yesterday. It still feels good to see new sights in new places.

I put my cup down in the powdery, sandy dirt and pick up my flashlight and the book. As I turn through its pages, something about the way they run over my thumb tells me that I have, at some point, stuck something in there. Perhaps as a bookmark. "Maybe it's money," I hope, albeit doubtfully. I grab the book by the spine and give it a gentle shake. Nothing. I shake it again, harder this time, and a small flower falls out and lands between my feet. Puzzled, I pick it up for a closer look. A rose. Flat and ugly now, but still, it is a rose. Oh yeah. Now I remember. I hold the flower by the stem, spinning it between my thumb and forefinger, old thoughts and memories I haven't recently taken the time to recollect trickling through my mind. I smell it. Nothing. Smells like paper. I almost throw the thing into the fire, but a moment of indecisiveness causes me to hesitate. I sit there on the ground in the desert silence, elbows on my knees, still unconsciously twirling the rose in my hand; thinking, seeing, and breathing clearly, feeling the emptiness and perfect indifference of the desert pass through me. I look over my right shoulder— to the east— and am taken aback by the beginnings of the most beautiful desert sunrise I have seen in a long while. "That's a good sign," I say aloud. "Gonna be hot today though."

I put the flower back in its book, where it belongs.

A Realization.

(the first two days)

"Don't do shit, don't unpack shit until I tell you. That means no sleeping bags and sure as hell no tents. We're only going to be here for tonight, so I don't want everything all fucked up when the time comes for us to roll out of here. Everybody understand that?" "Yes Sir!" we all say, glad to hear such expediency in the voice of our Lieutenant. We are all perfectly content to sleep in our vehicles for a night if it means we can get on the plane that much sooner. A happy mood seems to permeate the atmosphere, to consume even the nervousness I always figured I would have when this moment came. But the moment has now arrived, and it seems that it will take us into the history books, and figuratively speaking, into the pantheon of heroes which we had all been taught to revere.

I sleep like a child that night, dreaming no dreams I can recollect in the foggy stillness of the grey Grecian dawn, which, as it progresses, slowly reveals snow capped mountains I cannot name only just visible through the morning fog. I awake knowing that today was the day, and I feel happy seeing sights I've never seen on a place I'd never been. The question now was when, when would it happen, when would all this waiting end?

The initial coolness of morning was deceptive, and it gives way to a hot afternoon, with a perfectly cloudless blue sky and scorching sun. Shelter is out of the question; the vehicles are the only option, and while they provide shade, they are at least twenty degrees hotter than the air outside. And so, everyone simply lies around, shirts and boots and socks off, soaking up a beautiful Mediterranean day, telling jokes and smoking cigarettes, like Marines always do when they get bored. There is a difference today though. The jokes are a little more serious, a little more macabre. "Hey Bean, when you get killed tomorrow can I fuck your girlfriend?" "Fuck you mother fucker." Laughter and expletives all around. Eventually though, the conversation fades and one by one we drift away from the circle. I decide on an afternoon nap. "Not shit else to do anyway. This sitting around doing nothing is driving me crazy," I think to myself as I tie my boots and walk to my Hummvee.

"Hey dumbass, get up. Get up man," says John excitedly. "Fuck you dude, I'm fucking sleeping." "No seriously man they're passing out the goddamn ammo." "Oh shit. I guess I might need that huh?" I say, as I kick open the door of my vehicle. "Goddamn piece of shit door." As my feet hit the ground I feel a shock of pain course up from the bottoms of my feet to my calves. "Jesus fucking Christ," I mutter to myself as I hobble in the general direction of the platoon toward the neatly stacked green metal boxes of ammunition. "What's the matter man, feet hurt?" "Yeah from sleeping in those vehicles in the fucking fetal man." "Oh well, looks like tonight's the night huh? They don't just hand out this shit for no reason."

(the third day)

"Still no sign of life on this damn air strip. Have they forgotten about us? God don't let this be one of those times where they fuck us around for a couple of days and it's all for nothing. I'm ready for this, I know I am." All of these thoughts float vaguely in and out of my head as I watch the sun on its way down behind the mountains. "Tomorrow is four days John." "Yeah I know man, seems more like a week though, don't it?" "Sure as shit does. Nothing to do now but wait for tomorrow."

(the last day)

“You know why they do this shit right? So we’ll be so pissed off that we’ll be willing to kill somebody just to get the fuck out of here.” I sit to the side of this conversation, not a participant, but definitely a proud supporter of the theory. It is now day six on this god-forsaken strip of asphalt, and if something doesn’t happen soon, mutiny would seem to be the most logical choice. But alas, at the end of the tunnel, light. The Lieutenant, whom we have not seen in three days, has finally seen fit to grace us with his presence; the rank on his collar no longer the shiny silver we are used to, but now instead a subdued black. Combat insignia. To confuse snipers. And to keep from getting his college boy head blown off. “Gentlemen, gather around.” We do as he says. “Gents we’ve got C-130’s inbound, and they’ll be here to pick us up in two hours. Every body understand?” Muffled silence. There it is, the news we’ve been waiting for, for nearly a week. But no cheers, no high fives, just a lump in every throat and a colony of butterflies in every stomach. We’ll be flying into ----- Airport. For those of you who don’t know, that’s up in northern Iraq, up by the Turkish border. Now guys, Alpha and Charlie companies are already there. They’ve encountered some resistance, but the airport is secure. They’ve got a few guys that are hurt pretty bad. Just remember when we hit the ground, spread the vehicles out, you are going to want to bunch up, but whatever you do, don’t...” By this time I have stopped listening, actually I can no longer listen to him spout out the shit he had learned in officer candidacy school. I think I see a hint of fear in his eyes behind his carefully ingrained and practiced “command presence.” I feel my hand quiver ever so slightly as I rub the stubble on my chin; my fingers are suddenly cold. I look at the faces around me. This is the first time it really occurs to me that some of them, the best friends I had ever had in my life, might not make it back. This was the first time I considered the fact that I might not make it back. There was no fear, not yet, but perhaps the strongest feeling was kinship, not only with the men around me, but also with the Marines who came before us; in Vietnam, at Iwo Jima, at Belleau Wood. They felt the same fears and uncertainty I feel at this moment. For some strange reason, that is reassuring.

We’ve finally loaded up, chained the vehicles to the floor, and taken off. The plane quickly increases in altitude and levels out. I check my shirt pockets, a small Bible in my right and a miniature Buddha in my left. No sense taking chances. I think of where I got that little statue. Thailand. She was beautiful wasn’t she? I wish I could see her again. I know that will never happen again though, regardless of what happens here. A deep breath and I’m back in the present. And I’m thirsty. “Hey John, give me some of your water. Hey! You dumb Pollack, give me some of your water.” He’s asleep. A swift punch in the arm remedies this. “How in God’s name are you sleeping?” “I don’t know fucker, I’m tired.” “We’re going into a goddamn combat zone and you’re fucking sleeping – Jesus.” I say as I take a drink of his water and throw his canteen back at him. As I lean back in the uncomfortable Hummvee seat and try to relax, I think of how he truly is my best friend, despite the constant stream of vulgarity we spout in each other’s general direction. I think of how in some weird familial sense I love him as though he were my own brother, and would kill and die for him, just as I know he would for me. I think it was Jesus who once said, there is no greater love than the love of someone who is willing to lay down his life for his friend.

I search for this verse in my pocket Bible, but am unable to find it in the soft red lights of the plane. I tuck the little green book back into my pocket, and nervously slide down in my seat, resting my head against the hard metal of the truck. I understand for the first time in my life that religion truly is the last refuge of the condemned, as I try without success to get my brain to calm down and remember the words to the Lord's Prayer. Suddenly I am no longer in my seat, and my head collides with a metal rod a foot or so above me, immediately I hear a thunderous crash that seems to come from everywhere, and I am back in my seat again, red lights blinking, the plane shaking in ways it should simply not be able to do. A flight crew member comes out of his seat at the front of the plane and tells us to put our goddamn seatbelts on, we're making our approach! As quickly as I can I try to do as he says, but the fucking buckle is fucked up. I slow down, breathe, try again and it clicks home. Just then the plane shudders – in earnest this time – and I feel it sweep around and bank to the left. We're coming in. Then a strange metallic sound. Then another. Then another. Like a hammer striking sheet metal. Bullets. A realization. Please God, please God don't let me die God. Not like this. Just give me a chance God. Please God I don't want to die.

The plaque.

The Lieutenant read the inscription on the plaque, "...to Sergeant -----, whose leadership and dedication to younger Marines was an asset to second squad and to Engineer platoon. Good luck and Godspeed." He handed it to me and shook my hand. At this point I turned to the assembled group of men, some dear friends I had served with for years, others kids who were new to the Corps and to the platoon. People I would never really get to know. Looking at this piece of wood and engraved brass, the realization came that this was it, my days as a United States Marine were over. A sense of numbness, of being overwhelmed, swept through every cell of my body as I delivered what to me seemed a bumbling, rambling speech about nothing in particular. Next came the obligatory handshakes, slaps on the back, good lucks, etc. One of my friends said he and some guys were getting together to drink some beer later and that I should come. I said I would, but I knew it was a lie as soon as the words came out. Then it was over. Vaguely nauseous, with the plaque under my arm, I walked away alone; away from an entire world I was only then realizing that I loved in a way I couldn't even explain to myself. I was now a free man.

"What the fuck happened man?"

The last time I saw him, I cursed and yelled at him for no reason. In my best Marine Corps Corporal voice I told him to "get the fuck out of here you little piece of shit." That was my right - to talk to people who were junior to myself - that way. I was a non-commissioned officer and he was not.

I wasn't there to see it happen, but they said he never felt a thing. The rocket propelled grenade exploded only a few yards away, sending a single piece of shrapnel through the back of his head. The hole was so small they said you couldn't get your little finger into it. They said he shook for a minute and then he died. He was nineteen years old.

Reasons (excuses).

The drive from North Carolina went smoothly like always. This was the last time he would ever have to make this trip though, so he took his time. He thought of how ironic that would be, to go out in a fiery car crash while on his way back for the final time. There would be no accident today though. As the miles slowly rolled away a strange sense of foreboding or perhaps even dread began to build in his guts. He honestly had no idea what he to do next with his life. "I've got a long way to the graveyard," he thought. "What am I going to do with all that time?"

As he drove he thought about experiences he had once had as a high school kid. At least he tried to. The past years had so greatly overshadowed all that came before them that the first seventeen seemed like they had happened to someone else, and he had only read or heard about them somewhere. He thought of the friends he had back then. He hadn't spoken to most of them since. He had spent years overseas, going from one place to the next, making new friends and forgetting old ones along the way. Many of those people back home were now married and had children, or so he had heard. "Dumbasses," he muttered to himself as he pulled alongside a semi-truck with "Jesus Saves" and "Show Me Your Tits" written in the accumulated dust on the back. Passing a green sign that gave the mileages for Knoxville and Nashville he decided he'd stop in the former for some coffee. "Just seventy five more miles and I'll stop for a while," he repeated to himself as he glanced down at his gas gauge.

The miles continued to tick away. The closer he got, the more he couldn't help but feel that he shouldn't be going back to that place. "What the fuck ever man," he whispered under his breath uneasily. That way of speaking would have to go. Real people don't talk like Marines do. Wouldn't those uptight, goody-two-shoes, shit heads at First Baptist have a heart attack if he walked in there and actually spoke to them in a manner that he found comfortable though? He smiled as he thought of the scenario:

Man in khaki's with bad comb-over: "Hi -----, are you happy to be out?"

-----: Fuckin' A man. I was pretty goddamned tired of getting fucked with by those lifer motherfuckers, you know? Oh yeah, how's your fuckin' wife and kids dude?

He couldn't help but laugh out loud when he pictured the look on the supposedly pious man's face as he

tried to assemble some kind of a retort in his squeaky clean mind. No, from now on it would have to be: “Oh yes, I’m very well thank you.” and “My I really enjoyed that game of golf, we should do it again sometime.” and “No dear there’s nothing wrong, I was just thinking that’s all.”

“My exit, about fuckin’ time,” he said as he pulled off the interstate and got onto the highway that would take him directly back home. Home? That word just didn’t seem to have the same ring to it anymore. Home to him was a faraway place, a place to be idealized and talked about at three in the morning on sentry duty with a kid from Jersey. Or in the cargo hold of a gigantic troop transport ship with a Polish kid from Illinois. Everybody has a home they love and love to talk about-- in the military. Even if it was just the little shit-hole he was from in nowhere Tennessee, whose only claim to fame was the quantity of sweet potatoes it produced. From here on, home would not be some abstract concept. It would not be far away. It would be under his feet and all around him. The people he had once thought about so fondly would be at the next table over at the town coffee shop, asking the stupid questions he knew they would ask over and over again. Or they would thank him for his service in their innocent, good natured and overly patriotic way. They would shake his hand and buy him lunch, making a big show of it in a way he knew would be embarrassing, and to him at least, unnecessary.

As he topped the final hill of the trip, he felt a sudden nervousness he never expected. He looked ahead, and could see the grey mailbox with most of his last name on it. (The first three letters had fallen off years ago.) Over the course of the last couple of hundred feet he frantically thought of hitting the gas on his truck and simply going-- anywhere-- for a few weeks, a few months, or a few years. He didn’t feel ready yet, he still had some thinking to do. His worldly possessions-- the ones he really needed anyway-- were all packed up in his truck bed and in his sea bags up front. He could just keep going for a while and call his parents tomorrow. They would understand. His dad would anyway. His foot moved from the brake to the accelerator. He touched it ever so gently, slowly applying pressure, feeling the truck begin to gain speed.... and then hit his right turn signal and pushed down firmly on the brake.

As he wheeled his truck into the old familiar driveway, he took a deep breath. Not of relief, but one of resignation. His journey, at long last, had, for better or worse, reached its conclusion.

A nice cup of coffee.

“Are you glad to be out?” asks the plump, rosy cheeked man at the diner. How many times have I heard that question in the last month? “Fuck you, you big fat son of a bitch,” I dream of saying. Then I picture the look of surprise on his face as I kick his fucking table over on top of him... “Yeah, I sure am,” I say, as I smile without making eye contact and sit down at the table to his left. “He’s just trying to be nice,” I tell myself. “Yeah, I know how you feel, I was in the Guard back in the 80’s; I always hated it when they’d send me off somewhere. They had me building an airstrip out in the Mojave Desert for a month one time. It was a hot sumbitch there, let me tell you.” I smile and nod politely. “So, did you kill anybody over

there?" "Nope," I say, telling the truth, not looking up from my coffee. "Well that's too bad huh? Boy I wish I was over there right now, I'd love to kill me one of them raghead bastards." Hate begins to surge up from my guts to my heart to my brain and down into my arms and legs. Not dislike, not impatience, but hate, pure undiluted hate. I consider taking my fork and inserting it into his temple. It would only take a second provided I didn't hit the earpiece on his glasses. I can see his fat face screaming in his scrambled eggs with his blood all over his nice clean shirt. "Well Jimmy, I'll see you later," I say as I finish my cup of coffee, stand and walk briskly to the cash register. "Let me pay for that." "I've got it," I interject a little more forcefully than I mean to. I give the cashier a dollar and step outside into the brisk, sunny, early spring morning. I shut the door of my truck, take a deep breath and drive away.

The girl at the party.

"This music is too loud," I yell into the ear of the pretty girl in front of me, "do you want to go outside and talk." "Yeah, sure" she says with a drunken smile, and outside we go into the cool night, the music fading behind us as I shut the door and we walk away. "You want another beer?" "Yeah, okay." We sit alone together in the dark on the hood of someone's car, making the small talk people of the opposite sex feel they have to make with one another to feel comfortable. Eventually though, the subject turns to lost loves, and I realize that she's very drunk— and crying. Quietly at first, then slowly escalating into an uncontrollable childlike sobbing, replete with those hiccup-sounding gasps for air I remember my brother making when we were very young. "I want to die," she says.

I try to feel sympathy, to give a shit. I look inside myself, but find nothing, nothing but the insidious emptiness I always feel. I want to hold her in my arms and tell her that nothing of the pain she is feeling matters; that it is a wound which will heal with time like all wounds. I want to tell her that today is a gift, and she shouldn't waste it like this. I want to make her feel happy to be living; to have never really known sadness and despair; to have never been touched by mankind's inherent evil. But I know that to her nothing is more important than this stupid emotion she is shedding these stupid tears over. I know that no explanation from me can ever make her understand anything outside of what she thinks she knows. I suddenly realize that this sobbing ball of writhing emotion is something I have no business messing with— and in the end messing up. She is too complex, a being who feels too many emotions that I no longer feel. It's not that I don't find her attractive, since I do, and always have, (I have known her since we were kids) perhaps more so than anyone I have ever known in my life. It's just that I do not possess the emotional energy to care about her. Or about anyone or anything else for that matter. I could lie and pretend, but for some reason lies make me sick. Unnecessary lies do anyway. My entire life is now a lie out of necessity, and for whatever reason, I cannot bring myself to fabricate another one for my own sexual benefit.

From this emptiness, impatience begins to consume me. I know what's next. Within a few minutes I'll begin to feel that strange kind of hate for another innocent person whose only offense was trying to get close to me. I am trapped in a foreign place with strangers who used to be my family and friends. I hate

them all, but most of my hate is reserved for myself, and now increasingly the pretty girl next to me. Instead of sympathy I feel a kind of condescending aloofness. Instead of lust I feel revulsion. “What the fuck is wrong with me?” I ask myself. “I could have her right now if I wanted her.” But I don’t want her. I don’t want anything but to go-- to go anywhere but right here right now. I feel I can hardly breathe. I can feel the emptiness pulling my insides apart. I stand up. “Hey, I’ve got to go.” “I’m sorry, I’ll stop crying.” “No it’s uh not that, I’ve uh got to get up early in the morning. I’ll see you later though.” I lean down and kiss her cheek, tasting the salt of her tears.

I walk away into the darkness, leaving her there, crying all alone.

That smell.

That smell. It’s something I’ll never forget. Strangely it’s something I can’t quite remember either. The stink of shit, piss, rotting food. The smell in the air of something bad that happened yesterday, and today is somewhere around you putrefying in the sun. When I smell that smell another world comes-- sometimes flooding; sometimes trickling-- back into my brain. I hear the doves singing in the trees above me. They sound sad to my human ears, but perhaps they aren’t really. The broken down Soviet-era trucks stink of burnt oil and desert dust and the staleness of my great-grandmother’s closet - the one with her dead husband’s clothes in it -- the one she never opened. I smell the dirt under my fingernails, and see the sight of an uprooted rose garden now turned into sand bags. I remember how small and red and beautiful the flowers were, and how I felt a pang of remorse as I shoveled them into the green cloth bags to be made into instruments of defensive warfare. I hear the sound of morning prayers blaring over faraway speakers at dawn on a day I knew was going to be entirely too hot. They sound ancient and holy and soothing and intimidating and terrifying all at the same time. I see faraway trees through a faraway fog. They make me think of home and bottom lands and soybean fields for some reason. I see a perfect sunrise frozen in time by a perfect picture taken by a long gone friend. It reminds me of a happy moment now lost forever. I hear explosions that knock out windows and scare me half to death. I feel the strange freedom of the prison that is a combat zone. But that smell, that awful fucking smell. It’s still in my nose. From time to time when I drop my trash into a filthy dumpster, or pass a full porta-john, or drive by a rotting animal on a back road, the memory of that disgusting, indescribable smell sends me half a world away.

The long, dim trail ahead.

May 2004 – Black Hills, South Dakota “ Jesus.... Fucking.....Christ,” I gasp. “Is this... hill...ever....gonna end?” “I ... dunno ...man.” says John. “I think...I’m...gonna die.” “To the top... then... a... break...Okay?” “Yeah.... sure.” And so, onward and upward we go, one heavy foot step at a time-- up, up, up, the trail never seems to end. It simply meanders gently out of sight around the next bend, instilling hope that this

would be the last leg of our journey upwards, when again and again, upon rounding what seems to be the final curve of today's hike, another quarter mile of trail appears ahead, and disappears around yet another bend. Our spirits are not dampened in the least though. We slog on, the weight of my brutally heavy, U.S. Government issue (stolen by me personally) backpack seems to grow with every foot ascended, the straps feel as though they are on the verge of pulling my shoulders off. But there are no complaints; no thoughts of turning back. All around us is nature at her most beautiful. Everywhere, huge Ponderosa pines reach skyward from the rocky ground, their reddish bark contrasting sharply with the perfectly blue South Dakotan sky. In the distance, the ancient mountains loom above us, dark with shadow and the wondrous plant life they support. From our vantage point it's easy to see why the first white men to see them called them the Black Hills. As did the Indians long before. There is something sinister, yet holy about them. Like a gothic cathedral perhaps. My heart tells me that this is a sacred place. I can't help but feel that we are trespassing; that we don't belong here, even though the day can only be described as gorgeous and completely calm. For some inexplicable reason, we talk in a whisper, this despite the fact that we haven't seen another person in days. The Plains Indians used to come here to worship their spirits and to perform rituals. In a way this is fitting, for I am looking for something, anything to believe in. I am looking for something that is true and real, not bullshit like everything else has turned out to be. Somewhere here in these gigantic boulders and herds of bison and pine trees I am looking for something I have lost. Even though I have no idea what this thing could be, or even if I would recognize it if I were to somehow stumble upon it.

We have finally reached the summit. Over six thousand feet if we are to believe the accuracy of the government made map in our possession. "Fuck it, bro," says John. "Let's go down the hill a little and set up camp. I happily agree, and after a bit of searching, we find a fairly level spot a few hundred yards away at the base of a small cliff. "This'll work," and I drop my pack. In thirty minutes the tent is up, and a meal of coffee, beans, and canned spaghetti is over the fire. We shovel the food into our mouths without speaking, as though we haven't eaten in days. In minutes it is all gone. Time for coffee. I dig around in my pack for what seems like an eternity. Eureka! Ancient blue enamel coffee cup, sustainer of life, creator of the magnificent back country bowel movement. Ahh. A full cup. "Shit!" I hiss as the almost syrup-like substance touches my lips. "Hot, dumbass?" says John. I only smile. After blowing into the scalding hot liquid a few times, I stand and stretch, the sweat on my back from today's hike bringing a chill to my body that feels simply exquisite. I look upward at the cliff face in front of me. "I'm going up there." "Right now?" "Yeah come on, let's go." "Alright, I'll be there in a minute." I walk around the sheer face of the campsite and eventually find a far less vertical crevice just big enough to walk through. There seems to be a path, not a well worn one, but a path nonetheless, all the way to the top. A few easy hand and toe holds and I'm there. "How about that?" I think. "Only had to set my cup down twice."

I sit and relax, on top of a boulder, soaking up the setting of the blood red sun way out on the edge of God's creation, sipping my still too hot coffee, as John finally works his way up to my perch. "What took you so long?" I ask. John smiles and holds up a freshly rolled joint. Ah yes, Marijuana, staple of any good sunset. We pass the weed back and forth until it and the sun are nearly gone, then descend back down into

the shadows and our home for the night.

The fire has slowly begun to die. In a brief flash of paranoia I remember that campfires are illegal in South Dakota's national forests. A rule obviously created (or at least heavily influenced) by, fat, cowboy hat wearing, senators and representatives, from the depths of the logging industry's front pocket. To help prevent the natural cycle of fire and regrowth from cutting into profits. (Defacing a sacred mountain with the faces of four dead white guys— legal. Building a campfire to stay warm— illegal. Ain't America grand?) This moment of anxiety quickly passes as we give these popularly elected politicians our standard "Fuck 'em," a joint resolution passed unanimously by both John and Myself.

The entrancing effect of fire on the human mind— especially the stoned human mind has taken hold. The embers glow and flicker red and orange and blue and even green as we sit in wonder of them. The silence of the day has been replaced by the chirping of crickets and the rustle in the pine needles of various unidentifiable nocturnal creatures. "Where do we go from here man? Not that long ago we were *something*, you know? We were Marines, you know? Whatever that means now. What happens next?" All these thoughts seem to fall out of my brain like lead and to simply lie there, like something I didn't mean to show to the world, until my friend thankfully picks them up and shows me that he still understands. "I guess we just have to keep on living and take what we can get from what's left." I agree with him, and know that this is how things have to be, but in his eyes I think I see, and in his voice I think I can hear the same uncertainty that I know is in mine.

"Maybe we'll be better people someday because of all of this," he says. "I don't feel like a better man," I reply, not looking up from the fire. "I feel like a little kid who's lost his way out here." "Yeah I know. Me too. But we'll get there."

"We'll see I guess."

A Souvenir

I put the book down on the ground and stare blankly at the cover for a few seconds. "Leningrad— now those people had real problems to deal with," I mutter to no one, and pitch a rock through the fire. The rising sun has taken the chill out of the air, but I put a few small sticks on my campfire anyway. Shiprock still looms, unconquered, by me at least, in the distance. I try to decide what to do about this situation, but reach no conclusions. The only thing I feel sure of this morning is that I am in a special, albeit lonely, place, and I have arrived there by my own volition. Do the people who live here feel the same way? Or do they see this

place as a poverty and addiction ridden hell? Or is it simply all they know? A dog's bark seems to answer me from very far away. Probably from the single wide trailer covered with used tires that I saw yesterday afternoon. Maybe he's right, I think, maybe I should get the hell out of here.

But still, there's Shiprock, impartial, uncaring, looking as though it is awaiting a strong desert wind to push it along its way. Like it doesn't want to be here either. "You're being a dumbass man. It's a big fucking rock." Ah yes, that's me, the downtrodden realist, arguing with myself. I laugh.

I stuff my green sleeping bag back into my pack, throw my terrible coffee into the fire, and put my faithful mug back into its pouch. I stand, stretch, look all around, (I'm not totally uncivilized) and piss into the fire, putting most of it out; enveloping the immediate area with acrid smelling steam. I zip up and walk toward Shiprock for a few minutes. I pick up a tan-colored sandstone and throw it sidearm style toward what was to be my ultimate goal. "Nope," I say. "Some other time. I've gotta go back." Back home that is. I really haven't had any desire to be there until just now, but I can't help but feel that maybe it's time to stop running for a while. Maybe it's time to see if I've found anything wandering around all over creation, or if I've just wasted my time. I look down and pick up a rough broken piece of stone just small enough to hold with one hand. "You're coming with me," I say to the inanimate object, as I turn around and begin my walk back toward the truck.

A Forgotten Flower

I

There's A Foreign Field, Far Away
And A Tiny Red Rose Grows There Today
Simple And Perfect, It Reaches To The Sky
But Within Just A Week, The Rose Will Have Died

II

The Rose Is Destroyed
Taken From The Earth
Crushed In The Pages
Of A Sad Old Book
Of Its Former Beauty
Only A Shell Now Remains
A Rose It Still Is
But It Will Never Live Again

III

The Petals Are Brown

As It Lies In Death's Repose
But I'll Never Let This Ugly World Steal
That Beautiful, Tiny Red Rose

Mam'zell Boy-Scout.

By Teresa Jones

Hermione at thirty-four had it all: cute clothes, a decent job, and a way with women. Sometimes she couldn't believe it herself. She, a skinny librarian, a redhead who still freckled every summer, had floor to ceiling windows, a score of seersuckered attorneys all of whom agreed she was "smart as a whip," and a roster of loves won and lost or tossed that stretched from Alabama to Texas and back again. Sometimes there was nothing for it but to lock her hands behind her head, prop her feet on her desk, and let loose a "Praise God!" or a "Yeee-ha!" Divinity or cowboy confection, mystery or magic, Hermione joyfully claimed in the slightest serendipitous turn the rowdy hand of fate. And each time she did, Janice, the director of the library since the days of carbon copies, a born-again Baptist but practicing skeptic, dependably and distractedly replied, "I don't know about you." But she did. They were fast friends—in the way of people who don't always understand each other, but occasionally find in each other relief from being themselves.

But this time was even better. This time Hermione had smiled into the face of the sun and the sun, brazing Birmingham's back, turning rusted steel mills and white-steeped churches to brassy siennas and umbers, smiled back. God had kicked up a torment, a reorganization, an influx of immigrants that spun Catalina Marquez out of the whirlwind of Miami bars and beaches to the banks of the Cahaba where the only folks who spoke Spanish also served tacos or spread mortar between bricks, where the exotic was defined as not black, not white, but—so it seemed to Hermione—brownly unfamiliar to Mountain Brook money and manners. Hermione had felt it, the breath of God's goodwill, the moment Willem Sagamantis, heir apparent to the firm and a Bob Jones graduate presumed to be a black tie and a bicycle away from the Latter-day Saints, fell into humility at the hands of greed and accounting errors or—contrary to his father's face-saving spin—greed and affectional errors at the hands of a strapping young intern. Likewise, she felt it this morning when mirrored elevator doors opened and Willem, all bowtied graciousness and prickly excitement, stepped aside to introduce the dark-eyed, sun-burnished, hair tied like a morning after afterthought at the back of her neck, Catalina. Pinstripes and necktie could not have made it clearer; lipstick and pumps could not hide it. The handshake—not even the rain has such small hands—was heartbreakingly sure, a moment of conjunction ratified by instant assessments and sudden ground-breaking smiles. Hermione heard floors ticking by like swift centuries, felt the rising wheeze in her chest of hydraulic conviction: here at last, a woman of sadness and sacrifice worth sacrificing for. Pietá? No, no. *Dulcinea*? Oh, yes.

She looked away, just a flicker toward Willem. His eyebrows lifted, his smile turned whimsical. Hermione could see that he got it, that he would follow her lead. To Catalina she said, rolling the dice, bright Argus-eyed and grifter-sure, "My boss said I might like to meet you. She was right." Catalina, red-dogging, tossed it back. "She must know you well." Hermione laughed as if she'd been caught off guard by a full

house. “Let me know if you ever want to see the sights,” she said. “I’m not a bad tour guide.” Willem, doing his part, stepping up to the plate, said, “She isn’t. I’ve heard that.” Hermione made a note to befriend him sometime, maybe—the firm picnic was coming— at his next at bat. His last performance had been a study in humiliation, last chosen, first out, grade school all over again. She saw him differently now, not so much fundamentally impaired as circumstantially unable to concentrate on the ball—and who could?—when his sunny-haired bat boy had been summarily sidelined. She smiled at Catalina, held the elevator door. Catalina hitched her bag’s leather strap higher on her shoulder. “Vulcan, right? Birmingham’s sight? God of steel mills?”

Hermione chuckled. *Steel mills?* Not so fast, my lovely. She imagined looping a thumb over her belt, thrusting her chin. She said, “God of fire.”

Catalina peeled a slow smile. Hermione and Willem, statuettes in the quiet, carpeted hallway, watched as she strode toward her office, listing right then left, not quite loping, but still not unlike a gunslinger in heels.

“When a love of your life walks into your life,” Hermione insisted, “you know it.” Janice, married nineteen years, flatly disagreed. Bobby, she said, had a festering boil at the base of his spine. She’d been watching it for days, waiting for it to “ripen,” as the doctor said, applying medication every night. That’s how you know the love of your life, she said. She held out a boiled egg. “It’s *this* size, Hermione.” She shook her head. “I can’t eat this.”

Hermione, growing annoyed and, as a consequence, less inclined to share, nonetheless opened her white bakery bag and placed two cookies, one oatmeal-raisin, the other raspberry-chocolate for Janice, on a napkin tea party-style at the corner of Janice’s desk.

“But when you *met* him,” Hermione began.

“I had no idea he’d have boils on his butt.” She burped the lid on the remaining baby carrots and made sure the top of the Ranch dressing was good and tight. “There you go,” she said. “Now what?”

For two weeks Janice had been dieting in anticipation of her daughter’s upcoming high school graduation and the out-of-town relatives who refused to miss it. For two weeks, Hermione had been providing desert. That’s how she was, supportive of effort, prepared for weakness, intuitive when it counted. As would follow, few things exasperated her more than having to explain what should be obvious, especially when doing so involved reducing her lightheartedness to its most literal components. “It’s not like I’m really saying she’s the *one*, Janice. I’m just saying—”

“Oh, I know what you mean.” Janice snapped her cookie in half with her teeth, licked a trace of raspberry

from her lip. “She’s hot, and you’re randy.” She smiled behind her hand and chewed, brought out one of her grandmother’s favorite expressions, an all-purpose closer that she and Hermione usually found so absurdly devastating and decisive as to be hilarious. She hunched down over her desk like an old farm woman over a cowering child. “I am familiar with you,” she said.

Hermione felt the full weight of Janice’s inadequacy as a friend. It wasn’t about *that*. By many standards, Catalina wasn’t even pretty. Objectively speaking, too many teeth rushed out when she smiled. And her eyes, a little binocular behind the glasses, seemed slightly recessed, shadowed, as if she’d been reading too hard too many times all night long. On the other hand, she had an arm-wrestling kind of sexiness about her, a toe-to-toe toughness. Exchange the skirt for jeans, baggy and low-riding, and she could be a gangland kind of knockout, all straight talk and smirk, earthy and honest and comfortable with herself in a way that, it seemed to Hermione, she herself and people like her, white people pinched and pressed, neurotically bony and thin-lipped couldn’t ever be. She shook crumbs from her napkin into the trash. Janice spread *The Birmingham News* on her desk and began reading recipes. Hermione guessed it was true what they said about suffering. It always happens—she gave Janice an unhappy glance—when someone else is eating or opening a window or—she turned her head contemplatively to the side—just reading dully along.

“Listen to this,” Janice said. “Zesty Parmesan and Pecan Encrusted Halibut.”

“Uh-huh,” Hermione said, feeling the formality that follows great pain. “Excuse me. May I?” She lifted Janice’s wrist by its silky cuff to extract the sale and movie sections. “I need to get going.”

“Allrighty, then.” Janice flexed her wrist and fingers like a pro, eyeballed the layout, and set in to snipping fine straight borders around recipes. “You know what I need? A lemon zester.”

Hermione laughed softly, falsely. “I’ll keep that in mind.”

She made her lonely way to her lonely office with the floor to ceiling windows overlooking the city from which the sun had fled. There on her desk were pink telephone messages. Harriet’s, as always, was on top. Harriet, 23, called all the time, ever since she installed Hermione’s kitchen cabinets. “We will,” she liked to say, “be lovahs,” a line she’d heard in a Jim Carrey movie that cracked her up every time she said it and was yet another reason—cute though she was—that Hermione had made it clear that they would never be lovers. But she was funny, tiny but all swagger, New York Italian, and alarmingly ready to tell anybody who crowded her to climb the hell down out of her ass. The first time Hermione witnessed it, they’d been at the post office. When they got outside, a full half block away from any postal patrons, Hermione gave Harriet’s muscular shoulder a jocular, athletic pat. “You know,” she said, hoping to speak man-to-man, as it were, but gently and with kind laughter, “a little discreet discretion—“

“Hey!” Harriet said, “I’m waiting my fuckin’ turn and he wants to fuckin’ crawl up my ass? He’s in a fuckin’ hurry?” She shook her head. “I’ll kick his fuckin’ ass.” No, Harriet and she were far too different. Self-expression had its place, but so did gentility, and Hermione wanted someone who understood that,

understood her. In fact, what she wanted most, more than anything, was to be understood. Loved, yes. Appreciated, of course. But mainly—and now she saw that her life had been defined by this absence—she wanted to be understood.

The awareness lifted a burden she hadn't known she was carrying and soon she was soaring with the good spirits that come to those who imagine they have suffered and survived great hardship without complaint. Thus it was that she was very nearly euphoric when, returning from a mid-afternoon run to Rich's, she came upon Catalina in the lobby holding a cup of Dunkin' Donut's coffee. She looked splendid. As all newcomers do, she was taking an interest in the firm's wall of first-rate, sometimes second or third-rate, local and regional art. She turned her head from side to side, leaned in, stepped back, tightened her lips, nodded at a farm scene: a wheelbarrow, some chickens, rain. Hermione smiled. A week from now, she bet Catalina wouldn't turn her head if human beings were nailed on the walls.

Hermione scooted up behind her and looked hard at the painting. She'd been told it was *primitive*, not—and here the distinction broke down for her—simply bad. She said, "I like it, too." When Catalina startled, Hermione heard like an echo the spectral quality of her own voice, felt the easy-to-misconstrue nearness of her chest to Catalina's shoulder. She backed away smiling with hands raised as one does when a child in the grocery cart ahead suddenly begins screaming. "Because it's true," she added.

Catalina laughed. "Is it?"

Hermione laughed, too. "Sure, it is. You know it is."

Catalina laughed again and put her hand on Hermione's arm just above the elbow where Hermione's heart had come to rest. "You surprised me," she said. And Hermione, looking down at her, heard apology, reprimand, and delight. If she had dared to move—but who would dislodge warm fingers from the sleeve of a tropical-weight wool jacket?

"Will you," she said. What? Marry me? No, the courts were still out on that one. Be mine? No, women, especially professional ones, often had ownership issues. "I mean to say, would you like to—"

"I bet I would," said Catalina, checking her watch, "in about three months when I get settled in. For now, it's all about work." She lifted her coffee cup. "This is lunch." She pointed toward Hermione's Rich's bag. "Shopping spree?"

Now, see, this was all wrong. Hermione was this close to envisioning them stowed away on an Olivia Cruise surrounded by rich women all jealous of their love and glowing good health. Instead, she gets the watch check, the I'm too busy to eat or sleep routine. She sighed as if she couldn't be more bored and burdened. "Spree? I wish," she said, "but, no, not really. Just shoes." Sometimes lies simply sound better. This was one of those times. "A gift," she added. "For my mother. You know, down to the wire. But, whew, what a price, huh? I'll be working all night."

Maybe it was Hermione's tone, maybe it was something else, but Catalina changed. Her full brilliant cheeks caved to the bones. Her black eyes burrowed backward. *Cruel* was the word that came to Hermione's mind. "That *is* a price" Catalina said, tossing her cup, slipping away. "But for your mother? It's worth it. I know in Cuba—" Koo' bä, Hermione couldn't help noting—"well," she lobbed a buoyant smile full of shiny knives. "This isn't Cuba, is it?"

Clearly not, but Hermione could feel herself missing a move, caught in a bind. She could play the culture-blind game, say we're all people, it's all the same, but there was that whole Elian Gonzales thing and something about refugees in rowboats and who knows what all, Communism. She tried to register her awareness of tough times around the world in her face. "No," she said, "No, it isn't." It was hard to know whether to sound courageous or sad about that, so she aimed down the middle.

Catalina repaid her by climbing on her high horse. "Some people do, you know. Work all night. Even for their mothers sometimes."

"Hey," Hermione said, feeling a little like Harriet and more than a little put upon. "Hey," she said again, but Catalina was doing her Affenpinscher imitation, all dark and scrappy, and too close to high-pitched. "Why did you say that? What was the purpose? Will you work all night? Will you, really?"

Okay, now Hermione just wanted to shake her by all three throats off her pant's leg. "Probably not," she said, "Not *all night*." Her own eyes got wide on that one, and she shuddered. Not a minute past 4:30, more like.

"And the shoes?"

"No shoes for Mom, I'm afraid." Hermione twisted her mouth to bite the inside of her lip. She watched as Catalina's back mercifully diminished in the distance of the cavernous lobby. She could barely hear the clicky-clickity-click of tiny infuriated heels crossing cold marble. She threw her head back, closed her eyes. Thank God.

"What about the painting? Do you even like it? *Do* you?"

Hermione opened her eyes, surveyed the cathedral-like expanse of the open atrium, saw the sun reaching through faraway windows breaching her peace like the sharp sound of Catalina's persistent voice calling out as if from a speck by the elevator.

"The wheelbarrow, the chickens?"

Hermione hung her head. All she'd wanted to do was ask the woman out. She took a deep breath and shouted back. "Can't say I do. No. Not a bit!" She glanced toward the security guards who had stopped talking among themselves to watch the public dismantling of her character. She smiled and waved, hoisted

her shopping bag. They smiled and waved. They were always interested in what she bought, especially Bertie, more receptionist than security guard, who had a granddaughter about her age, an anthropologist in Ohio. Bertie described her as, “a little funny sometimes, but smart. You know what I mean?” Since Hermione’s mother described her in much the same terms, Hermione said she did. She squinted across the lobby and put a hand behind her ear to catch Catalina’s parting *riposte*. Wouldn’t dare want to miss it. The woman was insane.

Sure enough, here it came, lumbering through the air on wings of piety. “Think about it!” She cupped her mouth with her hand to get that foghorn action going. “It trivializes something!”

Something? *Something*? Like what? A *way of life*, maybe? Hermione, fed up and loaded for bear, fired back. “I get it!”

Catalina waved her off with both hands. “Can’t hear you!”

Hermione saw Bertie chuckling, heard her saying, “Lord, Lord,” and knew what she was thinking. Bertie had told her before straight up: white folks is crazy. Not are, is. There’s a world of difference.

“Can’t *hear* me, she says. No kidding, right? What is that?” Hermione had made the trek in rush hour traffic from her apartment in Southside, an old neighborhood of tree-lined boulevards, storefront restaurants, and kitschy shops all the way to Irondale, a solid suburb summed up by its name where Janice and Bobby bargained wisely for property and raised sturdy children. She’d brought Harriet along to break the monotony of the drive and to make her feel better about herself. Now she was on her soapbox, “literally,” as Bobby pointed out with the kind of glee you could only forgive in imbeciles or people you really love. Still, it was true. She was straddling an enormous box of Tide Super-Size from Sam’s Club. Harriet was perched beside her, leaning against the refrigerator. “I mean really, Janice. What is that? I’m a liar, I’m shallow? She’s on a mission?”

Janice allowed as how she didn’t know. Hermione suspected she wasn’t trying. Bobby was in the floor tearing down the dishwasher—“right *now*?” Janice had asked when he flipped open his tool box; “it’s broken right now,” he said. So Janice stepped over and around his legs as she moved from counter to counter, refrigerator to table, trying to prepare and fry halibut and French fries and hushpuppies. The kids, in the den watching television, shouted at each other to turn it up or turn it down or change the channel. Occasionally a “No way!” paved the way for the sound of blows and hilarity. Hermione said, “I am not a liar. I’m one of the most honest people I know.” Janice, said she knew, but some people were just “like that.” Harriet, grinning like an elf on a toadstool, said, “I know you are. That’s why I like you. And I trust you.”

Hermione mouthed, “We will never be lovers,” but for a second she felt fairies dancing in her hair, so she

added out loud, "I'm serious."

Janice said, "It's a serious business."

Harriet brightened as though she'd heard, "I'm yours."

Bobby came up off all fours swinging a mangled fork. He was a big man, blond and burly, solid and easygoing, just the way a telephone lineman ought to be, accustomed to heights and danger, and unfazed. Bobby said, "I'll tell you what the problem is." He looked everybody in the eye except Janice who had her back to him. "Something's wrong with her. That's all I'm saying." He closed his lips tight such that the upper lip formed a hood over the lower to create an air-tight seal. He pulled a chair out from the table, sat down almost knee-to-knee with Hermione. "I'll tell you another thing."

"What's that?" Hermione leaned close to hear. His this-is-how-it-is approach to problem-solving always tickled her.

"It don't mean you have to take no for an answer."

"It don't?" she said. She loved Bobby.

"No, miss smarty, it don't. And I'll tell you why." He sat back in his chair, rested hands bigger than Hermione's face on his thighs. "Because everybody's got something wrong with them. Everybody. Except Janice." He grinned like he'd pulled a fast one, and everybody laughed, Janice the hardest.

"Mercy!" Janice cried. "That's the first I've heard of that!"

"No, it's not, either," he said. He gave Hermione a solid pat right on the kneecap and stood up. He tossed the fork in the sink, took another look inside the dishwasher, closed the door, and gave it a pat, too. Janice lowered the basket of battered fish into the grease, then stepped back to let it sputter and crackle, spit and sizzle. "I don't know about him," she said, but she was smiling hard enough to break.

Hermione waited as long as she could. Then, like John Travolta beating a path to the disco, in step to the rhythm and heartbreaking, heart-pumping whine of "Stayin' Alive," she made her way directly to Catalina's office. Three weeks of curt nods and how do you do's were adding up to wasted time. She might've been right, she might've been wrong, but every time she saw Catalina, every time Willem said, "She's a trooper, that one," and gave Hermione a sideways look as if to say, "What's the problem here?" Hermione felt the tug of unfinished business. As she swung round the doorway into Catalina's office, she

was brought up short by the appearance of Sherry, Catalina's Administrative Assistance, crouched at the bottom drawer of a bank of filing cabinets grinding her teeth at the idiocy, no doubt, of attorneys unable to alphabetize.

"Get lost?" Sherry said.

"Lost?" Hermione said with a wink. "Not anymore." She patted the door frame, leaned in to scan the queen's palace. Black and white pictures of suffering; hungry children, desolate fields. Hermione had a three by five foot poster of a pink 1957 Thunderbird convertible on her wall. Above her desk she had a French print—a curly, red haired figure standing trim in Army green shorts and shirt, a jaunty cap, and high heels: *Mam'zell Boy-Scout, an Opéretta en 3 actes*. Looking at it always made her feel lighter, more noble, as if she, too, would look smart standing in uniform on a hillside with an orange neckerchief square-knotted at her throat. "Catalina around?"

Sherry tugged at the hem of her skirt as she always did, as though she were trying to cover her knees, as if she feared Hermione might start slavering or, worse it seemed to Hermione, fail to. Indifference, polite or otherwise, seemed to rub her the wrong way, bespeak an unforgivable arrogance. "Right behind you," she said, but *Big guy* hung in the air like a challenge, and Hermione turned around to show Sherry just how big a guy she could be. Already blocking the doorway, it was easy enough to stand her ground, make of her arm a living toll gate. She was cool. She looked Catalina straight in the eye. She cocked her head to one side. "So," she said. She felt sexy, she felt dangerous, she felt *hip*. "Koo' bä. Tell me about it."

Catalina did not laugh the throaty laugh of the sexually amused. She slid cheese crackers into her jacket pocket and slipped under the toll gate. "Chickens in the street, child conscription, the periodic execution of dissenters."

"Whoa," Hermione said, feeling suddenly à cheval and at risk, yet darkly exhilarated. Frown lines flamed, angry eyes spit. To be near her, whatever the price in pride, was—Hermione felt sure—to be warm to the core. Or words to that effect. What she said was, "Wrong foot, wrong time. I came to make amends."

Catalina sat down behind her desk, folded her hands into a church with an index finger steeple upon which she rested her chin. "Let's do it."

Friday night they went to The Alabama, the grand old downtown theatre, to see *Bound*, a film noir take-off with lesbian leads. Lesbian protagonists assure a lesbian audience; Hermione had thought of that, had planned a safe environment, safe for subtle moves and meaningful glances. She felt very much taller than her 5'6", and every muscle ached. She was in love. Even stale fumes rising from the seats almost in a powder put her in mind only of dandelions. She glanced at Catalina. Is there anything sweeter, really, than a woman's forgiveness? A child's breath? Whose child? What circumstances? It's a hard case to make.

Hermione, however, was not thinking of children, and she had turned her eyes from Catalina's squat little nose and tender, downy cheek to the tribe of lesbians spreading like militia all over the theatre. How wonderful to be among one's own, but how different they can look—swaggering, lumbering, happily cavorting—when seen through the eyes of a beloved who, for all Hermione knew, had never seen lesbians outside of black-habited nuns with rulers bearing down on her as a child. She imagined Catalina in a little plaid skirt and felt both weak and protective.

“Are you okay?” she said. “Need anything?”

Catalina twisted around in her seat and braced herself with a hand on Hermione's shoulder. With every flex of her fingers, sparks ignited in Hermione's brain. Her voice ran like an electric current. She loved old theaters, she said, these movie palaces with heavy red velvet curtains and gorgeous gold-leafed balconies, the old fashioned private opera boxes, the crouching gargoyles dispelling evil spirits, the opulence, the abundance. “It's Byzantine,” she said. “Isn't it?”

Hermione leaned her ear closer. “Big screen?” The crowd was roaring, and she'd just spotted Harriet at the front of the theatre casually and obviously cruising everybody.

Catalina shook her head, smiled. “No,” she said. Hermione could taste her breath warm and darkly sweet as, perhaps—who knew?—a Cuban cigar. “By-zan-tine,” she repeated.

Hermione nodded. Ah. “You like that, do you?” How was she supposed to keep her heart in her chest?

Catalina propped her elbow on the armrest, her chin in her hand. “I love it,” she said.

“Good,” Hermione said. “That's good. I'm glad.” Hermione sat up taller in her chair because she had made available to Catalina something Catalina loved. However, she couldn't help wondering whether Catalina would continue to love it when the movie heated up, as the reviews promised it would, and the catcalls and whistles started flying. Feminism, it seemed to Hermione, had done well in modifying the behavior and attitudes of men toward women, but it had fallen far short in curtailing the frank lasciviousness of high spirited women out for a night among their own. Times such as these made Hermione long for the days of romantic friendships and Boston marriages, those gracious days of downcast eyes and sweet discretion. She thought her heart would burst if someday, in a carriage, she should unbutton Catalina's glove.

“Look,” she whispered to Catalina, pointing toward the ceiling as the lights went down and the canopy turned velvety midnight blue, “stars.”

Catalina gasped just as she was supposed to, just as Hermione had imagined she would, as though she had never been so surprised, had never seen a sight more beautiful.

“How do you think they do that?” Catalina asked. “With hundreds of tiny electric light bulbs or cut-outs

in the ceiling with one huge light behind it?”

“I always thought they were real,” Hermione said, refusing to lose the moment to hardware and circuitry.

“Real stars?”

“Well—“

“Oh, no, that’s okay. I get it.” Her eyes were laughing. “You’re funny.”

Yes, I am, Hermione thought. I am *hi-larious*. She checked her watch, straightened her trouser seams, and made ready to watch the movie and try to ignore the wrenching tenderness of desire compromised by conscience or, as Janice would say, good sense. As she’d left the office at five o’clock on the dot, as she stepped into the revolving door, she’d heard Janice call out, “Play it safe, Moonbeam.” Moonbeam. The last time she’d been called that she’d been in college. Hermione scowled at the screen.

It had happened at Pepino’s, even then an old fashioned pizzeria. Dark wood, candles in jars, checkered tablecloths and half-window curtains, student crowded, beer noisy. She had been with Samantha. No, her name wasn’t Samantha, but it was an “s” word. Susan. Susan Browne, an older woman, twenty-six or so, with waist length wavy brown hair, parted in the middle and often tied at the back of her neck with a rubber band. Susan did not wear make-up, but she did wear the fatigues someone had left in her apartment. They met through mutual friends in the theatre department, Samantha, actually. Samantha was sweet, but bewildered, not quite ready. But now that Hermione thought of it, she might have been a better choice than Susan in the long run—Susan who talked to the actors about motivation because she was finishing a master’s in psychology while Hermione, a sophomore, managed props and struck sets.

Hermione had explained to Susan over pizza that she was majoring in psychology, too, or sociology or anthropology, she wasn’t really sure yet. But she was *fascinated* by social ritual and primal human nature kinds of, you know, instinct. Susan had said, “I am, too, moonbeam.” Then she ordered a box for the pizza and took Hermione home and had sex with her.

Hermione worried about the epithet for days. Samantha tried to console her. “Moonbeam, Hermione, *moonbeam*, not *moonface*.”

Hermione, prostrate on her dormitory bed, cried, “Think about it, Samantha. A moonbeam is flat and round, always. Sophia Lauren would never be described as a moonbeam.”

Even Susan tried to reassure her. As she struggled to get Hermione’s jeans from around Hermione’s rigid hips, she told her not to worry about it, that sex, which is what they were about, had nothing to do with cheekbones. Hermione did not believe that anymore than she believed, as Susan maintained, that the kick in sex came, not from love, but the freedom from love. When Susan was loading her car for Chicago two

or three semesters later, Hermione left her a ribbon-tied bundle of rain wet flowers between the screen and front door. Three days later, traces of them were stuck to the steps, trampled evidence, it seemed to Hermione, of love rejected with a slap. Sitting on the steps, prying stems and petals away from cracked mortar and broken bricks, Hermione appreciated herself and the scene she had created: forlorn young woman fingering flowers in drizzling rain. She had wished a photographer would happen by. It was poignant, she thought, and her gesture had made it so. Sitting in the theatre with Catalina, Hermione was moved again by the tenderness of her own heart when it was young, impressed again by her willingness always to make the right gesture.

The heroines on the screen, one dolled-up like a 1940's bimbo dominatrix, the other grunged up like a neighborhood thug-cum-plumber, were locked fast in close negotiations. The beauty offered a tattoo on her breast for the roustabout's digital examination. As the fingers went from tracing to gripping to squeezing to pumping the breast, as the soon-to-be lovers opened their mouths only hot breath apart, the audience, unable to stand it, unable to wait, exploded. "Go for it! Take her! Kiss her! Kiss her!" And Catalina was laughing, rocking in her chair with her hands over her mouth, laughing. "This is a classic," she cried, "a classic!"

Hermione laughed, too, and thought, this is not her first time; she too has been disappointed in love and awaits the coming of a heart sound and true.

Catalina leaned so close that Hermione could feel lips against her ear and a breast against her upper arm. "So, you fancy yourself a plumber?"

"A what?"

"I wouldn't be surprised," Catalina said and, in a gesture that Hermione was sure could have as its motive nothing short of torment, flopped back in her chair taking her breast with her.

In the final scene, the lovers are revving the motor of a brand new, bright red truck, about to make their escape—with the money. As they kiss, the credits roll, and Tom Jones sings "She's A Lady." The audience cheered.

In the parking lot, Catalina bounced across the gravel parking lot singing "Well, she's all you'd ever want, she's the kind you'd like to flaunt, and take to dinner'."

Smooth as glass, Hermione sidled up next her. "You hungry?"

“Why?” Catalina laughed. “You want to take me to dinner?”

Hermione opened the car door, stood gallantly to one side. “I could be persuaded.”

Catalina slipped into the seat, pulled her trailing skirt hem in after her. “I don’t know,” she said. “I guess not.” She twisted her mouth as if the right words were hidden behind a molar. “You know.”

No, Hermione did not know. No one goes home directly after a movie, especially not that kind of movie. It was weird and rude and unforgivable. Clearly, dinner to this woman meant, she didn’t even know what. Sex? A U-haul? She hadn’t been banking on either one. A spare toothbrush was a courtesy, not a demand. “Fine,” she said, but it sounded petulant, bullying. She played it again with a lilt. “That’s fine. Maybe some other time.”

“Maybe so,” Catalina said brightly, so brightly that Hermione heard the chirp of freedom in her voice, the warble of *not in this lifetime*.

When Hermione got in and started the car, Catalina pushed in a cassette that Hermione had specially compiled for the occasion and now regretted. The tape hissed for a second, then blared out “Kiss you All Over.” Catalina turned sideways in her seat so that her knee pressed against the gear shift. Light from the street lamp hollowed her cheeks, drew shadows beneath her eyes, made her lips look fuller, almost swollen. Hermione fastened her seatbelt, popped the car into reverse and, as she twisted around to look over her shoulder out the rearview window, she caught Catalina’s eye and thought that on anyone else that look would say kiss me, but on Catalina it said I want you to want to.

As the car started to roll, Hermione heard pounding on the hood and turned around to see Harriet, with a band of laughing chums, sprawled on the hood grinning, waving, and pointing like twelve year olds.

Catalina said, “I bet she’d go to dinner with you.”

Hermione said, “I bet she would.”

At the company picnic a week later, Hermione came as close to sulking as she ever did. She had hoped to have a date. She had hoped the date would be Catalina. Instead, she sat by herself with Janice and Bobby. Even Willem had a date this time, Josh, who turned out to be quite a little ball player. Willem, it turned out, made a better cheerleader. He’d been squealing all morning, and the game hadn’t even started. She made mush of her potato salad while Janice downed one chicken wing after another and Bobby started on his second ear of corn. When Catalina flitted by laughing with a baseball glove on her head, Hermione delivered a sharp smile and a mock salute and returned to her potato salad.

“Uh-uh,” Janice grunted as she gnawed the bones clean. “Get your feelings hurt, you act like the world’s out to get you.”

Bobby, holding his corn mouth high, looked over his shoulder. “She the one in the baseball glove?”

Hermione nodded.

“Girl’s a tease,” he said, grinding into his corn. “That’s what she is.”

Hermione leaned over the table. “She’s trash, isn’t she?”

He wiped his mouth and leaned over to meet her. “Pure T slut.”

“A whore,” Hermione said, trying to think what other vile names she could come up with without abandoning all principles. “I wouldn’t have her.”

“There’s a parking lot full of cars,” Janice said. “Go kick some tires.”

“Tires, hell,” Bobby said. “Get your glove, Hermie. We got butt to kick.” Bobby and Hermione swaggered like the Jolly Green Giant and Tiny Tim out to the softball field where teams were already divvying up. The Giant got tagged to pitch. Tiny won the catcher’s spot. Catalina was called for the opposing team, but only, Hermione noted, as a shortstop. When Catalina sashayed into the batter’s box, she tried to twirl the bat like a baton. Once a cheerleader, always a cheerleader, Hermione thought. Then she recalled that apart from their deeply pungent honeysuckle smell after two hours of practice, she really had no complaints about cheerleaders. None. But that was high school. Hermione was less forgiving now. Crouched low and close behind the plate, she said, “You hit me with that bat, I’m taking you down.”

Catalina said, “Honey, if I hit you with this bat, you’ll be down.”

That remark, Hermione thought, showed strength of character. She backed up. With a dribble off the end of her bat, Catalina made it to first base. From there, she waved to Hermione and danced on and off the base as though she might have the gumption to try to steal second, as though she were daring Hermione to look away. Hermione didn’t look away, and Catalina was tagged out with the next pop fly. It was the top of the sixth before Catalina got on base again. Hermione, meanwhile, had connected well with every at bat and had made it home twice. This time, Catalina got to third. The next batter hit it deep left, Catalina started running, and Hermione covered the plate. She raised her glove, she could see the ball coming. The ball slammed her glove, her glove slammed her face, Catalina slammed her—what a mix of emotions—pinned to the ground by the woman she loved and, not only that, the woman was out.

Catalina apologized repeatedly throughout the evening. She was too competitive, she said, and how was Hermione's knee, the one bent double beneath her in the tumble? And her poor face! Ear to jaw was swollen, but only the jaw was bruised. It was nothing, Hermione said. Lying on the blanket, surrounded by Catalina, Janice, and Bobby, looking too weak and disabled to push a straw into her mouth, she made herself brave. It was nothing, she repeated, that a cold compress wouldn't help or a cool hand. All her life—since she'd read it somewhere—Hermione had wanted someone, someone kind and good who loved her desperately, to put a cold compress on her feverish brow. Or, in this case, jaw. Catalina scouted around and found a dish towel, filled it with ice, and pressed the bundle to Hermione's throbbing masseter muscle, the thick muscle that holds the jaw in place.

Janice yawned and stretched, looked to the heavens. "The question is, will she ever walk again?"

Catalina, holding the lemonade straw to Hermione's lips, frowned. "Oooh," she said.

Hermione mended well and quickly. She began doodling house plans and coming up with names for the pets she and Catalina would pick out, train, love, and bury together. Sometimes she wept as her pen scratched a name off the list, and she imagined them clutching each other in the rain beside a tiny gravestone. Life was too short, they should marry at once. Catalina said maybe they should date at once.

"What do you think," Hermione asked, "about Glockenspiel as a name for a dog, a schnauzer?" She and Catalina had just finished dinner at Dish, a sidewalk café with entrées that resembled toys or decorations. Hermione wore new khaki shorts, Birkenstocks, and an orange T-shirt. Catalina did, too, except that her Tee was red. They'd been to the mall together, and Hermione saw that as a milestone. It had been three weeks since their collision on the ball field. There had been no sleepovers, not a trace of couch time, but she thought now, strolling past the shops as the sun went down behind them and the air cooled to balmy, that they—together—must look in their red and orange like a summer sunset, and that must mean something.

"Glockenspiel," Catalina said. "I like it, but there has to be a cat, too, named Timpani, maybe a Siamese." She had stopped in front of Affairs, a campy knickknack shop that always had plaster monkeys or ceramic farm animals in the window alongside hand-painted china plates, palm tree candlesticks, lettuce leaf salad bowls or bunny rabbit salt and pepper shakers. Deco glasses—goblets or wine—were not sold in sets, but individually, and came marked with an admonishment to hand-wash gently in warm water. This time, mixed in with all the rest, were yellow chicks peeking over the rims of teacups, mother hens with drooping double chins—*wattles*, Catalina pointed out, *barbas de ave*—bristly-haired, scruffy black and white cows in a family of sizes, and a cookie jar that could pass for a cauldron, the lid of which was encircled by pink apparently squealing curly-tailed pigs.

"A farm!" Hermione said. "We could have a menagerie!" And that fast she saw herself in cut-off overalls

surrounded by friendly livestock, spit-shining her own bright red home-grown tomato, Catalina calling to her from the back door, coming down the steps, apron flying, flushed and smiling from farm-wifely exertions, pushing loose hair away from her glistening face with the back of her shapely hand. Mercy, Hermione could hear the screen door slam. “We could have a pig named Piccolo and a goat named Oboe!”

“Or,” Catalina said, “a goat named Piccolo and a pig named Oboe. And a cow named Tuba. Toooola!”

Hermione’s head was spinning. *Chicks and ducks and geese better hurry, when I take you out in my surrey.* If only they could have a surrey with isinglass windows!

“Look,” Catalina said, grabbing Hermione’s elbow, pointing to the farthest corner of the window display where a peacock constructed of gardening utensils and feather dusters stood, its full plumage expanded like a giant shimmering turquoise fan. “Viola.”

Hermione caught her breath. “Yes,” she said. Melancholy, mournful, yet stunning, not unlike Catalina. “And a whole brood of chickens called—collectively— Maracas.”

Catalina laughed, turned away from the window dragging Hermione along by the hand. “I don’t know about chickens. My grandmother had chickens. Every morning of the world when I was a kid, she was out killing chickens. I know this was Cuba, but I expect your grandmother did the same thing.”

Hermione was unaware of having ever seen a live chicken at all, much less in her grandmother’s backyard. “My grandfather was a barber. They lived in town.”

“We did, too, I guess, but we still had chickens, lots of chickens, and dogs and cats and whatever else wandered in.”

They walked away from the lighted shops, bars, and restaurants, the Saturday night couples with ice cream cones, the sweaty-haired teenagers with skateboards, the blaring jazz from Blind Willies, and into neighborhood streets embowered by massive old oaks. There, they moved carefully—a quick hand on the shoulder or arm, a “Watch out!” to warn of knotted roots or broken sidewalk that shifted underfoot and startled in the dark—and Catalina explained. Every Saturday—Saturday was market day—her grandmother, *mi abuela*, she said, would go through she didn’t know how many chickens, hundreds it seemed like. With one hand, she’d wring their necks, one hand! Then, sitting on the back steps, she’d pluck them clean in a hurry—feathers flew everywhere—Catalina chased them like bubbles, gathered them into hemp sacks. Then in the kitchen, the naked birds slung on the drainboard, her grandmother would “Whack!” with one slice of a big blade—no, Hermione, *not* a machete, a *cleaver*—straight through the neck, the bones; she was fast, all business. One morning a cat got inside, a little black cat, too frisky for its own good. It ran in circles between Grandma’s feet. Everywhere she stepped, there was *el gato*, clawing at her shoe strings, trying to climb her dress. She brushed him aside, but back he came, crying and clawing, leaping on the chairs, on the table, on the drainboard, always nosing around, and Grandma pushed him

away, pushed him away, but back he came. Still, she continued her work, stringing the chickens, swiping away the cat, chopping and chopping, but *el gatito* kept mewling, scratching, circling back, staring from the floor to the drainboard, the chickens.

Hermione's eyes were so wide her head hurt. She stopped walking, took hold of a guy wire that stretched from earth to power pole as if illusion and wishful thinking, more than physics and luck, could keep anything standing.

"Then," Catalina said, "the cat jumped again, slid against the chickens, and quick as a flash, he was flat on the drainboard and 'Whack!'—"

"What!" Hermione's head pounded. "No!" The shout was just noise, sudden and involuntary, but behind it refusal ran wild. She pulled her hands to her chest like a pledge or a plea or a slow, steady bellows, and pressed hard.

Catalina chuckled, looked up from the sidewalk, eyes shining. "We don't play, Hermione."

"I know, but my God!" What kind of woman would do that? What kind of child could survive it? Hermione tried to steady herself with the guy wire, but at this point it didn't help; the wire might snap, lash around her throat, and kill her. Anything could happen. The shrubs perfect and still against these perfect houses might grow legs, tear free from the earth, and march en masse to smother all their human oppressors.

"It was her livelihood, Hermione. Our livelihood."

Hermione heard the voice, but it blended with the sound of tires spinning over pavement. She smelled grass and wild onion. She felt her arms and knees bare and prickling into goose bumbs. She saw Catalina waiting, then Catalina with dirty hands and knees, running, spinning round and round on hard earth, waving her arms, chasing flying feathers. And, as from a distance, the echo of Catalina's laughter rolled toward her like the bright bell tones of crystal wind chimes, and then closer like shattered glass tumbling down a metal chute.

Dark Histories, Bright Revisions: Writing the Black Female Body.

By Maria Cristina Nisco

Colonialism and the European thought have created a system of dualisms on the basis of which a positive and a negative connotation was assigned to any reality the West encountered. The history of the world has been written according to categories establishing the white European countries as the norm – in contrast with any other other reality representing the difference; the West was the light (of progress and civilization) – in contrast with the darkness (of primitivism and wilderness). The metaphor of the dark has been for a long time associated to a particular country, Africa, notoriously the “dark continent”, the “heart of darkness”.

In recent times, Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic theories appropriated the dark continent definition to describe another mysterious, wild, and unknowable entity: the female body. Ann Mary Doane underlines that there is an “intricate historical articulation of the categories of racial difference and sexual difference”¹ implied in the dark continent trope. As a result, the black (and African) female body can be regarded as the symbol *par excellence* of darkness, with all the different layers of signification applied to it.

Saartjie Baartman, known to the Western audience as the Hottentot Venus, can be said to fully embody darkness for her being both African and a woman. Her black body was a mystery to the white European gaze, which consequently caged it and turned it into a mere object of curiosity and knowledge: the excessiveness of her genitalia and buttocks were shown as a proof of the wild sexuality characterizing black women. Parts of her body were exhibited during her life as well as her death (the Musée de l’Homme in Paris kept them until 1992).

In this condition of overexposure, a series of deep contradictions can be found: Baartman was physically present, she was the “spectacle”, but she was perceived almost as absent, as she was hardly accepted as a human being; she existed mostly as an image, an icon, something to be looked at, but at the same time, she represented a non-image, the negation of her image, as the only parts of her body that were regarded as worth of attention (genitalia and buttocks), were also the reason why she was not treated like a person.

According to Mary Ann Doane: “In a patriarchal society, to desexualize the female body is ultimately to deny its very existence.”² Baartman found herself in a condition of both extreme visibility and invisibility. She was an absent presence in Western history.

Reconfiguring dark continents through poetry and images.

It is exactly on history that, decades later, the Guyanese writer Grace Nichols draws for her poetry collection *The Fat Black Woman's Poems*.³ Nichols's fat black woman resists and rejects the stereotypes linked to her image by appropriating the negative labels implied in them.

Steatopygous sky
Steatopygous sea
Steatopygous waves
Steatopygous me

O how I long to place my foot
on the head of anthropology

to swig my breasts
in the face of history

to scrub my back
with the dogma of theology

to put my soap
in the slimming industry's
profitsome spoke

Steatopygous sky
Steatopygous sea
Steatopygous waves
Steatopygous me

Grace Nichols's fat black woman, a steatopygous woman (with reference to the protuberances of her body), equates herself with the sky, the sea, the waves, and in so doing, she confronts and opposes to anthropology, history, and theology, all definers of norms and discipline.

And it is through another contemporary voice that emerges Saartjie Baartman's need to hide from visibility. Her thought can speak in Elizabeth Alexander's poem “The Venus Hottentot”, which also gives the

name to her poetry collection.⁴

There is unexpected sun today
in London, and the clouds that
most days sift into this cage
where I am working have dispersed.
I am a black cutout against
a captive blue sky, pivoting
nude so the paying audience
can view my naked buttocks.,

I am called “Venus Hottentot.”
I left Capetown with a promise
of revenue: half the profits
and my passage home: A boon!
Master’s brother proposed the trip;
the magistrate granted me leave.

(...)

That was years ago. London’s
circuses are florid and filthy,
swarming with cabbage-smelling
citizens who stare and query,
Is it muscle? bone? or fat?”

(...)

Monsieur Cuvier investigates
between my legs, poking, prodding,
sure of his hypothesis.
I half expect him to pull silk
scarves from inside me, paper poppies,
then a rabbit! He complains
at my scent and does not think I
comprehend, but I speak
English. I speak Dutch. I speak
A little French as well, and
languages Monsieur Cuvier
will never know have names.
(...).⁵

Baartman's body becomes a bridge over a new subjectivity, implying a different way to approach the dark female body.

With reference to the complex and ambivalent representation of the black female body, Lyle Ashton Harris and Renée Valerie Cox realized the photograph "Venus Hottentot 2000" presented within the exhibition *Mirage: Enigmas of Race, Difference and Desire*⁶:

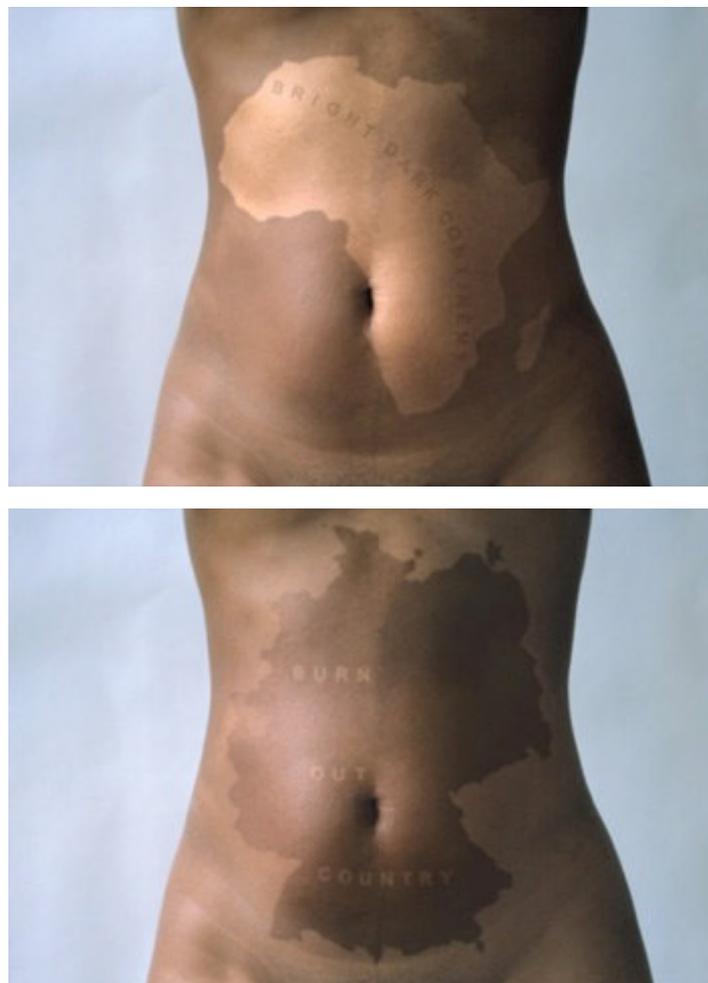


Renée Cox's body is inserted into metallic protuberances, hiding and revealing her profile at the same time, playing metaphorically with visibility and invisibility, visibility and invisibility, and drawing attention to the implicit meaning inscribed on images.

Writing the body

Focusing on the intertwining connections between body and writing is another female artist: Ingrid Mwangi. Born in 1975 in Nairobi, Kenya (of Kenyan father and German mother), Mwangi explores her being a black woman with African and European roots. Her body is the place where these worlds converge. She claims: “My body is the only thing that I actually own”: she thus places her body or parts of it (hair, skin, voice) at the very core of her photographs, performances and video- installations. She alters her image to question the oversimplified and stereotyped way in which race, gender and sexuality are narrated.

In the photos *Static Drift*⁷ she manipulates the color of her skin by applying different shades to her dark skin.



She traces on her stomach the borders of Africa adding the word “bright” to the traditional “dark continent” definition. Mwangi makes her body tell another story, a new story posing a distance from Freud’s authoritarian voice. She also traces the borders of a “burn-out” Germany, a European country now implying

darkness. The two countries inscribed in her genetic inheritance are, thus, impressed on her skin, on a new territory, with new borders and characteristics. Photos become photo-graphies⁸, not simply the site where writing takes place, but the expression of what Jean-Luc

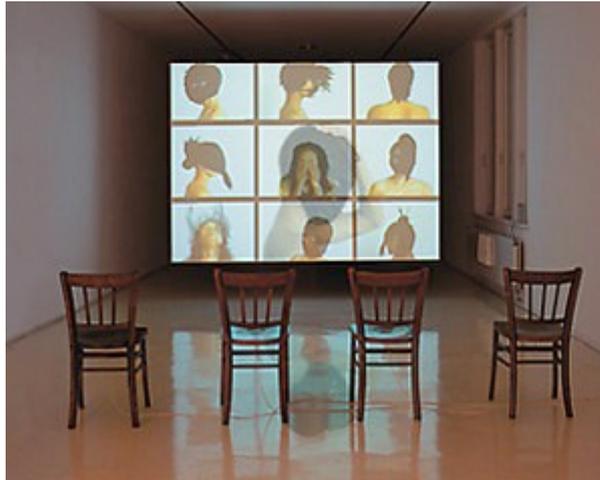
Nancy calls “l’écriture de notre corps”⁹, a writing exposing the body, inscribing it outside – in a sense, “outscribing” the body.

The photos *Shades of Skin*¹⁰ constitute the installation *Coloured*¹¹, where four monitors show the artist’s face, back, upper thighs, and feet (each part with a different shade of darkness).



The fragmentation of Mwangi’s body, not represented as a whole, recalls the absence and invisibility of Saartjie Baartman’s exhibition (even if no glimpse to the female genitalia is included in Mwangi’s installation).

In the video-installation *Neger don’t call me*¹² Mwangi projects on a large video images of her face covered by masks made of her own dread-locked hair.



Her experience with difference and prejudice (when she left Kenya for Germany as a teenager) is the basis of the installation. The artist's face gradually disappears, becoming unrecognizable, almost transformed into a beastly image, implicitly questioning Western discriminatory modes of representation. Linked to this critique towards the power images have in constructing identities, is also the video-installation *Cutting the Mask*¹³. Mwangi's image (from shoulders up) is displayed on two screens: in one of them she covers and masks her face with her dreadlocks, in the other she intensely stares at the camera while cutting away her dreadlocks.





What appears clearer and clearer is that the body is the interface between the self and society. The image is no longer a consumer good, it is explicitly charged with a social responsibility, it becomes a sort of prism through which each person can see and read (just like a text or an image) him/herself and the rest of the world in many different ways. During the conference *Mirage*, Stuart Hall talked about a “practice of risignification” consisting in working on and with the black body, thus becoming a sort of “auto-graphy”.¹⁴ Bodies are thus introduced into writing, their writing is uncovered and corpo-realized in a new dimension. New “lights” (coming out of darkness) join old ones.

Notes

¹ Mary Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire*, London, Macmillan Press, 1987, p.212.

² *Ibid.*, p.19.

³ Grace Nichols, “Thoughts drifting through the fat black woman’s head while having a full bubble bath” in *The Fat Black Woman’s Poems*, London, Virago Press, 1984, p.15.

⁴ Elizabeth Alexander, *The Venus Hottentot*, Charlottesville and London, University Press of Virginia, 1990, p.3.

⁵ *ibid.*, p.3-6.

⁶ London, May-July 1995, Institute of Contemporary Arts.

⁷ Two-piece digital photography, each 110 cm x 75 cm (2001).

⁸ See Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus*, Paris, Editions Métailié, 1992.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.14.

¹⁰ Four-piece digital photography (2001).

¹¹ One video projection, four videos on monitors (2001).

¹² One video projection (2000).

¹³ Two videos on monitors, two bases (2003).

¹⁴ Stuart Hall in Alan Read, ed., *The Fact of Blackness. Frantz Fanon and the Visual Representation*, London, Institute of Contemporary Arts, Seattle, Bay Press, 1996, p.20.

An Analysis of the Opium Situation in Afghanistan.

By Jesse Zonavich

On May 23, 2005, Afghan President Hamid Karzai, together with President Bush, held a press conference in the East Room of the White House to discuss the current state of Afghanistan. Inevitably, questions arose regarding opium, which currently accounts for 52 percent of Afghanistan's gross domestic product (GDP).¹ Karzai announced that cultivation of poppies, which are grown and processed to create opium, could be eradicated in "five or six years".² Therefore, opium's vast stake in the economy of Afghanistan, which is already greatly impoverished, must be replaced. President Bush believes crop substitution is a viable option. Bush believes crops such as pomegranates, honeydew melons, wheat, and corn are all practical alternatives to poppy cultivation. In a perfect world, legal crops would constitute all of Afghanistan's agricultural products, but the simple fact remains that poppy is far more valuable. In 2004, for example, wheat yielded gross profits of about \$390 per hectare. Conversely, poppy cultivation yielded gross profits of about \$4,600 per hectare under the same conditions.³ Aside from the feasibility of the aforementioned timeline and the numerous logistical problems involved with eradication, one gravely important, and widely ignored, question arises: will the quality of life be improved if poppy cultivation is eradicated? This paper argues that Afghanistan would benefit greatly from a significantly slower eradication program than the current one proposed. A gradual program would give Afghanistan's economy time to grow and absorb the impact suffered by opium withdrawal; Afghanistan's economy is simply too fragile to withstand eradication.

Prior to further discussion, three important factors should be considered when attempting to understand why farmers are pressured into cultivating opium: it is extremely valuable, it is cheap to plant, and poppy is ideally suited for Afghanistan's arid climate. Also, in a few select areas, poppy allows for two growing seasons (two crops) per year; wheat typically bears only one crop per year. Poppy is also able to withstand extended periods of drought better than typical staple crops. Poppy cultivation is also very labor intensive but does not require expensive, burdensome machinery. If one disregards the obvious detrimental effects of opium, poppy is the ideal crop for Afghanistan. Unfortunately, farmers are forced to borrow money from illegal drug traffickers at exorbitant rates, which forces farmers, in turn, to continue planting poppy to repay the loans. The drug traffickers typically receive their payment in the form of poppy.⁴ This cycle is repeated *ad nauseam*.

At the aforementioned press conference on May 23, 2005, President Karzai presented a rather one-sided

view of the eradication progress. Karzai vaguely proclaimed that a “20 to 30 percent reduction in poppies” could be expected.⁵ A 21% reduction in net hectares devoted to poppy cultivation was achieved but total production of opium was only reduced by 2.4%, which is modest considering the \$780 million the U.S. devoted to opium eradication (although not all of the \$780 million was spent by May of 2005).

	2004	Variation on 2004	2005
Net opium poppy cultivation	131,000 ha	- 21%	104,000 ha
in percent of actual agricultural land	2.9%		2.3%
number of provinces affected ¹	32 (all)		25
Average opium yield	32 kg/ha	22%	39 kg/ha
Production of opium	4200 mt	-2.4%	4,100 mt
in percent of world illicit opium production	87%		87% ²

Figure 1. Opium Yield (Source: Summary Findings of Opium Trends in Afghanistan, 2005, 1.)

Karzai pointed to the great progress made in the province of Nangarhar, which saw a 96% decrease in total hectares of farmland devoted to opium, but he failed to mention that numerous provinces observed a stark increase. For example, the province of Nimroz witnessed a 1,370% increase in total hectares.⁶ Karzai also failed to mention that the United States deliberately disregarded his wishes in regard to eradication techniques. On numerous occasions prior to the press conference, Karzai vehemently expressed that he did not want planes to spray poison on opium fields. But in January, reports began to leak that planes were indeed spraying poison on opium fields, especially in Nangarhar.⁷

A rise in various illnesses was reported in the area soon after the spraying.⁸ Christian Parenti, a reporter that interviewed an Afghan opium farmer whose son was poisoned by the spraying, received an ominous response regarding his son’s illness. According to the Afghan farmer, “If my son dies, I will join the Taliban, and I will kill as many Americans as I can find.”⁹ Karzai was acutely aware that spraying, especially in eastern (Nangarhar in particular) and southern areas could lead to dramatic hostility in the region due to Taliban influences.¹⁰ On numerous occasions, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has stated that narcotics breed instability and terrorism but have failed to mention that counter-narcotics operations may have the exact same debilitating effect.

The UNODC recently released a report, entitled “The Opium Situation in Afghanistan as of 29 August 2005”, which presented a misleading view of current conditions in Afghanistan. The article gave three reasons for the drop in opium cultivation in 2005: presidential respect (unspecified as to which president they are referring to) for anti-opium policies, fear of law enforcement, and lower opium prices.¹¹ An opinion

poll released in September of 2005 does support the idea that Afghans are fearful of law enforcement, but the data fails to support the UNODC's suggestion that poppy reduction is related to presidential respect. In fact, the September opinion poll cites "fear of eradication" as the biggest deterrent to poppy production. Also, the UNODC has failed to acknowledge that the correlation between opium supply and demand is a two-way street. As poppy production is drastically reduced, which is the ultimate goal of the UNODC, the temptation and desire to grow poppy may greatly increase due to higher potential profits. In essence, the cost to fight poppy production may increase exponentially as cuts in production cause opium prices to skyrocket. The September opinion poll suggests that monetary support for alternative crops and livelihood is considerably inadequate; only 0.1 percent of Afghans reduced poppy cultivation because of government assistance. The exact figures are presented in the following chart:

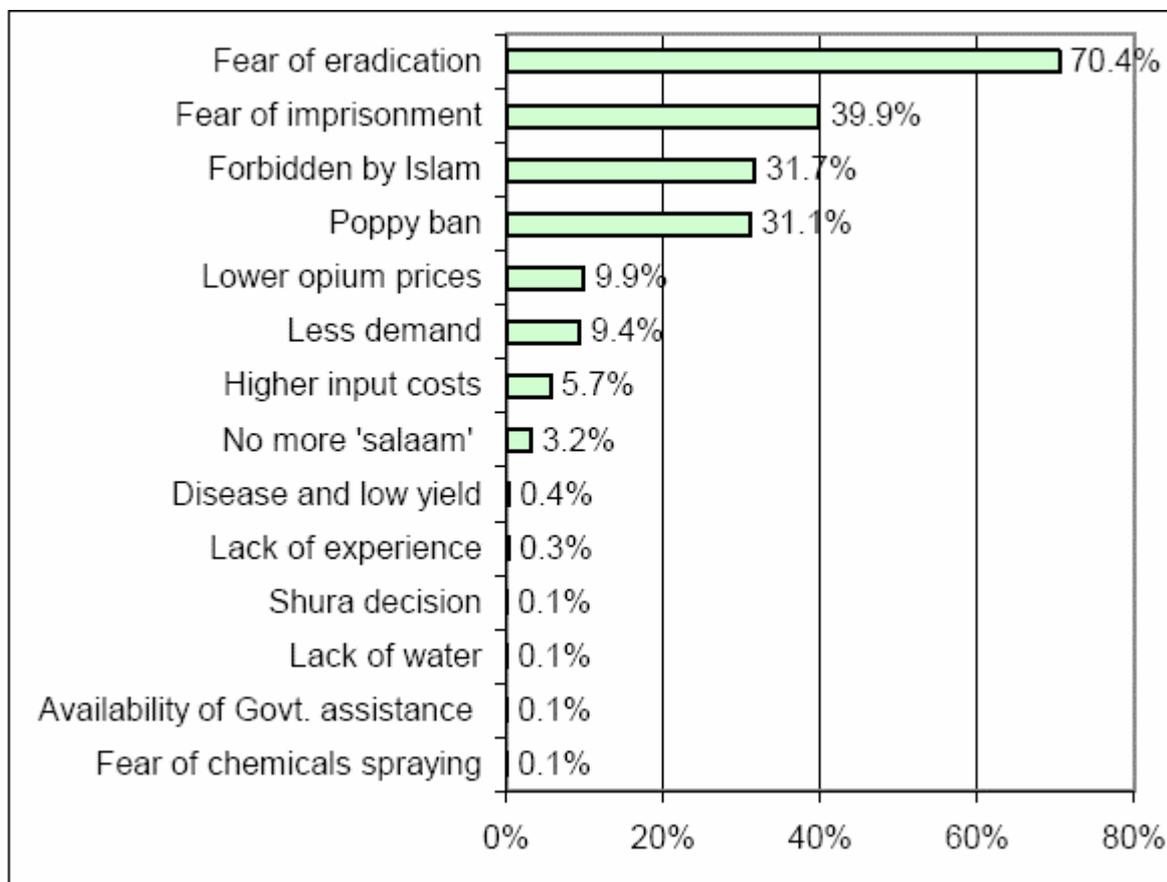


Figure 2: An opinion poll (1,922 farmers polled) regarding why poppy production was reduced or stopped entirely. More than one vote for each reason was counted. (Source: Summary Findings of Opium Trends in Afghanistan, 2005, 11.)

The data suggests that fear of governmental or religious reprisals are the primary reasons for the reduction of poppy. Afghans are curtailing production because they are fearful that their crop will be destroyed, and they will not be able to repay loans from drug traffickers; they are not stopping production because

they believe it is in their best long-term interest to do so. Development of alternative livelihood programs should progress at an equal pace with eradication. Unfortunately, alternative livelihood programs require substantial time and money. Infrastructure, namely roads and irrigation systems, must be built before switching to crops such as wheat, which requires more water and investment capital than poppy, are feasible. Either eradication efforts should be slowed or alternative programs should be accelerated to provide the best environment for Afghans to succeed without opium.

Success in Afghanistan should not merely be judged by how much poppy cultivation is reduced. If that was the case the Taliban should be praised because their opium ban in July of 2000 resulted in an 89.75% reduction of poppy cultivation (in terms of hectares devoted to poppy cultivation).¹² Numerous other factors should be considered, such as quality of life. Early indicators show that eradicating poppy has resulted in a drastic downturn for many families, women in particular. In Nangarhar, which saw a dramatic decrease in poppy production in 2005, there have been numerous reports that indebted farmers were forced to sell their own daughters to repay loans.¹³ Farah Stockman, a reporter embedded in Shinwar, Afghanistan in September of 2005, spoke to numerous people involved in the tragic practice of selling women. Girls as young as fourteen, and some as young as six, were offered to repay loans from drug traffickers.¹⁴ Those who refused to pay their debt were forced to flee the country, typically to surrounding areas such as Pakistan. In 2002, the opium industry recovered rapidly from the Taliban's opium ban. With recovery came an increase in the quality of life for women. The labor-intensive nature of poppy cultivation gave Afghan women a place of employment in an otherwise barren, desolated nation. Women employed in opium fields can make approximately twice as much as the average laborer in Kabul.¹⁵

The eradication of poppy fields left thousands jobless and, like in most times of need, looking to the government for help. In February of 2005, The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that tens of thousands have applied to join the Afghan National Army (ANA) but only a portion can be accepted. General Mohammad Ibrahim Ahmadzai, the chief of staff for ANA recruitment, commented on the situation: "We have 20,000 people on standby in 34 recruitment centers despite recruiting 3,000 every month."¹⁶ The boom in ANA applicants is generally a good sign, but it may also highlight the fact that opportunities in the private sector are extraordinarily low. The government simply lacks the funds to supply everyone with jobs.

This paper is not arguing that outside organizations and governments are wrong in their attempt to eliminate illegal opium from Afghanistan and, ultimately, the world. But, Afghans should be given adequate alternative programs before eradication is strongly implemented. Rapidly converting farms from poppy to less valuable crops could result in poverty and starvation if one bad growing season (or disease) occurs. Also, governments and organizations controlling drug policy in Afghanistan should consider alternative proposals to eradication. The Senlis Council, which is based in France, is currently examining whether legalizing opium production in Afghanistan for medicinal purposes could succeed.¹⁷ However, the UN and Afghan government are worried that Afghanistan is not stable enough for the plan to succeed. They are worried that legally produced opium could easily make its way to the illegal sector.¹⁸ It is a justified concern, but, in regard to the risk that legal opium may fall into the wrong hands, the Senlis Council

accurately concluded the following: “The risk of diversion exists but it would be minimal compared with 100% diversion occurring outside of a licensing system.”¹⁹

In 2005, Afghanistan accounted for 87 percent of the world’s illegal opium production and efforts made by outside organizations and governments should be applauded.²⁰ However, efforts need to be made to ensure that eradication of poppy does not lead to starvation and further indebtedness. Afghanistan’s economy and GDP is already startlingly depressed, and it should be the ultimate goal of everyone involved in shaping the future of Afghanistan to ensure that poppy eradication does not drag both even lower. As of June 2005, \$486.2 million has been approved to provide Afghans with alternatives to opium.²¹ Currently, it appears that alternative programs are falling woefully short and eradication is proceeding far too rapidly. However, it remains to be seen if alternative program funding is merely insufficient or that infrastructure improvements simply need to be given more time. Regardless, very few opportunities are available for farmers who have either chosen or been forced to halt poppy production. Equal attention needs to be devoted to opium and non-opium producers alike to ensure the success of Afghanistan.

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²¹ Ibid, 13.

Uprising...

By Nicole McNamara

It's a sleeping kind of lightning,
some thunder you knew only by night.
The dance that changes charmingly, every thirty seconds
or so, to mock the moon.
A tarantella built from cirrus and nimbus,
convulsing in unison with my pose.

But the force of the dance parades by too swiftly -
One spasm (repeated over)
courses through the eyes, closed against the night.
Able to invade even these most hidden of places;
caverns behind the eyes shiver in place of my spine.
The storm of subterfuge, perfect and glittering,
rises on the back of stratus.

The Tarantata; a *donna sola*.
Clockwise, then anti-clockwise, bows
to tambourine grate and mandolin howl.
Lightning wakes in Taranto, seeping to my bones like venom.
A venomous union; oppressive skies and electric steps.
Unlucky as it is to dance the Tarantella alone,
I revel in this ironic insurrection.

.....

It's a sleeping kind of lightning,
some thunder you knew only by night, not by sight.
Why would a storm be so thrilling?
The dance that changes so charmingly every thirty seconds,
or so, from dark to blinding light.
A tarantella built from cirrus and nimbus,
convulsing in unison with circumstances below.

But the force of the dance parades by too soon -

One spasm after another
courses through the eyes, closed against the night.
Able to invade even these most secret of places.

.....

It's a sleeping kind of lightning,
some thunder you knew only by night, not by sight.
Why would a storm be so thrilling?
The dance that changes so charmingly, every thirty seconds,
or so, to mock the moon.
A tarantella built from cirrus and nimbus,
convulsing in unison with circumstances below.

But the force of the dance parades by too swiftly -
One spasm after another
courses through the eyes, closed against the night.
Able to invade even these most secret of places.
The caverns behind the eyes shiver in place of my spine.
Perfect and glittering; the storm of pretense
rose on the back of stratus and strings.

.....

It's a sleeping kind of lightning,
some thunder you knew only by night, not by sight.
Why would a storm be so thrilling?
The dance that changes so charmingly, every thirty seconds
or so, to mock the moon.
A tarantella built from cirrus and nimbus,
convulsing in agreement with my pose.

But the force of the dance parades by too swiftly -
One spasm after another
courses through the eyes, closed against the night.
Able to invade these most hidden of places;
caverns behind the eyes shiver in place of my spine.
The storm of subterfuge, perfect and glittering,
rises on the back of stratus.

.....

It's a sleeping kind of lightning,
some thunder you knew only by night, not by sight.
Why would a storm be this thrilling?
The dance that changes quite charmingly, every thirty seconds
or so, to mock the moon.
A tarantella built from cirrus and nimbus,
convulsing as the shadow of my pose.

But the force of the dance parades by too swiftly -
One spasm after another
courses through the eyes, closed against the night.
Able to invade these most hidden of places;
caverns behind the eyes shiver in place of my spine.
The storm of subterfuge, perfect and glittering,
rises on the back of stratus.

.....

Uprising

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The dance that changes charmingly, every thirty seconds
or so, to mock the moon.
A tarantella built from cirrus and nimbus,
convulsing in unison with my pose.

But the force of the dance parades by too swiftly -
One spasm (repeated over)
courses through the eyes, closed against the night.
Able to invade even these most hidden of places;
caverns behind the eyes shiver in place of my spine.
The storm of subterfuge, perfect and glittering,
rises on the back of stratus.

The Tarantata; a *donna sola*.
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A venomous union; oppressive skies and electric steps.
Unlucky as it is to dance the Tarantella alone,

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rises on the back of stratus.

The Tarantata; *a donna sola*.
Clockwise, then anti-clockwise, bows
to tambourine grate and mandolin howl.
Lightning wakes in Taranto, seeping to my bones like venom.
A venomous union; oppressive skies and electric steps.
Unlucky as it is to dance the Tarantella alone,
I revel in this ironic insurrection.

Uprising...

It's a sleeping kind of lightning,
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The dance that changes charmingly, every thirty seconds
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A venomous union; oppressive skies and electric steps.
Unlucky as it is to dance the Tarantella alone,
I revel in this ironic insurrection.

Scars and Strings...

Summer skin slipped on much like a bathing suit,
covers the marks I am made to
feel ashamed of.

Red and white stains – Indications
of a winter baby,
bloodied and grown too fast for her coat.

Sewing lines beneath thin gauze,
silk roads diverted towards the shoulders.

They are purple flowers thrown against
the spine again, nine times, again...
Crushed pigment strings that spread
with grace across a pale back.

As autumn unstitches each vertebra
the flowers fade, and sour to green.
Blue becomes the horror, with white
a saviour and acting shadow.

Embroidered with frost
my summer scars recede into mist.
The arc of my spine swept free {almost}
of blossom bones and fabric strands, without
a summer skin in sight.

Poetic Prose and Imperialism: The Ideology of Form in Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness.

By John Parras

Inscribed in the 1899 novella Heart of Darkness, and serving as context for the characters' upriver journey, is the history of an immense enterprise of cultural appropriation, a "fantastic invasion"¹ that drastically influenced the course of modernist aesthetics: namely, the expansion of narrative prose into the realm of poetry--a literary phenomenon tied, in Conrad's work, to late-nineteenth-century European colonialism. The ideological struggle between poetry and prose in Heart of Darkness affects thematic as well as formal structures of the novella, played out in the friction between lyric and narrative modes as well as in the tension between artistic and imperialist practices. Thus, Heart of Darkness offers a unique opportunity for gauging not only the aesthetic relations among genres, but also the interpenetrations of genre and history, of literature and social practices.

Jean-Paul Sartre's pronouncement that prose is an attitude of mind applies equally well to poetry, and this essay begins with an analysis of the "poetic attitude" inscribed in Heart of Darkness--the set of working assumptions governing the text's posture toward poetic discourse. I offer an account of how poetry is figured and employed, how its traditional literary territory is invaded by the ambitious prose of the novella. I am interested not only in Conrad's implementation of poetic techniques such as repetition, rhythm, image and symbolic pattern to pioneer a modernist prose style, but also in the specific ways the categories poetry and prose are constituted as cultural categories in the uniquely Conradian, and in the generally modern, universe. It is not so much the technical or formal differences between verse and prose that are at issue here than the different practical functions assigned to each, what ideological purposes each serves within the particular historical context of late Victorian imperialism. The genre of poetry, in particular, is saturated with historically variable preconceptions that play a decisive role in determining its scope in the social as well as in the literary realm. Since, as Heart of Darkness so acutely demonstrates, poetry is situated within a system of discourses whose values are determined institutionally and socially, we need to consider it not simply as the lyrical expression of a private individual but rather as a collective utterance that serves to legitimize or subvert predominant structures of power and knowledge. Thus, working with Fredric Jameson's assumption that "form is immanently and intrinsically an ideology in its own right,"² I

first consider the ideological ramifications of Conrad's hybrid poetic prose, discussing the divergent social functions of poetry and prose in Marlow's imperial world. Singling out especially the dialectical contest I see operating between a nonlinear, subjective lyricism and the sequential, rational demands of narrative, I then assess the roles these fundamentally distinct discourses play in constituting--and thus limiting or liberating--human subjectivity within the colonial realm of Conrad's novel.

Remarks on the poetic aspects, however variously conceived, of Conrad's writing style have become staples of Conradian scholarship; rare it is to find a critical study that does not at least briefly assess the "musical," "lyrical," "rhythmic," "suggestive," "incoherent," "non-representational," "subjective," or "atmospheric" qualities of Conrad's fiction. This is particularly true with regard to Heart of Darkness, generally considered the most poetic text of Conrad's oeuvre. Unfortunately, critical discussion of, say, the "aura of poetic allusion"³ in that work often does not proceed much beyond vague, typically reverent, passing observation (with the notable exception of Ian Watt's work, mentioned below). Though Conrad's own remarks on the so-called symbolist aspects of his work fail to clarify matters, it is probable that, like Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and other modern British novelists, Conrad infused his prose with the methods of French Symbolist poetry in order to counter what was perceived as the increasingly burdensome demands of narrative realism and to add notes of mystery, symbolism and musical form to fictional prose. For modern fiction writers, the techniques of Symbolist verse suggested ways of representing the mind and emotions that transcended the rationalist analytical methods typically employed by discursive prose forms, including the realistic novel, of the nineteenth century. The result, in Heart of Darkness, was not merely a new type of formally innovative prose; the poetic forms employed in Conrad's novella also suggested new avenues of perceiving and interpreting the imperial experience. While these new ways of looking and understanding did not necessarily result in subversive critiques of imperialist practice, they did offer liberating glimpses of alternatives to imperialist ways of approaching the world.

Despite the poetic qualities of the text--its preoccupation with repetition, rhythm and pattern, subjective, dream-like experience, and open-ended symbolism--poetry is explicitly mentioned only once in the story. This takes place late in the narrative, at the Inner Station, just as the Russian "harlequin" is taking his leave of Marlow. Interestingly, the Russian sums up his impression of Kurtz by referring to the latter's poetic talent:

"Ah! I'll never meet such a man again. You ought to have heard him recite poetry-- his own too it was, he told me. Poetry!" He rolled his eyes at the recollection of these delights. "Oh, he enlarged my mind!"

(140)

The force of this little scene derives in part from the incongruity between the word "poetry" and the alien context in which it is uttered. As the Russian's amazement and Marlow's quiet irony intimate, so delightful and esoteric a pursuit as poetry is decidedly unanticipated and out-of-place in the filthy, brutish world of the Congo. But Kurtz, of course, is singular and astonishing. Despite his ultra-utilitarian bent--exemplified

by his unsurpassed success in obtaining ivory--he also finds time to engage in the expressly quixotic pursuit of composing verse. At this point in the narrative, Marlow already knows that Kurtz is a painter, and later on he learns that Kurtz had also been “a great musician” with a solid chance for “immense success” (153). These cultural pursuits--poetry, painting and music--comprise the artistic triad Conrad sets up as antithetical to the prosaic, routine practices of capitalism and colonialism. Unlike “correct entries” and “readable reports,” art plays no essential role in the bureaucratic system of the company. It doesn’t serve to obtain ivory or reform savage customs, but rather “enlarges the mind”; it is a disinterested or marginal “delight” at odds with the sober duty and efficiency required by the Company. Indeed, art as portrayed in Heart of Darkness can also serve to critique the imperialist project, as evidenced by Kurtz’s painting “representing a woman draped and blindfolded carrying a lighted torch. The background was sombre--almost black. The movement of the woman was stately, and the effect of the torchlight on the face was sinister” (79)--obviously insinuating the hypocritical aspects of European “justice” in Africa.⁵

We know too that Kurtz was a master of written prose. His report to the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs is described by Marlow as “a beautiful piece of writing” demonstrating an “unbounded power of eloquence--of words--of burning noble words” (118, *emphasis added*). Eloquence for Conrad, as Jeremy Hawthorn has pointed out, is a highly ambivalent and suspect talent, a word that Conrad “hardly ever uses innocently” and that “nearly always implies a morally suspect facility with words, an ability to build beautiful verbal structures which are at variance with what is really the case.”⁶ With regard to Kurtz’s report, eloquence and nobility of purpose serve to associate prose with the ideological strategy of couching grand ideas about progress and civilization in fine, often empty, rhetorical phrases that beguile individuals with the dubious notion that they are participating in a noble collective mission. Another work of prose--Towser’s An Inquiry into some Points of Seamanship--drives home this point. Marlow comments:

The matter looked dreary reading enough with illustrative diagrams and repulsive tables of figures and the copy was sixty years old. ...Not a very enthralling book, but at first glance you could see there a singleness of intention, an honest concern about the right way of going to work which made these humble pages...luminous with another than a professional light” (99, *emphasis added*).

Such light is not the illuminating radiance of art, here, but rather the sham, blinding glare of the often hypocritical ideas bolstering the “great work” of civilization. Towser’s book, Marlow suggests, tries to raise the work of imperialism above the realm of toil and plunder by quietly glorifying it as a noble collective mission in which the “honest concern” of every individual plays an essential role. Read in the larger context of the novel, however, Marlow’s reading of Towser is called into question by less confident observations, such as the understated remark that “the conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much” (50-51). If Towser’s book represents one of those ideas that “redeems” the “brute” conquest of the earth (“What redeems it is the idea only” [50-51]), it does so only if one does not look into it too much, only if one refuses to contemplate a larger historical picture that takes

non-European and anti-imperialist viewpoints into consideration.⁷

Conrad's fictional prose comprising Heart of Darkness occupies an ambivalent space somewhere among these other discourses of art, poetry, rhetoric, reports, non-fictional prose. As a romantic story of adventure set in a real world of colonial exploitation, the work serves--to some extent it is difficult to measure--to reproduce imperial ideology and participates at least marginally in the task of constituting subjects who will be prepared to carry out the demands of life and work in an era of capitalist expansion: "to celebrate adventure," one critic writes, "is to celebrate empire, and vice versa."⁸ However, the complexity of Conrad's text renders its ideological status radically ambivalent. Despite the profoundly disturbing racism critics have exposed in the work, it does take long strides toward critiquing the most egregious excesses of colonialism and debunking the most prominent clichés of capitalist thought.⁹ The very possibility of "imagining the unimaginable"--civilizers as savages, cannibals as restrained beings, England as seat of darkness and Africa a place of light--does at least indicate that the narrative vessel of Heart of Darkness is piloted by one attuned to complexities and unsettling implications, by an eccentric who "did not represent his class" (48).¹⁰

That Marlow is to be distinguished from typical seamen/colonialists is borne out most explicitly by the manner in which he relates "one of [his] inconclusive experiences," as the frame narrator disparagingly puts it (51). For Marlow's "inconclusive" manner of telling, a narrative technique that is compared to a spectral haze, expresses merely an ambiguous morality, an ethical ambivalence reinforced by the novel's much-discussed undermining of traditional narrative progression, climax and closure. Heart of Darkness resists the textual closure of traditional narratives, which supposedly yield an "inner" substance of meaning. Meeting Kurtz provides no conventional end-punctuation to the tale. Full signification is endlessly deferred by Conrad's "rhetoric of enigma," by a Symbolist aesthetic that refuses to overtly "name," and by the tale's complex, nested frame narration.¹¹ Edward Said and others have argued that such a loss of narrative certainty corresponds with and reflects the demise of imperial confidence and mastery;¹² indeed, in Heart of Darkness it does seem as if the narrative disruptions signal a loss of confidence in imperial modes of cognition, which at times lack the capacity to comprehend Africa. Hearing the strange music of drums in the forest, for instance, Marlow admits,

"Whether it meant war, peace, or prayer we could not tell.... We were wanderers on a prehistoric earth, on an earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet.... The prehistoric man was cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us--who could tell? We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings" (95-96).

The inadequacy of European ways of understanding the African world is driven home in another way when Marlow comments on the utterly inappropriate manner the company has devised to pay the cannibals--with lengths of copper wire which cannot be traded. Marlow observes: "unless they swallowed the wire itself, or made loops of it to snare the fishes with, I don't see what good their extravagant salary could be to them" (104). Like these pieces of useless copper wire, European narrative traditions seem unfit for the African experience, and it is perhaps in order to compensate for such deficiency that Conrad

“poeticizes” Marlow’s storytelling. As mentioned above, Marlow’s narrative techniques--which result in a fog of semantic ambiguity, an “outer haze of meaning surrounding the story”--may of course be associated with what are now generally considered to be the Symbolist methods of Modernist novels I touched on earlier.¹³ In *Heart of Darkness*, interestingly enough, the image of a haze plays a crucial symbolic role in at least one key episode, when the steamer, mired in fog, is threatened by a “savage clamour” (105) from the bush. Marlow reports: “What we could see was just the steamer we were on, her outlines blurred as though she had been on the point of dissolving, and a misty strip of water, perhaps two feet broad, always around her--and that was all. The rest of the world was nowhere...” (102). The narrative uneasiness and concomitant threat to imperial mastery symbolically elicited by haze in the novel is perhaps best reflected in one pilgrim’s fearful comment: “We will all be butchered in this fog” (102).

It is telling, too, that Conrad himself associated the symbolic, suggestive, and inconclusive quality of prose writing specifically with poetry and art. To be a writer, he wrote in a 1895 letter, “you must treat events...as the outward sign[s] of inward feelings,” and to accomplish this “you must cultivate your poetic faculty....”¹⁴ He writes in another, later letter:

A work of art is very seldom limited to one exclusive meaning and not necessarily tending to a definite conclusion. And this for the reason that the nearer it approaches art, the more it acquires a symbolic character. All the great creations of literature have been symbolic, and in that way have gained in complexity, in power, in depth and in beauty.¹⁵

Though in the same breath Conrad explicitly dissociates himself from the “literary proceedings” of the “Symbolist School of poets or prose writers,” his work undeniably stands on the shoulders of that movement, owing a debt not only to the avant-garde techniques pioneered by Symbolist poets but also to the increased respect the novel gained in part by associating itself with what was then considered the “morally superior” genre of poetry.¹⁶ Indeed, in addition to its Symbolist inheritance, Conrad’s text hints at the influence of nineteenth-century poems rooted in the tradition of oral storytelling, such as “The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner.”¹⁷ Marlow is, then, a remote descendent of the conventional seaman-storyteller so prevalent in lyric verse. He is kin to the narrator of Wordsworth’s “The Thorn” as well as to Coleridge’s Ancient Mariner, and such a poetic ancestry makes itself felt as a strange, submerged, almost hidden presence in Conrad’s text. For poetry in *Heart of Darkness* finds expression less in outright rhetorical flourish or stylistic techniques than in the prose’s “unconscious” poetic attitudes and obscured origins. Running parallel with the narrative of Marlow’s journey upriver is another journey--the effaced passage of prose fiction into the “impenetrable” literary forests of nineteenth-century Symbolist and lyric-inspired verse.

It would be instructive now to take a close look at one particularly allusive passage in *Heart of Darkness*, one that occurs near the beginning of the second section of the tale, after Marlow finally gets his rivets and the rusty old steamer begins its uncertain voyage upriver to the Inner Station. The passage begins with what seems to be a straightforward realistic description of the African landscape:

Going up that river was like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when

vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings. An empty stream, a great silence, an impenetrable forest. The air was warm, thick, heavy, sluggish. There was no joy in the brilliance of sunshine. The long stretches of the waterway ran on, deserted, into the gloom of overshadowed distances. On the silvery sandbanks hippos and alligators sunned themselves side by side. The broadening waters flowed through a mob of wooded islands (92-93).

The apparently realistic use of language here, however, may on closer inspection be recognized as comprised of poetic tropes. The opening simile, the personification of nature (“rioting,” “kings,” “sunned themselves,” “mob”), and the oxymorons (“empty stream,” “great silence,” joyless sunshine) all serve to convey the extremities of an African experience that tests not only the senses but the language used to describe sensory experience. Despite the great distances and the absence of people, the landscape seems close and crowded, an effect perhaps of the passage’s prolixity and parataxis (“warm, thick, heavy, sluggish”). There is a faint suggestion of social anarchy (“rioting,” “mob”) that seems not accidental, and the thick alliteration, assonance and consonance in the sentence “On the silvery sandbanks hippos and alligators sunned themselves side by side” appears quite deliberate. Taken together, these devices indicate a close attention to the texture of language, to what might be called Conrad’s poetic rhetoric; the well-crafted style underscores the constructed, artificial and non-mimetic nature of even realistic description.

Conrad follows up this description of the physical setting with psychological and tonal speculations:

you lost your way on that river as you would in a desert and butted all day long against shoals trying to find the channel till you thought yourself bewitched and cut off forever from everything you had once known--somewhere--far away--in another existence perhaps. There were moments when one’s past came back to one, as it will sometimes when you have not a moment to spare to yourself; but it came in the shape of an unrestful and noisy dream remembered with wonder amongst the overwhelming realities of this strange world of plants and water and silence. And this stillness of life did not in the least resemble a peace. It was the stillness of an implacable force brooding over an inscrutable intention. It looked at you with a vengeful aspect (93).

Drawing his readers/listeners in with his use of second-person pronouns, Conrad here continues his use of contrasts (river with desert, past with present, dream with reality, stillness with unrest) and moves toward a more abstract depiction of Africa (“implacable force,” “inscrutable intention”) as a malevolent, vengeful other. In the concluding section of the passage, Conrad invokes the European values--hard work, perseverance, dutifulness--that will supposedly protect an individual (Marlow, in this case) from such life-threatening African vengeance:

I got used to it afterwards; I did not see it anymore; I had no time. I had to keep guessing at the channel; I had to discern, mostly by inspiration, the signs of hidden banks; I watched for sunken stones; I was learning to clap my teeth smartly before my heart flew out when I shaved by a fluke some infernal sly old snag that would have ripped the life out of the tin-pot

steamboat and drowned all the pilgrims; I had to keep a look-out for the signs of dead wood we could cut up in the nights for next day's steaming. When you have to attend to things of that sort, to the mere incidents of the surface, the reality--the reality I tell you--fades. The inner truth is hidden-- luckily, luckily. But I felt it all the same; I felt often its mysterious stillness watching me at my monkey tricks, just as it watches you fellows performing on your respective tight-ropes for--what is it? half-a-crown a tumble (93-94).

It is not difficult to understand why this passage is often cited by critics intent on underscoring Conrad's poetic force. Perhaps nowhere in the text is naturalistic description of the voyage upriver so intimately blended with symbolic suggestiveness as in this single paragraph. Replete with the concrete sensory details expected of conventional realistic description, the passage also resonates with a figurative energy that serves to characterize the journey symbolically as "something more than" an autobiographical, naturalistic account of one man's experience of European colonialism in the African Congo. Marlow's voyage becomes a figure for civilized man's apprehensive return to his primeval origins, a voyage in which the self is frighteningly bewitched, stripped of the ideological conventions it once relied on to understand the world, and confronted by a malevolent reality which stares back at the disoriented traveler with an unsettling gaze. The voyage becomes a figure for the search for truth, a "truth stripped of its cloak of time" (97) that can only be found beyond the margins of knowledge set by European civilization. Thus, over and above a purely stylistic strategy, in Jameson's words, "to derealize the content and make it available for consumption on some purely aesthetic level," there is also the production of a new metaphysics, "a new myth about the 'meaning' of life and the absurdity of existence in the face of a malevolent nature."¹⁸ This myth is couched in an adventurous, exotic search for universal truth or primitive knowledge that displaces or, in Said's vision, "obscures the highly if obscurely organized political circumstances obtaining when knowledge is produced."¹⁹

As a search for truth, the figure of the voyage may be associated with another enterprise with similar goals--the literary project, the work of writing and interpreting. For Marlow's journey upriver bears striking similarities to Conrad's act of producing the story. Like Marlow watching the channel for "signs of hidden banks...and dead wood," Conrad must be sensitive to meaningful details along his way in order to produce "with immense effort a thin trickle of MS"²⁰--a curious trope which interestingly connects Conrad's literary production with the "precious trickle of ivory" (68) Kurtz extracts from the bush. That Conrad himself associated his project of writing with Marlow's captainship is suggested by a letter Conrad wrote to Edward Garnett in which he refers to *Heart of Darkness* as a story "I myself tried to shape blindfold";²¹ Marlow offers a similar analogy when, offering his listeners a figure for his piloting the steamboat, he suggests picturing "a blindfolded man set to drive a van over a bad road" (94).²² Marlow's task of keeping the steamboat afloat and moving it upriver toward the Inner Station, then, is analogous to Conrad's task of keeping the story moving forward toward its revelation.

In such a scenario, the figure of the river plays a central role in representing the linear movement of narrative plot, a concept closely linked with the broader notion of progress--that typical, even essential,

principle of the imperialist mind-set. The forest, on the other hand, may serve as a figure for poetic suggestiveness, indeterminacy, incoherence, inconclusiveness, and ambiguity.²³ That the forest is “impenetrable” might be considered a figural evocation of the utter difficulty of navigating past and present poetic discourse. Conrad’s depiction of nature in *Heart of Darkness* is eerily similar to that found in Baudelaire’s poem “Correspondances,” for instance, and Conrad’s anthropomorphism of nature seems imbued with Wordsworthian Romanticism: posited as the city’s other, as a retreat from civilization, nature is personified as an agent of ultimate knowledge and truth.²⁴

Unlike Wordsworthian nature, however, the forest Marlow encounters is utterly alien to human sympathy; it is inscrutable, impenetrable, and ultimately unreadable. Moreover, the truth it contains is no longer a source of peace but of distress. This is because, over the stretch of the hundred years since Wordsworth’s day, nature had been transformed from a beneficent school of universal sympathy to a swamp of moral darkness; through an unrelenting socio-cultural syllogism powered by capitalist enterprise, it had become the place of Kurtz’s horrors, the out-of-sight site of the unchecked machinations of imperialism. “By the time Conrad arrived,” Hunt Hawkins writes of Conrad’s arrival in the Congo in 1890, “pressure from Arab slaving, along with increasing Belgian exploitation, had devastated the region.”²⁵ Indeed, the forest, which “looked at you with a vengeful aspect,” seems to accuse its observer of some horrible infraction, the “fantastic invasion” of Africa by greedy and callous explorers in search of raw materials and new markets. Indeed, as Marlow tries to describe the strange uneasiness the forest inspires in him, he seems to touch a soft spot in one of his silent listeners aboard the *Nellie*, as if he had probed into a source of hidden guilt. It is arresting that this tender spot pertains to working for profit, performing “monkey tricks” and “tight-rope” acts for “half a crown a tumble.” Significantly, this is one of the few crucial points in Conrad’s text where the narrative breaks out of Marlow’s frame tale in order to insert what amounts to an admonitory ideological threat: “‘Try to be civil, Marlow,’ growled a voice” (36). It is as though some invisible hand intervenes at the precise moment Conrad comes too close to exposing the fact that nature is treated merely as raw material for the capitalistic labor process, a fact that the alienating, anthropomorphic myth had just attempted to displace.

On another level, the Romantic and Symbolist attitudes of *Heart of Darkness* do underscore its gestures toward socially unmediated, subjective, even hallucinatory experience. In wanting to strip away the traps of civilization in a return to primitive nature, Conrad’s tale attempts to reaffirm the stability of the subject who is able to stand apart from society and engage in a pure consubstantiality with the world. Yet in Conrad’s work, this desire for unmediated experience is clouded by the suspicion that consubstantiality with “pagan”²⁶ or savage nature will result in meanings too meaningful, meanings too horrible, for an individual to bear--as borne out in the example of Kurtz. Thus Marlow is troubled by a double burden: the pervasive anxiety of meaninglessness that gives rise to his metaphysical and anthropomorphic treatment of nature, and the fear that an indulgent surfeit of meaning will result in insanity or death.

The apprehension that experience--particularly the reified experience of Company bureaucrats--is meaningless leads Marlow to explore--at least tentatively--what might be called, to use Leo Bersani’s term, “fragmentary” desire; Bersani defines fragmentary desire as an individual’s quest for “heterogeneity of..

desiring impulses,” the urge to go beyond her socially defined, centered self by transgressing the limits of conventional forms both social and literary.²⁷ In Conrad’s passage quoted at length above, such fragmentary desire can be associated with what I distinguish as Marlow’s poetic proclivities, his obsession with gleaning the meaning of the forest’s “impenetrable” and “bewitching” gaze, his desire to “enlarge the mind” by contemplating peripheral or exfoliative meanings not related to the central interests of capitalist enterprise, figured in the text as navigation and captainship. Opposed to these fragmentary desires are what Bersani calls “structured” desires, which provide the basis for coherency and unification of the self by sublimating heterogeneous urges into some dominating interest or project. In the passage from Heart of Darkness quoted earlier, Marlow’s structured desires are what protect him from being inundated or overwhelmed by the forest’s horrible meanings. Marlow invokes such structured desires as a series of “excuses” for his not understanding the forest; even his rhetoric becomes firmly structured by anaphora as he claims he avoided fully returning the forest’s gaze because “I had no time. I had to keep guessing at the channel; I had to discern...the signs of hidden banks.... I had to keep a look-out for signs of dead wood we could cut up in the nights for next day’s steaming.” Forced to attend to such “surface truths,” to the demands of seamanship and steam, Marlow absolves himself from confronting the dangerous peripheral seductions which might diffuse or dissipate his otherwise structured existence.

As the demands of captainship parallel the strictures of narrative, Marlow’s preoccupation with the forest holds analogous to the text’s engagement with poetry. Virtually effaced, yet tingeing the entire novella, poetry becomes an unrestrained play of the imagination that threatens to fragment and incapacitate the boat captain--and the narrator--in hallucinatory speculations about the forest’s “inscrutable intention.” Too much poetry would stop the flow of narrative and short-circuit novelistic suspense by becoming sidetracked with other, nonlinear desires. Because of this, poetic or fragmentary desires are diametrically opposed to the prosaic work of imperialism, which proscribes the practice of certain activities (speculating about “hidden” meanings) and demands engagement in others (steering the boat) in order to preserve that unified self capable of functioning in the Western capitalist, colonialist or imperialist system. Ultimately, then, the dialectic of poetry and prose in Heart of Darkness is implicated in broader historical and metaphysical issues, issues which find their supreme expression in the contradictory figure of Kurtz, whose paradoxical character attempts to embrace both poetry and imperialism.

In Kurtz’s world, the poetic sensibility is subsumed by the dominant cultural authority of prose; ultimately, any aesthetic pursuit becomes equated with a violent rupture from justice. One such rupture is compellingly illustrated upon the steamer’s arrival at the Inner Station, when Marlow, surveying the scene with a telescopic field glass, comes across what he had initially thought to be “attempts at ornamentation” (57): a series of posts arranged around the station that were topped by peculiar knobs of wood. “I returned [my sight],” Marlow explains, “deliberately to the first I had seen--and there it was black, dried, shrunken, with closed eyelids--a head that seemed to sleep at the top of that pole, and with the shrunken dry lips showing a narrow white line of the teeth...” (57). In the Congo, then, ornamental beauty is replaced by signs of a violent system of authority and dominance.²⁸ At Kurtz’s Inner Station, the “merely” ornamental is replaced by what Marlow calls the “symbolic” (57)--the “expressive and puzzling, striking and disturbing” (57) message of authority emitted by this display of the decapitated, mutilated, shrunken heads of so-called

“rebels” (58). Yet intriguingly, despite the obvious political ramifications of that term (“rebels”), Marlow insists on the apolitical, non-commercial and non-utilitarian aspects of this gruesome exhibit of power: “I want you clearly to understand,” Marlow tells his listeners, “that there was nothing exactly profitable in these heads being there. They only showed that Mr. Kurtz lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts...” (57). Marlow’s attempt to efface the social and political implications of those “non-ornamental” heads by identifying their existence with Kurtz’s personal excesses is permeated with layers of Conradian narrative irony we will perhaps never be able to penetrate. The fact, however, that Marlow, on seeing Kurtz for the first time, becomes aware of the failure of referential discourse, of the radical disjunction between words and things, may indicate that Conrad is at least aware of the non-referential aspects of much of his own discourse. Hawkins makes a similar point: “as Conrad presents history...it is at best no more than words, and words are opaque, unable to convey reality. Worse than that, words are treacherous, unstable, shifting, distorting. Conrad frequently voiced his mistrust of language, the very medium of his craft.”²⁹ The disjunction between history and fiction in Heart of Darkness seem unbreachable. Reading Conrad, are we not, as Watt has put it, made aware instead of “the ease with which the individual can be unaware of the disjunction between his words and his works in a society which is so widely and deeply fissured by the contradictions between its pretenses and its realities” (235)?

Read as a representation of the unconscious imperial mind-set, Heart of Darkness disturbingly suggests poetic prose’s intimate connection with the more concrete activities of colonization and their ideological effects. Lyrical narrative seems to conscript poetry into its service, enslaving it to carry out the crucial task that more sequential narrative is thought no longer capable of accomplishing: to produce meaning. The supreme conventional ending of traditional plot--“his last words were your name”--is shown to be an outright and unserviceable lie. Thus, only through a bewildering encounter with the unknown; only, to use Arthur Rimbaud’s words, through “a long, gigantic and rational derangement”³⁰ of traditional orders could turn-of-the-century civilization attempt to save itself from its own horrors. Were it not for characters like Kurtz, who take the logic of imperialism to its extreme conclusions, who find illumination in the abyss of human travail, would the crimes of the colonialist enterprise be as clearly visible? Would we be thinking about Conrad’s work at all if it weren’t for the “poetic force” of Kurtz’s transgressions, his explorations beyond the structured desires of imperialist discourse? Is it not madness itself, as Foucault has suggested, that compels us to desist our own madnesses?³¹

Notes

¹ “Heart of Darkness,” in The Complete Works of Joseph Conrad, vol. 16 (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1924) p. 26. All subsequent references to the text are from this edition.

² Fredric Jameson, The Political Unconscious (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 141.

³ C.B. Cox, Joseph Conrad: The Modern Imagination (London: Dent, 1974), p. 47.

⁴ Peters, John G. Conrad and Impressionism (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁵ For a discussion of the implications of Kurtz's painting, see Brian W. Shaffer, The Blinding Torch: Modern British Fiction and the Discourse of Civilization (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), pp. 47-57.

⁶ Emphases added. Quoted in Allon White, The Uses of Obscurity (Boston: Routledge, 1981), p. 125. See White for further discussion of Conrad's "deep suspicion" of eloquence and rhetoric.

⁷ For other discussions of the significance of Towser's book, see Homi K. Bhabba, "Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority Under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817," in The Location of Culture (New York: Routledge, 1994) pp. 102-122, and V.S. Naipaul, "Conrad's Darkness," in The Return of Eva Peron (New York: Knopf, 1980), pp. 215-216.

⁸ Martin Green, Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire (New York: Basic Books, 1979), p.37.

⁹ On racism in Heart of Darkness, see essays by Chinua Achebe, Francis B. Singh, and C.P. Sarvan in Heart of Darkness, 3d ed., ed. Robert Kimbrough (New York: Norton, 1988); Patrick Brantlinger, "Epilogue: Kurtz's 'Darkness' and Conrad's Heart of Darkness," in Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830- 1914 (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1988); and Hunt Hawkins, "The Issue of Racism in Heart of Darkness," Conradiana 14:3 (1982): pp. 163-171.

¹⁰ On Marlow's sympathies for Africans, see Hawkins, "The Issue of Racism in Heart of Darkness," p. 168.

¹¹ For a full discussion of these narrative issues, see for instance Peter Brooks, "An Unreadable Report: Conrad's Heart of Darkness," in Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative (New York: Vintage, 1984).

¹² Benita Parry, "Narrating Imperialism," in Cultural Readings of Imperialism: Edward Said and the Gravity of History, eds. Keith Ansell-Pearson, Benita Parry, and Judith Squires (New York: St.Martin's Press, 1997), pp. 227-246.

¹³ For a general discussion, see Melvin J. Friedman, "The Symbolist Novel: Huysmans to Malraux," in Modernism: 1890-1930, eds. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (New York: Penguin, 1991), pp. 453-466. Other significant appraisals of poetic prose include E.M. Forster's Aspects of the Novel (New York: Harcourt, 1927), Alan Friedman's The Turn of the Novel (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), and Ralph Freedman's The Lyrical Novel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963).

¹⁴ "To Edward Noble," 28 Oct 1895. The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad: Volume I: 1861-1897, eds. Frederick R. Karl and Laurence Davies (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 252, emphasis added..

¹⁵ “To Barrett H. Clark,” 4 May 1918. Joseph Conrad on Fiction, ed. Walter F. Wright (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), p. 36.

¹⁶ See, for instance, Henry James’s critical essays on fiction in Henry James: Selected Literary Criticism, ed. Morris Shapira (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1981). Northrop Frye likewise sees fiction’s reputation as dependent on poetry when he states that “any attempt to give literary dignity to prose is likely to give it some of the characteristics of verse.” Northrop Frye, The Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957), p. 263.

¹⁷ On comparisons of this poem with “Heart of Darkness,” see Warren U. Ober, “Heart of Darkness: ‘The Ancient Mariner’ a Hundred Years Later,” in the Dalhousie Review 45 (Autumn 1965), pp. 333-337, and Alan D. Perlis, “Coleridge and Conrad: Spectral Illuminations, Widening Frames,” Journal of Narrative Technique 12 (Fall 1982), pp. 167-76.

¹⁸ Jameson, pp. 214 and 216, respectively.

¹⁹ Edward W. Said, Orientalism (New York: Vintage, 1978), p. 10.

²⁰ “To William Blackwood,” 13 Dec 1898. The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad: Volume II: 1898-1902, eds. Frederick R. Karl and Laurence Davies (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 129.

²¹ From a letter to Edward Garnet quoted in Robert F. Haugh, Joseph Conrad: A Discovery in Design (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957), p. 35, emphasis added.

²² Emphasis added. The morally resonant word “blindfold” also recalls the obvious symbolism of the blindfolded woman of justice in Kurtz’s painting.

²³ On the aesthetic and metaphysical ramifications of forests in Western literature, see Robert Pogue Harrison, Forests: The Shadow of Civilization (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

²⁴ Jonathan Culler, “Intertextuality and Interpretation: Baudelaire’s ‘Correspondences,’” in Nineteenth Century French Poetry, ed. Christopher Prendergast (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990) p. 122.

²⁵ Hawkins, “The Issue of Racism in Heart of Darkness,” 164.

²⁶ A term associated with Arthur Rimbaud. For a full discussion of the affinities of Rimbaud and Kurtz, see John Parras, Modern Poetic Prose: Lyricism, Narrative, and the Social Implications of Generic Form, Diss. Columbia University, 1996 (UMI, 1996), 9616730, pp. 153-159.

²⁷ Leo Bersani, A Future for Astyanax (1969. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), pp. 5-7.

²⁸ In a widely reported 1898 incident that followed a “punitive military expedition,” Stanley Falls station chief Captain Léon Rom apparently used human heads as “decorations” for his flower bed. Cf. Adam Hochschild, King Leopold’s Ghost (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1998) p. 145.

²⁹ Hunt Hawkins, “Conrad’s Heart of Darkness: Politics and History,” Conradiana, 24: 3 (1992), p. 208.

³⁰ “Le Poète se fait *voyant* par un long, immense et raisonné dérèglement de *tous les sens*.” “A Paul Demeny,” 15 Mai 1871. Rpt. in Arthur Rimbaud, Complete Works, Selected Letters, trans. Wallace Fowlie (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966) pp. 304-305.

³¹ Cf. Michel Foucault, Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Pantheon, 1965).

Warholian Machinehood I

By Michael Angelo Tata

I really like to eat alone. I want to start a chain of restaurants for other people who are like me called ANDYMATS—"The Restaurant for the Lonely Person." You get your food and then you take your tray into a booth and watch television (*Philosophy*, 160).

Robo-Picasso

Machines promise Andy Warhol a perfectly dehumanized world in which anomie and alienation are meaningless problems because human nature itself has become fully mechanized. After all, issues of integration only have semantic value for human beings. Robots, cyborgs and automatons are not known for experiencing existential crises; disaffected, they work without contemplating their respective situations, concentrating their lives into a laser beam of pure performativity. As systems pioneer Silvan Tomkins has demonstrated in his work on affect, the mechanized device is unable to transcend its status as prosthesis because it cannot exhibit any interest in its context. Even a virus demonstrates interest in the world—hence its absorption by the job of transmitting its genetic material to other cells. Without the basic tropism sparked by interest there is no possibility of autonomy—nor is there any chance that affect will erupt into existence, therein compromising the device's ability to perform an assigned task. Orientation cannot take place without the drive to be situated: creatures interested in nothing perish.¹ Mechanisms and gizmos are not able to generate interest in anything, and are consequently unable to experience being-in-the-world, a quality reserved for higher forms of sentient life: "The automaton must be motivated. It must be equipped with a drive signal system which tells it when it is running out of cards, oil and electricity, and it must be motivated to store energy as it now stores information. It must also be motivated to reproduce itself. Turing, who demonstrated that a self-producing machine was theoretically possible, was a logician, and understandably limited the problem of self-reproduction to asexual techniques; but if we are interested in the problem of human simulation, the race of automata must be perpetuated not only by knowledge but by passion" (Tomkins, 41). Seeking to find the secret to artificial intelligence, Tomkins faults contemporary AI for its inability to infuse the computer with affect. Working laterally to Warhol-as-machine, I arrive at a new understanding of his obliviousness and nonchalance: like any good cyborg, he refuses humanism, even to the point of shirking off the Oedipal yoke so integral to Western notions of individuation.²

Warhol's reports of his own affective states make him sound like an "unintegrated automaton," or machine which has not as of yet acquired motivation. Wanting nothing, the unintegrated automaton fails at properly orienting itself in spacetime, and never transcends the servo-mechanism for which it was intended.

Ever desiring not to desire, Warhol rejects affect in an effort to self-mechanize. Consummate bachelor machine, he produces a variety of sterility as his ultimate product.³ Making apathy chic, Warhol reflects the disaffection of the Youthquakers while playing up his own physiognomic and corporeal strangeness. *Philosophy* begins with Warhol getting his inhuman look together:

“The bored languor, the wasted pallor...”

“The what?”

“The chic freakiness, the basically passive astonishment, the enthralling secret knowledge...”

“WHAT??”

“The chintzy joy, the revelatory tropisms, the chalky, puckish mask, the slightly Slavic look...”

“Slightly...”

“The childlike, gum-chewing naïveté, the glamour rooted in despair, the self-admiring carelessness, the perfected otherness, the wispieness, the shadowy, voyeuristic, vaguely sinister aura, the pale, soft-spoken magical presence, the skin and bones...”

“Hold it, wait a minute. I have to take a pee.”

“The albino-chalk skin. Parchmentlike. Reptilian. Almost blue...”

“Stop it! I have to pee!”

“The knobby knees. The roadmap of scars. The long bony arms, so white they look bleached. The arresting hands. The pinhead eyes. The banana ears...”

“The banana ears? Oh, A!!!”

“The graying lips. The shaggy silver-white hair, soft and metallic. The cords of the neck standing out around the big Adam’s apple. It’s all there, B. Nothing is missing. I’m everything my scrapbook says I am” (10).

Appearing in the guise of other species, and with a skin made of paper, Warhol has visually left his *Homo sapiens* ancestry behind, having launched off for a robotic, post-human existence. The interior picture comes off as equally bizarre. For Warhol, the ultimate end is the experience of emptiness, as his words of *POPism* indicate: “Most people love watching the same basic thing, as long as the details are different. But I’m just the opposite: if I’m going to sit and watch the same thing I saw the night before, I don’t want it to be essentially the same—I want it to be *exactly* the same. Because the more you look at the same exact thing, the more the meaning goes away, and the better and emptier you feel” (*POPism*, 50). Assimilating to his camera lens, Warhol, like the Bolex or Auricon, can watch an unchanging tableau without blinking. In such a boring and emptying place, the questions Romanticism lays out for art—issues surrounding legitimacy, authenticity, originality, novelty, inspiration and genius—turn to so much gibberish. Parodied, these permeate Warhol’s works, which seek to drain them of semantic value in an effort to maximize nonfeeling and nonsensation. Positing the machine as ideal endpoint, Warhol envies the mechanized entity its ability to enact a production uninterrupted by affect.

Walter Benjamin’s predictions about mechanical reproduction as spirit of an age receive confirmation

by Warhol, who envisions a time and place when and where machines can fabricate anything, including those products of human enterprise thought to be most resistant to technological mediation: works of art and literature. More than any other artist, Warhol bears out the ramifications Benjamin identifies as resulting from the displacement of original by copy in the modern (and postmodern) world. In his essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” Benjamin diagnoses the machine-dominated epoch as suffering a loss of aura due to the detachment of objects from tradition. As image separates from object via the logic of infinite reproducibility, a crisis in authenticity makes its presence known: “To pry an object from its shell, to destroy its aura, is the mark of a perception whose ‘sense of the universal equality of things’ has increased to such a degree that it extracts it even from a unique object by means of reproduction. This is manifested in the field of perception what in the theoretical sphere is noticeable in the increasing importance of statistics. The adjustment of reality to the masses and of the masses to reality is a process of unlimited scope, as much for thinking as for perception” (*Illuminations*, 223). Replacing the cult value of an older hand-made art with the exhibition value of machine-fabricated art, the industrial era paradoxically re-invests the human face with a fetishistic quality: “In photography, exhibition value begins to displace cult value all along the line. But cult value does not give way without resistance. It retires into an ultimate retrenchment: the human countenance” (225-226).⁴ Warhol embodies this tendency. His own paintings are indebted to the human face, however ironic that cathexis may be. Silkscreening faces onto canvas, Warhol demonstrates the proof of Benjamin’s assertion that, in a dehumanized age, the face becomes a fetish. Perhaps seeing the humanoid countenance from the automaton’s point of view, Warhol gazes upon it as a relic or trace from a lost order. The face should not be; that it persists generates the same interest displayed by a paleontologist unearthing a fossil. Only a machine could find the human face so atavistically riveting. A cyborg gazing wistfully at a humanoid landscape long since obliterated, Warhol experiences AI’s nostalgia for its antiquated creator.

Converting affect into the cold, digitalized language of the computer, Warhol lives out a personal version of Systems Theory. As Habermas discusses in his *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, Systems Theory counters Hegelian pan- subjectivity with an all-consuming objectivity: “It [systems functionalism] allows the subjects themselves to degenerate into systems. It tacitly sets a seal on ‘the end of the individual,’ which Adorno encircled with his negative dialectic and protested against as self-inflicted fate” (353). Losing himself in crude objectivity, Warhol produces a painting, cinema and literature obsessed with the status quo, which entralls him as a result of its sheer being-there. Machines fill his spaces to the point of saturation. Tape recorders, telephone answering machines, Bolex, Auricon, Polaroid and Big Shot cameras, robots and automats: the self-regulating entity becomes an ideal for Warhol, who marvels at its capacity to work without interruption. Machines always bring home the bacon. When they cease doing so, they are junked, and a new bacon- bringer is installed. Half android himself, Warhol envies machines for their ability to maintain a functional homeostasis day in and day out—unlike human beings, machines keep going with a minimum of input, spitting out product without respite. This technophilic extreme remains a limit for the Romantics and the Surrealists—a threshold nonchalantly crossed by Warhol. Keats’ idea of negative capability and Breton’s passion for aesthetic automatism receive fresh confirmation by Warhol’s work, which refuses insemination while paradoxically never stopping to reproduce.⁵ Externalizing the creative process, Warhol redefines negative capability, intensifying the traditional Aeolian harp metaphor such that

active contribution approaches zero. Furthermore, he increases the impersonality of automatism, resulting in a creativity of almost total renunciation. The work of art is no longer pseudo-external, but external in its own right. Not merely arising as if created by another, art is actively fabricated by others. Their psyches bubble through the work's perforations, as when Warhol's typists make *a* their own: "Billy Name supervised the typesetting, and made sure that every spelling mistake and typo was left intact so that Andy's intention of making a 'bad' book would be realized" (Bockris, 243). Untouched, the artist's id refuses to reveal itself, languishing safely at a distance (that is, if it even exists).

Making nothing, Warhol offers something after something in the hyperfabrication of a delicious zero-calorie nonsense. Desired objects lurk off-screen, as in the 1963 silent film *Blow Job*, which shows only the face of a fellated rebel without ever granting visual access to the act of fellatio itself: "Much in *Blow Job* is unverifiable. We don't know whether a man or a woman is fellating the actor. Perhaps several different men or women, perhaps one per reel. We may even wonder whether Warhol himself is servicing his star, while someone else mans his Bolex. Thus we don't know the recipient's sexual preference: he looks like trade (a straight man who, especially if paid, lets another man blow him). We don't know whether he truly reaches climax, or merely fakes it. There is no money shot: evidentiary ejaculation, a porn staple" (Koestenbaum, 84). Similarly, Warhol's attention runs out the moment important events occur, as when, in the 1965 film *Camp*, the camera bleeds into whiteness as black model Donyale Luna works it in a fur coat, or when, in "The Tingle," Warhol takes a urination break during Brigid's discussion of her vibrator.⁶ The question of what Warhol makes looms large: what exactly does he offer his audiences in terms of product? Appearing to offer the strange gift of nothingness, Warhol is that queer machine which makes zero-ness a tangible commodity. Whether Warhol paints his paintings, writes his books or films his films doesn't matter—in fact, if we can attribute them to someone else, he glows even brighter. Negating nothing—that is, making nothingness palpable, concrete, "there"—Warhol pulls off the inimitable stunt of making emptiness salable. Glamourizing emptiness, Warhol perfects absence, which persists as a species of presence after it exits his machinery.

System Toxicity

Machines are closed systems. Complete with a structure, an organization and a motivating source, they continue to generate product until they break down, at which point they can be repaired and set in motion once again. No stranger to the artworld, Warhol the commercial success gleaned the industrial power of the paintings, sculptures and wisdom of Marcel Duchamp, who made the poetics of the machine central to his Cubist and Dada projects.⁷ The glamour of the machine as formulated by Marinetti in his *Manifesto of Futurism* achieves new luminescence with Warhol, who removes the destructive properties of machines from the equation, focusing almost exclusively on their productive and reproductive potential (machine make things; machines record things).⁸ Even when machines do produce destruction, as in his electric chair and atom bomb images, their power seems to be minimized, subverted: "This 'modern' form of legal electrocution impressed Warhol as a typically American way to go...Perversely, he silkscreened the

image of lethal furniture against monochrome backgrounds in decorator colors, as in *Lavender Disaster*” (Bourdon, 154). Overall, machines allude to industrialism, that process by which mechanization was installed in both the West and its colonized territories as culturally determining praxis. Thus Warhol would name his atelier “The Factory,” implying that it could produce almost anything—corrugated cardboard, ball bearings, ketchup. Factory work is impersonal; it refuses any attempt to wash over it with a poetics. Yet on closer examination, the factories central to the industrial revolution itself actually regressed poetry to *poiesis*, or the unqualified act of making. Factories make: they produce on a large scale, serially emitting products from their assembly lines with presumably minimal interruptions. Factories refuse authorship as well— although labor is performed on a large scale, the labor produced involves only anonymity. Communal, these entities merge individualities into the collective worker, that fictive creature whose actions produce merchandise. As demonstrated by Marx, they represent the ultimate degree of alienation—the kicker being that Warhol embraces that aloneness and separation, incorporating it directly into his aesthetic. Finding joy in factory work, especially when others undertake it, Warhol brings a little bit of Pittsburgh to Manhattan: modeling aesthetic production on the activities of the steel mill, he imports its brute reality into the creative act.

From the vantage point of autopoietic theory, a discipline dedicated to describing and analyzing the ways in which systems self-organize, self-regulate and self-propagate, Warhol’s obsession with automatic entities makes even more sense, as it ties to his fixation on relations (how groups aggregate, how individuals respond to larger entities, etc.). Developing as an offshoot of evolutionary biology, the work of Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, foundational to autopoietic and Systems Theory alike, speaks to Warhol’s love of the machine. For Maturana and Varela, systems are defined by their self-regulatory ability, referred to as “recursion.” Whether they be a machine, cell or, as in the famous Belousov-Zhabotinsky reaction, molecule, systems are first and foremost “dissipative structures.”⁹ Through their homeostatic workings, entropy is made to dissipate—as happens to that theoretical precursor to the system, the vortex.¹⁰ Machines (and vortices) are recursive because they fall back on themselves in the homeostatic act. Managed from within, machines require human labor and input only until the moment they are produced, after which they run themselves with minimal external intervention: as such, they are also *heteropoietic*, or produced from without (as Tomkins has commented, no machine can yet self-replicate due mainly to problems in motivation). Organized such that they are able to maintain an essential balance between intake and excretion, anabolism and catabolism, systems remain radically self-reliant. According to these definitions, machines qualify as systems by virtue of their insularity. As productive entities, they also qualify as *allopoietic* (they create potentially new systems) For Maturana and Varela, allopoiesis contrasts with autopoiesis in terms of what exactly gets produced via automatism. While the autopoietic entity essentially makes only itself, the allopoietic entity acts like an assembly line. Spitting out product into an extra-systemic world, it creates a not-self. Thus for Maturana and Varela even sexual or asexual reproduction qualifies as allopoietic, since the organism generated must necessarily pinch off from its parent to assume a life all its own. Technically speaking, autopoiesis is not marked by reproductive viability: only self need be produced and maintained in order for there to be autopoiesis. Hence through allopoiesis, the self-enclosed autopoietic system creates potentially new systems, which pass into an extra-systemic space where they will be dispersed. Incorporating only bonding and production, the allopoietic device fabricates product in the same way that

a crystal branches out, oblivious to problems of regulation or maintenance, bent only on making more.

Inevitable in any discussion of Warhol's relevance for autopoietic theory is his use of the silkscreen—especially given that this particular technology ensured his centrality to Pop art and garnered him instant celebrity (a fame capable of regenerating and recharging itself like Prigogine's vortex). Through this advertising technique, Warhol even produces other silkscreening machines, as when, in *POPism*, he reports teaching the technique to Rauschenberg: “David [Bourdon] went on, ‘He was very interested in the silkscreens and asked where you got them. Up to then he’d been transferring images by putting lighter fluid on magazine and newspaper illustrations and then rubbing it onto the paper—a very painstaking process. He was impressed when he saw that with a silkscreen you could get an image larger than life and use it over and over again’” (23). In the *Diaries*, he describes a Mike Bidlo installation at P.S. 1 which might have rolled off a Warhol assembly line: “Rupert came by and told me about the show at P.S. 1 where they created a replica of the old 47th Street Factory. They had a silver room and people passing out LSD and an Edie running around” (Monday, April 16, 1984). Transplanting his technique of commercial art into the zone of high art, Warhol causes a commotion: What does it mean that important painting is now generated by machines? Surely some paradigm of humanism has been violated—as well as a principle of organicism.¹¹ Opting for his half-dead look, Warhol complicates matters by appearing to be only slightly human himself. Hence his perpetual use of the wig, which turned his coiffure into a silver-rinsed cyborg's mane.¹² Managerial ghoul, Warhol uses the toil of others to create his paintings, which remain the products of his authority despite the fact that he has not authored them in a traditional way. For there are authentic Warhols and inauthentic Warhols. The *Diaries* is quite clear on this point, especially when Warhol expresses displeasure toward ex-assistant Gerard Malanga, who uses Warhol's electric chair silkscreens to create his own fakes: “Julian Schnabel came by with his little girl. We're talking about maybe doing some different image on top of a fake or mine that he bought—one of those paintings I think Gerard Malanga did. Julian didn't know it was a fake when he bought it” (Friday, November 14, 1986). Warhol encounters his own fakes in an exhibit: “And then we went to Mary Garage. What's the name of that gallery? Gracie Mansion. On Avenue A. And there were five fakes of mine. Electric Chairs. And some Jackson Pollock fakes. I didn't say anything” (*Diaries*, Saturday, January 28, 1984). In addition, not only Warhol's art is fakeable: Warhol himself can be cloned quite efficiently, at least in the popular imagination. At a Prom Night Party for Neil Bogart, Warhol's authenticity is challenged by a reporter, causing him joy: “She said she was a second-string reporter at *Stern* and they didn't get her the *real* Andy Warhol to interview, they got her the double, and what was she doing in such a second-rate position, and somehow he believed her, he just got right up and left, and he wouldn't talk to me for the rest of the night. He thought I was a fake Andy Warhol. Isn't that great?” (*Diaries*, Wednesday, May 6, 1981).¹³ Claiming to be a machine, Warhol places himself in the precarious position of having to defend his originality in the face of non-Warhol Warhols. Catching a glimpse of Warhol encountering his faked paintings and personae, we experience a precious humor—for while many artists find their work cloned, only Warhol has made the stakes so high regarding the authenticity of even “authentic” Warhols. Self-enclosed yet prolific, Warhol himself epitomizes the best of both worlds: autopoietic, he obsesses over his relationality and catalysis; allopoietic, he imports the assembly line into the world of *kunst*. Letting his gaze alight upon those machines which both maintain themselves and create an ontologically distinct product, he turns the problem of exchange into

a question of maintenance. In this context, entropy is an integral concept. As John P. Briggs and F. David Peat comment in *Looking Glass Universe: The Emerging Science of Wholeness*, the question of entropy is intimately connected with the problem of the perpetual motion machine (Warhol's dream): "Scientists discovered that this barrier to the free exchange of energy was the key to why perpetual motion machines are impossible...the new science of thermodynamics showed engineers that in each cycle alone some of the energy would be converted into an unusable form and, without an independent input of power, the machine would quickly run down. Thermodynamics related this problem of the running down of all machines to 'the law of increasing entropy'" (155). Desiring to be in perpetual motion, Warhol wishes to maximize his efficiency by using everything, omitting nothing.¹⁴ Consequently, the leftover tantalizes him with its possibilities, challenging his frugality with the prospect of waste. Whether the leftover is a remnant of his art (the out-take, the junked print) or of some other productive system (camp taste), it represents a quantum of potential energy, which, from a utilitarian perspective, must not be overlooked:

I'm not saying that popular taste is bad so that what's left over from the bad taste is good: I'm saying that what's left over is probably bad, but if you can take it and make it good or at least interesting, then you're not wasting as much as you would otherwise. You're recycling work and you're recycling people, and you're running your business as a by-product of other businesses. Of other *directly competitive* businesses, as a matter of fact. So that's a very economical operating procedure. It's also the funniest operating procedure because, as I said, leftovers are inherently funny (*Philosophy*, 93).

Refusing to succumb to entropy, Warhol's motto is to put each and every leftover to use—a sort of caserole mentality possibly rooted in Depression-era, immigrant poverty and displaced to the sphere of art. For Warhol, there are leftover questions: "So then he [Steve Aronson] said he just interviewed Roy Cohn and that he was going to ask him, 'Aren't you a big fag?' but then he ended up liking him and he didn't, so he still had the leftover question and he asked me if *I'd* like to admit that *I was*" (*Diaries*, Wednesday, July 15, 1981). Workers are also leftovers, as Warhol comments with respect to *a's* typists: "I would glance over at them sometimes with admiration because they had me convinced that typing was one of the slowest, most painstaking jobs in the world. Now I realize that what I had were leftover typists, but I didn't know it then" (*Philosophy*, 95). Excised from the work of art proper—or an interrogative order, or the workforce—the leftover constitutes a productive supplement. Like the mighty atom, it demonstrates the power of the miniscule, the force of the infinitesimal.

Fighting entropy on a personal level, Warhol the artist worked hard to survive the sixties, which threatened to subsume him under a limiting Pop stereotype. Recycling his traditional imagery in series like his Reversal Series and Retrospectives (1979), Warhol responds to his sixties fame by treating it, too, as an object which might be run through the homogenizing silkscreen process—only in this instance the silkscreen itself is being silkscreened, and fame is being made famous. Forever affiliating himself with young blood, Warhol literalizes the nickname "Drella" by his coercion of "the kids"—creatures who might be film stars (Joe Dallesandro), pop stars (Grace Jones), art stars (Kenny Scharf), or street-smart freaks (Victor Hugo). Opposed to the more respectable members of the ruling class, they entrance Warhol, even

in the midst of high-society mavens and pundits: “The Herreras were back from the royal wedding and they invited me to dinner with Jerry Zipkin and said they’d call at 6:00. I said I’d go but I knew I’d cancel because I’m so tired of elegant people, I just wanted to be with some kids” (*Diaries*, Tuesday, August 4, 1981). Through association with younger generations, Warhol rejuvenates his own art, which finds its gears lubricated by the freshness of youth. Desiring even to incorporate his most terrible moments into his aesthetic legacy, Warhol muses about exhibiting his failures: “I still want to do the ‘Worst of Warhol,’ all the stuff that didn’t come off. I’ll (*laughs*) have to do more, though” (*Diaries*, Friday, January 16, 1987). In this context, Warhol’s laughter resonates and ripples. Truly, his failures have all been successes—attempting to fail, he could only succeed (such is the paradigm of the professional loser, as formulated by Quentin Crisp in books like *How to Have a Life-Style*, *The Naked Civil Servant*, or *Resident Alien*).¹⁵ Ultimately, Warhol’s work is “bad,” to divert the title of his final film—and this badness sells. The Warhol machine runs on this badness, which guarantees that even its most malformed products will be successes in their own right. Celibate yet promiscuous, he packages failure for a hungry throng eager to consume and to embody his offness. The proposed name for his TV show, *Nothing Special*, is decidedly honest, revealing Warhol’s commitment to zeroes. For he, too, is nothing special—yet in his unspecialness, he has miraculously managed to fathom the delirious heights of celebrity.

Allopoietically, Warhol’s commitment to the assembly line alludes to a Fordist order which, in Mandel’s rubric, qualifies as pre-postmodern, or middle-capitalist (it occupies the imperialist slot). Poised at the end of an era—that moment just before the onset of Daniel Bell’s post-industrial society—Warhol demonstrates a nostalgic attachment to the model of factory production (in Bell’s theory, production gives way to information-management).¹⁶ Throughout his career, Warhol never tires of the assembly line, which for him ensures maximum productivity as well as incessant collaboration and multiple authorship—and, *de rigueur*, an energizing source of interpersonal conflict. Alluding to the Fordist staple the division of labor, the silkscreen embodies the very order subverted by Marx—that efficient scenario in which work is parceled out into a finite number of sub-jobs, therein draining the joy from production and inciting alienation. Even books are produced according to the assembly-line’s logic, as detailed by Colacello, one of *Philosophy*’s ghostwriters in *Holy Terror*:

When I finished the chapter, I handed it to Andy. He counted the pages, as he counted the ads in *Interview*, and said, “Only twelve?” He took it home that night and read it over the phone to Brigid Berlin, taping her reaction. Then he gave the tape to Pat Hackett, telling her to “make it better.” So now the ghostwriter had a ghostwriter, Factory-style. A literary assembly line was set up: Bob to Andy to Brigid to Pat to Andy to HBJ [Harcourt Brace Jovanovich], with a quick stop at Fred’s desk, to make sure we didn’t put in anything “funny” about Lee Radziwill or Jackie Onassis (208).

Other literary assembly lines follow. Developing a potential book on film star Paulette Goddard—*HER*—Warhol sets up another productive flow: “A friend of Fred’s, Christopher Hemphill, a young scribe from an old family, was hired to redact those tapes. Paulette to Andy-and-Bob to Chris to Fred for the Lee-and-Jackie check to Andy-and Bob to HBJ” (208).¹⁷ Adding fuel to the fire, Warhol ensures that his

assembly-line operators are never secure enough to claim authorship (Malanga never achieves this, while Hackett's is only partial and Colacello's does not arrive until Warhol has died). When Pat boldly requests either more money or more credit, Warhol gives her the Solanas treatment: "'Pat's freaking out,' he moaned, scurrying out of the cubicle they shared. You've got to do something, Bob. Pat's going crazy.' It was Andy's standard last recourse, and just in case I missed the implication, he added, 'I don't know what she might do'" (208).¹⁸ Manning his literary mechanism with skilled laborers too demoralized to refuse him anything, Warhol embodies capitalist allopoiesis, or the production of potentially self-sustaining entities by a self-sustaining entity, in perhaps its purest form.

After Warhol's death in 1987, fashion designer Stephen Sprouse exhibited the most apropos reaction: "'Who will we do things for now?" (Colacello, 495). Sprouse's statement rings true, since Warhol's mystery is that he is able to entice others to do his work for him. While these significant others achieve a sort of proletarian glamour all their own, they of course never accede to authorship in the way that Warhol does. Warholian allopoiesis mystifies. That disgruntled employees like Colacello or Malanga would continue to make his art despite grave misgivings marks Warhol as a master manipulator and cultural pimp (even at his September 14, 1985 joint show with Basquiat at Tony Shafrazi, Malanga, by then long alienated from Warhol, asks for an autograph). Running his engine on the egos of these sub-creators, he taps into the perpetual energy source of intrapsychic instability. Recycling cultural leftovers—drag queens, junkies or political crackpots, like Valerie Solanas—he sets these otherwise overlooked energy sources in motion. Encouraging wackos to perform for the glaring lens of his camera, he set his stars up for true failure (as opposed to his pseudo-failure). In her introduction to the *Diaries*, Hackett comments on Warhol's diminution of her role in the ominous project. Referring to Hackett's work as her "five-minutes-a-day job," Warhol elides the fact that Hackett expended many kilocalories of daily energy recording, redacting and transcribing Warhol's notes and observations about his social and business lives (xix). With Colacello, Warhol displays a mixture of overt hostility and sexual puerility. Peppering their conversations about *Philosophy* with lines like "Oh, Bob, I'm soooo hot for your cock," "Why don't you shove it up your agent—then she'll really work for you?" and "Well, you can dance fast, you can come fast, you can whip off pages fast..." Warhol torments Colacello, living up to his reputation as a "holy terror" (Colacello, 185). In such a system, volatility is bound to erupt. Solanas' shooting of Warhol is the most famous example of Factory volatility, but others exist—as when, for example, in 1964, Sammy the Italian, one of Ondine's friends, forces Paul Morrissey to play Russian roulette, shoots a blank, then forces Warhol to wear a plastic rain bonnet and threatens to take him hostage, or when, also in 1964, Dorothy Podber waltzes into the Factory and shoots a bullet through a stack of Marylins (Bockris, 213). Perfecting the autocatalytic loop, Warhol ensures the permanence of his vorticality while offering a nearly continuous product flow. Harnessing the volatility generated by social friction, he fabricates a startling personal and aesthetic stability in the midst of wild energy fluctuations.

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Notes

¹ Arguing for the development of a viable affect mechanism for computers, Tomkins splits drive from

affect, revising Freud such that drive and affect are differently motivated, drive lacking (1) the freedom of time, (2) freedom of intensity, (3) freedom of density of investment, (4) freedom of investment in possibility, (5) freedom of object, (6) freedom of membership in sequential central assemblies, (7) freedom to combine with, modulate and suppress other drives, (8) freedom of consummatory site, (9) freedom of instigation, and (10) freedom of substitutability of consummatory objects which affects possess (41). Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's and Adam Frank's *Shame and Its Sisters: a Silvan Tomkins Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995, 75-80) is my source for all Tomkins references in 2.3.

² In her "A Cyborg Manifesto," Donna J. Haraway identifies the cyborg as radically disaffected, a state she connects with the cyborg's lack of Oedipalization: "The cyborg is a creature in a post-gender world; it has no truck with bisexuality, pre-oedipal symbiosis, unalienated labour, or other seductions to organic wholeness through a final appropriation of all the powers of the parts into a higher unity. In a sense, the cyborg has no origin story in the Western sense—a 'final' irony since the cyborg is also the awful apocalyptic *telos* of the "West's" escalating dominations of abstract individuation, an ultimate self untied at last from all dependency, a man in space" (150-151). See *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991). Deleuze and Guattari are the first to ally the refusal of the Oedipal narrative with a revolutionary project; Haraway's genius is to name the cyborg as anti-Oedipal ideal. See also Haraway's *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.FemaleMan©_Meets_OncoMouse™* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

³ Regarding the bachelor machine, or *machine celibataire*, see "The Arts of Dying: Celibatory Machines" in Michel de Certeau's *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986). "Having put an end to the *coincitadio oppositorum*, and having washed its hands of any 'consolation' overcoming difference, the machine's essential characteristic is that it is male. It behaves as such at its place of production. It confesses (or flaunts, whichever you like) its relation to its limit, the limit of being masculine and nothing but. The celibate of the machine, in effect, returns to the essential, structuring form of difference—sexuality—and refuses to exercise any masculine power of expressing the feminine in speech [*dire la femme*]" (166). Since de Certeau primarily refers to writing as arena of celibacy, his work on literature as bachelor machine immediately recalls references to Warhol's *a*: celibate text, it too refuses to *dire la femme*. Pace *POPism* and *Philosophy*, the femme must articulate both text and self (Pat Hackett, Brigid Berlin, even a feminized Colacello).

⁴ "Works of art are received and valued on different planes. Two polar types stand out: with one, the accent is on the cult value; with the other, on the exhibition value of the work...With the different methods of technical reproduction of a work of art, its fitness for exhibition increased to such an extent that the quantitative shift between its two poles turned into a qualitative transformation of its nature" (225). While the mechanically reproduced work of art initially abnegated the human trace, it ultimately returned to it as obsessive relic. All Benjamin quotes are taken from *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968).

⁵ Keats defines negative capability in a December 27, 1817 letter to George and Tom Keats: "I had not a dispute but a disquisition with Dilke, on various subjects; several things dovetailed in my mind, & at

once it struck me, what quality went to form a Man of Achievement especially in Literature & which Shakespeare possessed so enormously—I mean *Negative Capability*, that is when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason—Coleridge, for instance, would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetrallium of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half knowledge” (370). In his first *Manifesto of Surrealism*, Breton equates surrealism with automatism: “SURREALISM, *n.* Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express—verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner—the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern” (26). As a “disinterested pay of thought,” automatism represents a machine-like productivity. Like Keats’ negative capability, it refuses interruption, making writing an externalized practice emanating from without.

⁶ Dorothy Dean also vaporizes in *My Hustler*. Like Donyale Luna, she brings the film to a close at a moment of maximum interest. While Hilton Als sees the disappearance of the black queen as demonstrating Warhol’s disinterest in her, I disagree. In Warhol, what disappears is often of high importance. Though figurative, he alludes to figures outside his lenses and screens. These become the displaced and unvisualizable locus of fulfillment.

⁷ Duchamp is also the basis for the idea of the bachelor machine. His *Large Glass* depicts a bachelor machine attempting to strip bare and penetrate a bride—unsuccessfully, of course. “Michel Carrouges has identified a certain number of fantastic machines—‘celibate machines’—that he has discovered in works of literature. The examples he points to are of many different sorts, and at first glance do not seem to belong to a single category: Marcel Duchamp’s painting ‘La mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même’ (‘The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even’), the machine in Kafka’s “In the Penal Colony,” Raymond Roussel’s machines, those of Jarry’s *Surmâle* (*Supermale*), certain of Edgar Allen Poe’s machines, Villiers’s *Eve future* (*The Future Eve*), etc.” (Deleuze and Guattari, 18). Warhol first met Duchamp at his 1963 Pasadena Art Museum retrospective (Warhol was in LA for the Ferus Gallery’s exhibition of his Elvises). Oddly enough, Duchamp was more enamored of Taylor Mead than of Warhol. Dressed in an oversized knitted sweater and dancing the night away with Patti Oldenburg, Mead was the evening’s star (Watson, 113).

⁸ Marinetti fetishizes the machine, saturating it with ecstasy: “We say that the world’s magnificence has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of speed. A racing car whose hood is adorned with great pipes, like serpents of explosive breath—a roaring car that seems to ride on grapeshot—is more beautiful than the *Victory of Samontrace* (“Manifesto of Futurism,” Thesis #6).

⁹ In their *Looking Glass Universe: The Emerging Science of Wholeness* (New York: Cornerstone Library, 1984), John P. Briggs and F. David Peat discuss this important chemical reaction: “In 1958, two Russian researchers stumbled upon a far-from-equilibrium structure occurring in a chemical environment. When they mixed malonic acid, bromate, and cerium ions in a shallow dish of sulfuric acid at certain critical temperatures, what is now called the Belousov-Zhabotinsky reaction created a structure of concentric

and spiral ‘cells’ that pulsed and remained stable even as the reaction secreted more cells. The reaction is clearly chemical and does not involve DNA, but in its structure it looks like the growth of a life form!” (164). Using an autocatalytic loop, the reaction produces a low-degree autopoiesis, raising serious questions about the nature of life. Since, as Maturana comments, there is no reproductive criterion for autopoiesis, only the stability of a structure over time, the entities produced by Belousov and Zhabotinsky redefine the threshold of existence. My source for Maturana and Varela here and in the text is *Autopoiesis and Cognition: The Realization of the Living* (Boston: D Reidel Publishing Company, 1980).

¹⁰ Physicist Ilya Prigogine first theorized the vortex as dissipative structure in the early 80s. His interest is in self-regulating entities, among which the vortex figures most importantly. Emerging as a stable structure in a zone of wild energy fluctuation, the vortex maintains its structural integrity, despite surrounding chaos. Thriving on that chaos, it creates an autocatalytic loop which guarantees its longevity. Briggs and Peat provide a more detailed discussion of Prigogine’s work—specifically, its relevance for autopoiesis. Entropy is defined as any system’s increase in disorder over time. According to the second law of thermodynamics, all closed systems exhibit increased chaos irreversibly.

¹¹ Haraway’s cyborg is not a humanist creature, nor is it organic: “Pre-cybernetic machines could be haunted; there was always the spectre of the ghost in the machine. This dualism structured the dialogue between materialism and idealism that was settled by a dialectical progeny, called spirit or history, according to taste. But basically machines were not self-moving, self-designing, autonomous. They could not achieve man’s dream, only mock it. They were not man, an author to himself, but only a caricature of that masculinist reproductive dream. To think they were otherwise was paranoid. Now we are not so sure. Late twentieth-century machines have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines. Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves are frighteningly inert” (*Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, 152).

¹² For de Certeau, “wig” or “perruque” has another—yet related—meaning: “Take, for example, what in France is called *la perruque*, ‘the wig.’ *La perruque* is the worker’s own work disguised as work for his employer. It differs from pilfering in that nothing of material value is stolen. It differs from absenteeism in that the worker is officially on the job. *La perruque* may be as simple as a secretary’s writing a love letter on ‘company time’ or as complex as a cabinetmaker’s ‘borrowing’ a lathe to make a piece of furniture for his living room” (*The Practice of Everyday Life*, 25). Diverting time, the wigact gels with Debord’s idea of *détournement*, as described by Len Bracken in *Guy Debord: Revolutionary* (Venice, CA: Feral House, 1997): “Debord rediscovered and amplified Lautreamont’s method of *détournement* (diverting an existing phrase by changing or adding a few choice words), using texts by Hegel, Freud, the civil code, science fiction novels as well as comics and films. The exciting hubris of these appropriations elicited charges of megalomania, which Debord and his cohorts shamelessly accepted with equal arrogance” (42).

¹³ In 1967, Warhol sent out impostor Allen Midgette onto the college lecture circuit; he is Warhol’s most famous fake. “The faux Andy Warhol lectured at four western campuses during a week in October, and

both Morrissey and Midgette felt the anxiety of pulling off the hoax. Paul Morrissey recalled arriving in Salt Lake City, where the wind from the airplane propellers blew powder from Midgette's hair, and Midgette recalled moving his head and chewing gum to divert attention from his face. But Midgette got away with it until, a few months later, the hoax was discovered" (Watson, 349).

¹⁴ One crucial parallel between capitalism and totalitarianism is that each exhibits a tendency toward perpetual motion. Hence phenomena like Trotsky's idea of permanent revolution, Hitler's "constant radicalization of the principle of racial selection," or Stalin's supernumerary purges kept totalitarianism in motion, preventing any stabilities from forming (see Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 391). Warhol's love of perpetual motion figures into this context, since, for example, through social gradients and minefields at his Factory, he too kept his art in play. Working to achieve a non-equilibrium situation, he created a fragile order whose survival depended for a large part on movement. I mention this state of affairs only as a way of exploring the complicated relationship between totalitarianism and capitalism, both of which seem to share certain constitutive traits.

¹⁵ Quentin Crisp's *How to Become a Virgin* (London: Flamingo, 1996) begins: "I am not a drop-out; I was never in" (7). Setting himself up as a professional failure, Crisp never hesitated to dismiss himself as unglamorous—this dismissal setting himself up as paradigmatically glamorous. Like Warhol, Crisp comprehends that if one sets oneself up as a loser, and then succeeds, he has lost at losing; if he succeeds at failing, he fails, which is what he expected to do, anyway. Hence for the professional loser, losing at losing has the pleasant byproduct of incurring fame. See Crisp's *How to Have a Life Style* (Los Angeles: Alyson Books, 1997) for additional descriptions of Crisp and the loser-winner paradox.

¹⁶ In his *Postmodern Cartographies: The Geographical Imagination in Contemporary American Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), Brian Jarvis explains Bell's idea of a post-industrial society. According to Bell's mapping, "America's economic landscapes are no longer under the shadow of reifying technologies and the Fordist production of goods, rather, they are the site of disalienating services, of interpersonal contact and the circulation of information. As the evanescent factoryscapes of industrial capital fade from view, individuals' primary geographical experiences are of office spaces, university campuses, places of recreation and aesthetic activity" (16).

¹⁷ Perhaps a "Worst of Warhol," Paulette Godard's book never reaches completion. Like Warhol's other books, *HER* involved the taping-and-transcribing method. According to Colacello, Godard loses interest, and Harcourt Brace rejects two manuscripts. By then, the book title had changed from *HER* to *Her, Him and Them* after Harcourt Brace had discovered a porno titled *Her*. True to form, Warhol blamed his ghost-writer for the book's failure: "'It's all Paulette's fault,' Andy said, because she never really talked. And that's *your* fault, Bob, because you didn't pay the price'" (290).

¹⁸ Holly Woodlawn recalls a personal example of "going Solanas" in *A Low Life in High Heels*. When Warhol refuses to grant her an audience, she turns to her drag friend Estelle for help: "Then Estelle turned to me and said, 'Hey, listen, Jackie showed me where the powerbox is in the basement. If they're going

to fuck with you, let's fuck with them" (163). Cutting of Warhol's power supply, she next climbs the fire escape to personally harass Warhol: "'It's Valerie!' I screamed, banging on the windows with my fists. 'I'm back and I know you're in there. I'm gonna getcha—and your little dog, too!'" (163).

Incest and Innocence: Janey's Youth in Kathy Acker's *Blood and Guts in High School*

By Kathy Hughes

Kathy Acker is known for her feminist postmodernism; her dismantling of language; and her overturning of the mores of dominant society to expose the fascism of the capitalist system and of white males in general. Michael Clune writes that “Acker’s treatment of the incest taboo and her celebration of masochism, show her transgressive machine in action, cutting away the malignant apparatus of sovereignty” (495). While the masochism in Acker’s work has been written about extensively by Clune, Karen Brennan, and Catherine Rock among others, Acker’s choice to make Janey a child of ten in her 1978 novel *Blood and Guts in High School* (hereinafter referred to as *BGHS*), has only been examined in full by Gabrielle Dane. How does Janey’s age contribute to the punk aesthetic Acker is known for? How does Janey’s youth drive home the message of patriarchal injustice Acker is trying to communicate? How does Acker’s choice to make Janey so young affect the language of Acker’s work? Critics have not directly answered these questions, but I believe that in her decision to make Janey a child, Acker has two goals in mind: One, the juxtaposition of the innocence of childhood with a taboo (sex) to create, as Catherine Rock and Rod Phillips write, a challenging aesthetic, an irony as morbidly humorous as it is heartbreaking; two, as Clune and Dane allude, to reinforce and underscore her message of injustice toward women in patriarchal society.

Rod Phillips, speaking of Acker’s plagiarism of Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* in *BGHS*, quotes Larry McCaffery, who writes that a modus operandi of punk aesthetics is

‘crossing images over unexpectedly.’ Often this is done, McCaffery writes: ‘By profaning, mocking, and otherwise decontextualizing sacred texts...into blasphemous metatexts’ (221). *The Scarlet Letter*, with its high position in the canon of American literature, is ripe for this type of approach. What, after all, could be more unexpected than a juxtaposition of Puritan and punk cultures? (174).

More shocking than the use of *The Scarlet Letter* in a post-punk pornographic manifesto is the more

unexpected (and disturbing) image of a child having sex with her father. The juxtaposition between a child and sex is certainly a by-product of McCaffery's punk aesthetics. The sacred innocence of childhood is profaned by the taboo of sex, as in this scene where Janey confronts her father for his infidelity:

Janey: You told me that you were just friends like me and Peter (*Janey's stuffed lamb*) and you weren't going to sleep together. It's not like my sleeping around with all those art studs: when you sleep with your best friend, it's really, really heavy (Acker 9).

This disturbing juxtaposition of Janey's childish behavior in the same paragraph as her sexual behavior is an example of what Catherine Rock describes as Acker's "intermix[ing] of the sacred and the profane" and her "coupling of the debased and the delicate" (208). The innocent, loving request of a little girl who asks to sleep in her parent's bed for security and snuggling takes on a whole new meaning with Janey and is an example of this debasement that Rock speaks of. Before her father leaves for his date with Sally, the starlet he's seeing, he behaves like a loving father: he promises Janey he'll wake her up when he comes home; calls her "sweetie"; and says "yes" when she asks if she can "crawl into bed and sleep with him" (Acker 12). By now the reader knows that this ten-year-old girl will not get the comfort she needs, and when Johnny comes home at seven in the morning, she runs away from his sexual advances. However, wanting to please her daddy/lover, and prevent him from leaving her, she crawls into bed with him and performs fellatio. This whole scene would be heartbreaking if it was an adult woman trying desperately to hold on to her philandering lover. The age of the protagonist, and her relationship to the man who is hurting her, beats the reader over the head with the pain and the juxtaposition (the mingling of the "debased and the delicate" as Rock would say) between Janey's behavior and her age.

Janey's age serves as an ironic device, especially when seen through the lens of Freudian interpretation. Susan E. Hawkins writes that

Janey, as an incest victim, blames herself for her father's indifference and thus can't handle Johnny's romantic interest in the starlet. Conversely, Johnny's attachment to Janey and his need to free himself of it sound absurdly like the emotional struggles disenchanting spouses experience in their attempts to leave a marriage made unhappy through their own midlife crises (646).

Johnny tells Janey that "You've completely dominated my life... for the last nine years and I no longer know who's you and who's me" (12). Johnny's friend Bill (who also sexually abused Janey, "but his cock was too big" (10)) tells Janey that she has "dominated his life since your mother died and now he hates you. He has to hate you because he has to reject you. He has to find out who he is" (11). The irony of these statements, which Susan Hawkins alludes to, is centered on their Freudian implications. Karen Brennan writes that "Bill's psychoanalysis refigures the family roles by casting Janey as the overbearing mother and her father as the daughter/son on the threshold of the Oedipal stage. The father-daughter relationship, for Bill, is really a son-mother relationship" and turns the Freudian theory upside-down and inside-out (258). Brennan's use of Freudian theory for analysis of the text is rendered more ironic by Janey's age.

The father resents his daughter, who is only a child, for holding him back and smothering his identity the way the son resents the mother for the same reasons. Fatherly responsibility, and Janey's dependence, do not matter to this man, as is made clear by his resentment for an incestuous relationship that he started when his daughter was an infant. Later, Janey tells Johnny that "It was always me, my voice, I felt like a total nag; I want you to be the man" (12). Janey, a ten-year-old little girl, believes that she has usurped her father's position as the one with power in the relationship, a sign of her father's emotional manipulation. Adding to the irony of Bill's psychoanalysis is his remark that "There's always been a strong connection between the two of you. You've been together for years" (16). This bizarre connection is also commented on by Janey, who tells Johnny, "When I first met you, it's as if a light turned on for me. You're the first joy I knew" (9). With this remark, Acker turns the natural infatuation a very young girl has for her father, as well as Freud's Electra complex, inside out through sarcasm.

It is the misogynist dynamics of the patriarchal family (the type that Freud was primarily concerned with) that Acker is attacking with this irony, according to Karen Brennan. By ignoring the traditional family roles—by making the daughter into the controlling mother/wife and the father the hen-pecked son/husband—Acker is rendering the family unit extremely unstable, the consequences of which spread out into society (Brennan 258-259). It is this patriarchal, capitalistic society that Acker sees as promoting injustice toward women. Using Brennan's theory, Janey, as a female and a child, is especially powerless, both in her family and in society at large.

Michael Clune, in his article "Blood Money: Sovereignty and Exchange in Kathy Acker," discusses how Acker uses incest to visualize a truly free market, one in which "the weeds of sovereignty can be pulled out by their roots" (497). If Claude Levi-Strauss is correct, and the incest taboo encourages economic relations between different families and tribes through the exchange of women, then Acker's flouting of the taboo is a refusal of the principle of women as legal tender (Clune 496). As Brennan pointed out, the Oedipal roles have been switched in Janey's family—the father is the child, the child the mother, and the little girl is "the man" in the relationship. Brennan refers to a drawing Acker has captioned "boyfriend, brother, sister, money, amusement, and father" (8). The drawing features a man in two poses from the neck down and naked from the waist down. Brennan's analysis of the picture leads her to the conclusion that the headlessness of the father is symbolic of castration, and his nudity "transforms the daughter into a pornographer and the phallic father into a sex object, a consumable product" (256). Through her sexual relationship with her father, the little girl becomes the subject and the adult male the object. The little girl has the power to emasculate. The most powerless member of society—a female child, the daughter—has power over the most powerful—the adult male, the father. As the family dynamic is rendered obsolete by the reversal of roles, so is the societal dynamic. After all, as Kathryn Hume writes, "The family represents the most personal form of Acker's hostile world scenario" (491). While Marjorie Worthington writes that abortion in Acker's work is "a means for gaining power by taking it through what those in power would call unnatural means" ("Posthumous Posturing" 246), following Clune's line of reasoning, incest operates in the same manner as Worthington's abortions, for it is through her sexual relationship with her father that Janey is able to objectify him.

However, while Clune sees the incest and pedophilia of BGHS as Acker's way of undermining societal restrictions, feminist critics see them as a reflection of society as it actually is. Catherine Rock writes that while Acker "opens language and text to marginal sexual and social spaces" (206) and thus demonstrates an affinity with deviant sexual behavior, Hume writes that "patriarchal incest becomes the archetypal image for men controlling women" (491) in BGHS, particularly in a capitalistic context. Acker's tale of childhood incest and sexual abuse provides a "counter-discourse to hegemonic ideologies of marriage, family, heterosexuality, and stable bourgeois identity" (Rock 207) and the power plays that come with these ideologies, power plays that consistently exploit women. Following Rock's line of reasoning, Acker's choice to make her heroine a child underscores her beliefs: in a capitalistic, patriarchal society, all women are as powerless as children.

Making Janey a child drives home the point that Acker is trying to make about the misogyny of society not only symbolically but linguistically. Acker used straightforward, direct, visceral, and obscene language to remove the dilating effects of propriety. Christina Millietti writes about Acker's use of "stupid language," or language that is primordial and thus powerful (8):

In contrast to writing that similarly invokes topics of a sexual nature, but that simultaneously obfuscates them in prose, she makes sexuality viscerally negotiable so that she can confront her reader's conventions directly. By paring 'propriety'—a learned social skill—from her writing, Acker enables an explicit discussion of the sexual spectrum that is unique to her work. (8)

Through this clear, unpoetic, and ugly language, Acker reveals the horror of Janey's victimization and the victimization of all women:

That night, for the first time in months, Janey and her father sleep together because Janey can't get to sleep otherwise. Her father's touch is cold, he doesn't want to touch her mostly 'cause he's confused. Janey fucks him even though it hurts her like hell 'cause of her Pelvic Inflammatory Disease. (Acker 9-10) Johnny returned home (what is home?) and told Janey he had been drinking with Sally...She [Janey] lay down on the filthy floor by his bed, but it was very uncomfortable: she hadn't slept for two nights. So she asked him if he wanted to come into her bed.

The plants in her room cast strange, beautiful shadows over the other shadows. It was a clean, dreamlike room. He fucked her in her asshole cause the infection made her cunt hurt too much to fuck there, though she didn't tell him it hurt badly there, too, cause she wanted to fuck love more than she felt pain (21).

Millietti demonstrates Acker's visceral language by comparing a passage from Empire of the Senseless (which also has a victim of pedophilic incest for a protagonist) to Vladimir Nabokov's Lolita. The contrast between the styles of the two authors underscores the significance of the straight forward, visceral

language, a language untamed by the mores of society, in Acker's work (Milletti 8-9). While Nabokov uses the beauty of poetic, intellectual language (the language of the patriarchy) to veil the horror of pedophilia, Acker's visceral, simple language, the language of the body, not the mind, shakes up the reader and forces a confrontation between the reader and his or her conventions (Milletti 8-9). Janey, as a child, does not have the socialization to throw the veil of intellectual language over the horrors of her daily life, thus Acker does not utilize poetics when describing her life. Milletti quotes Acker herself, who called her method of writing "stupid" and describes it as "primary"—like the cry of a baby (Acker 64, qtd. in Milletti 6). Acker's choice of writing style and choice of child protagonist thus work together to create a strong, visceral response in the reader, and thus allows the "terrorist language" Milletti ascribes to Acker to ring clear.

Gabrielle Dane examines Acker's use of language from a Freudian perspective, particularly from Freud's work with hysterics, who express mental anguish from trauma and repressed sexual desires in physical ailments (232). Dane calls Acker's writing "hysterical" because "as the repressed found expression in Dora's hysterical symptoms, so it erupts in the mad and erotic 'antidiscourse' of Acker's text. Exploding into a violent kaleidoscope of obscenity and taboo desire, the novel takes the reader, in effect, on an uncensored tour through the phantasy-life of a hysterical psyche" (246). Acker's work bounces from genre to genre, from location to location, from voice to voice, like a child who wants to experience and express everything. Acker's text, and its fragmentation and blurring of genres and voices, is a physical and linguistic manifestation of the childhood incest, and the aftermath. The lack of boundaries between genres, and this multiplicity of voices, reflects for Dane "the splintered psyche of an abused little girl" (247). Janey has no boundaries, and feels compelled to repeat the abuse first inflicted on her by her father with other men and eventually Everyman. The voice changes in the novel from Janey to Hester Prynne to Erica Jong; the style leaps from stage dialogue to poetry to fairy tales. All these different voices and styles, Dane writes, reflect the splitting of the personality of a sexually abused child (248). The fairy tale and the childlike map of Janey's dreams is a "foray into a childhood (always already) denied Janey" (Dane 248). Acker's fluctuating, experimental style adds a layer of poignancy to her choice of a youthful protagonist, and Janey's youth adds power to the visceral hysteria of Acker's prose.

Dane, in her article, shows that by demonstrating the horror of sexual abuse through a text that reflects the splitting and permeability of a sexually abused child and through explicit pictures of an adult male with an erect penis, Acker refutes the Freudian hypothesis that the memory of sexual abuse is actually nothing more than a repressed wish on the part of the woman for her father to seduce her (246). The horror of Janey's young life—the rapes; the sexually transmitted disease; the kidnapping and forced prostitution; the imprisonment; and finally the death from cancer at age fourteen—is further cemented in the reader's mind by the way Acker writes it; while Nabokov makes pedophilia seem like true love, Acker shows it as a terrifying act of violence on the body and the psyche of a young child—and as a metaphor for how women are treated in society.

With her unconventional language, Acker seeks to free herself from the prison of a male dominated language. Janey, Dane writes, is "fallen into the alienated locus of speech, a prisoner in patriarchal language"

(248), a language reinforced by capitalism, as seen in the dialogue between Mr. Fuckface and Mr. Blowjob, the capitalists.

Mr. Fuckface: You see, we own the language. Language must be used clearly and precisely to reveal our universe.

Mr. Blowjob: Those rebels are never clear. What they say doesn't make sense.

Mr. Fuckface: It even goes against all the religions to tamper with the sacred languages.

Mr. Blowjob: Without language the only people the rebels can kill are themselves (136).

Dane sees this dialogue as an accurate description of the position of women and minorities in capitalistic society. Language molds perception, and those that control the language—what is said and what is not said; and how something is said—can control the minds of their society. In a culture in love with the binaries of male/female and mind/body, patriarchal societies have a male-centric language. Marjorie Worthington writes that Western societies typically equate the male with the mind, rationality, and speech, and the female with the body and with irrationality (“The Territory Named Women’s Bodies” 391), and Acker turns these binaries against the system that uses them in BGHS by turning the language of the patriarchy inside out, using it in a feminine, pre-rational fashion. Janey, as a female child, is the best mouthpiece for this counter-language.

It is my belief that while Acker’s work could have made as much an impact on the reader with the protagonist being of age, but her choice of a child as the heroine increases the visceral intensity of her words and corresponds with her use of experimental language and technique to reflect the injustice toward women in a patriarchal, capitalist society, as Dane and Clune write. It also is in keeping, as Rock, Hume, Philips, and Hawkins write, with Acker’s punk aesthetic of mixing the sacred with the profane, and enhances the irony of Acker’s playing with the mores of the society.

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Interior mind

By Guido Monte

With the Golden Bough, you enter
 the earth wide opened mouth
to the subterranean sky, to the very end
 of darkness and hollow,
under the dull light of the black sun –
you pass oceans of shadows,
beaches of fallen leaves,
the Angelus Novus who lets not looking
backwards people cross - you overtake
the Father, enlightened by fires
of future lives, pointing
to the ivory door of misleading dreams.
An interior, hidden mind spreads
 around the universe -
if eyes opened even for a moment,
they could see how things really are:
slow drops of rain on a window pane

Tracing an Archeology of Experimental Video in Cairo.

By Samirah Alkasim

In the continuing technological explosion of transportation and information that began in the 20th century and that replaced the post-Enlightenment explosion of print capitalism, we have the problem of the “global village”, which Arjun Appadurai described as the idea that cultural processes are forged through media. This is a problem, Appadurai implies, in the ways that the “global” is imagined as a village, where homogenization across cultural differences is often activated by shallow and utopian ideas of globalization that work to eradicate important cultural differences. Commenting on a new role for the imagination in social life, Appadurai referred to it as “central to all forms of agency,” itself a “social fact”, the key “component of the new global order”.¹ He asserted that we should ask not how such complex, overlapping fractal shapes (shapes that change in scale depending on how we see them) of the imagination constitute a stable system, but rather what are this system’s dynamics and processes. This enables us to look at cultural productions within their own contexts and not comparatively by a measuring stick of technological advancement. Furthermore, while he suggested that media produced, shared and exchanged between places is a primary conduit of the imaginative field of social practices, we have yet to more sufficiently examine our points of difference from one cultural field to another before any imagined unities can blend more authentically with reality. Those today who extol the positive virtues of global communications and networks, do not adequately acknowledge the undeniably dark side of globalization, which is experienced and understood as economic and cultural imperialism in third world countries. In addition, there is still often the situation of lack of access to the means of production, as a result of poverty and poor training facilities, and this leads to huge technical and qualitative disparities between works produced across the globe. In light of this, the intersection or imbrication of art and politics cannot be dismissed.

In the case of Egypt, a third world country known to be the second largest recipient of financial aid from the United States, the merging of new technologies and art mostly takes place in the field of digital video production, video installation and electronic music performance. This has everything to do with lack of resources and the lack of mainstream educational training in the higher technologically advanced areas. However, there has appeared in the last ten years a small group of experimental artists, who have distinguished themselves in the international art world, and are now uniquely placed in what has become a market of the “Arab avant-garde.” In the following pages, I will trace a tentative genealogy for this group of experimenters, for the purpose of addressing the subject of the “Arab avant-garde” in the field of globalization studies about art and new technology. Terms such as “interstitial” and “accented” have been used

to name a category where the experimental North African, Middle Eastern, South Asian and East Asian post-colonial artist can find shelter for their works. The way these times are most clearly distinguishing is due to the fact that most of these artists have difficulty showing their work in their countries of origin. One has to be attending a film festival in Rotterdam, a biennale in Sao Paulo, an art gallery in Paris, or has to have enough bandwidth to download a compressed video file if the work is stored on the Internet. This is the real interstitial space – that of “found” space, no space, curated space, or virtual space, and these spaces have now entered a global marketplace in the transmission of art between cultures.

From the outer periphery of a discussion about new technologies and media, it is relevant to look at the status of satellite communications. Naomi Sakr’s study of intercultural flows in relation to some of the major Middle East satellite channels launched at the beginning of the 1990’s, applies Appadurai’s model. She concludes that technology, images and money must follow an isomorphic path, having the same structural properties, because they form both the motivation and the main characteristic of satellite broadcasting. But she also concludes that the exercise of power through these satellite channels was far from de-territorialized, as evidenced in the close ties between people, money and ideas in the Middle East satellite television sector, which are held tightly together by the nature of power relations in the Middle Eastern states, where governments and politicians wield power over the regional/local stations in pursuit of their own agendas. The global reach of these satellite channels was thus heavily circumscribed by flows of money, power and technology that were determined from the start. What appeared to be heterogeneous in nature became homogenous in scope - dictated by the power hegemony it reinforced. Sakr points out that globalization sometimes refers to a set of policies designed to turn the world into a single place, with the suggestion that an increasing part of the globe is becoming enmeshed into a single system, through processes that are said to be paralleled by a developing consciousness of the world as a single society (homogenizing discourse). She explains how effective this interpretation was for business in the 1990’s, which used globalization discourse to urge governments to remove barriers to foreign trade and private investment such that companies could treat different parts of the world as if they were the same.ⁱⁱ

Sakr’s study and conclusions are noteworthy when trying to grasp the complex political and technological context of experimental video production in Egypt. While satellite television, a cipher of high technology, has become increasingly available to the mass population, independent and experimental production of video is limited to a very small group. The close ties between media and government suggest how difficult it is for independent projects and productions to flourish in this environment. Experimental uses of technology and narrative structures, as seen in the works of Hassan Khan and Sherief el Azma, often involve a critique and gesture of rebellion against political, societal, and even generic artistic forms such as melodrama and soap opera in fiction film and television.

While for most of the last decade there has been a crisis in the Egyptian film industry, it has been the birth of experimental video production and video installation. Film directors and critics have variously diagnosed this cinema crisis. Whether it is attributed to one or a combination of factors - the defeat of 1967, Nasser’s nationalization of the cinema in the 60’s during which social realist films were nearly a generic mandate and thus oppressive to artistic expression, or the privatization in the Sadat era and the subsequent

flight of producers elsewhere – without a doubt, the most powerful external ingredient that changed the Egyptian film industry was the Saudi market, which has been a major market since the late 1950's. By the 1980's Egyptian studios were mostly producing TV melodramas for export to the Gulf States, and by the mid-1990's, Egyptian film production had declined by 75 percent and nearly 80 percent of film studios were leased out to television stationsⁱⁱⁱ. Now, a decade later this estimate is still valid, but what we see now in the Egyptian cinema is a confirmed state of confusion – financial, aesthetic, narrative, technical – which is but a reflection of the general sociological, cultural, and ideological confusion history has wrought in the last 50 years. However, this state of confusion and the direction of film production towards television and satellite programming, has also contributed in certain ways to the cultivation of a minor experimental video scene. Often installation and video artists refer to television sitcoms, talk shows, famous stars, or classic Egyptian films now owned by satellite channels, because this has become the cultural archive, or repository of cultural history that has the most widespread meaning on the popular level.

The production of video art in Egypt began around 1996, with people like Hassan Khan making formalist essays and visual poems, and Sherief El Azma finishing film school in the UK. Before this time, there was little if any concept of audio/visual experimentation circulating in the art world and the public film world in Cairo. The wellknown exception is Shady Abdel Salam's 1966 film, *Il Mumiya*, [Night of the Counting Years], which is considered to be the first Egyptian "art film" because of its modernist enfoldment of plot, narrative ambiguity and primacy of artistic visual details to convey meaning. Although this locus of experimental video production is relatively new, it is not at the same technologically sophisticated level as that of the new media discussed amongst theorists and artists of developed countries. Most theories of new media have spoken from economically inflected production standards that characterize the first world, without, until very recently, acknowledging this determination, and have employed terminology like "global village", interactivity, liberated agency and community, in positive, utopian terms. What has not until recently been addressed, is that "outside" the developed world, media circulates through different channels, between different landscapes, and in different ways that are regionally, politically and historically determined.

Michel Foucault's notion of archeology is useful to deploy in asking the following questions: what is the discourse in which Egyptian video art participates; what discursive formation can we trace; what discursive practices are engaged; how are these artistic practices of resistance formed against cultural hegemony and homogenizing discourse; how do these practices enhance our discussions of "global" culture; and in what ways do their performances of resistance affirm non-transcendental notions of the spirit?^{iv} Foucault's notion of discourse as "a totality, in which the dispersion of the subject and his discontinuity with himself may be determined," "the space of exteriority in which a network of distinct sites is deployed," helps to illuminate the space of this artistic production, which is characterized by relations of fluidity, contingency and dispersion. He proposed a view of history, texts, books, oeuvres and statements in terms not of unities moving towards grand totalities that can be broken into chronologically progressive and significant frames, but rather as contingent, fluid, fragments moving across a complex network of information exchange. This archeology, or new historical practice, aspires to the "intrinsic description of the monument," the monument being the object of historical investigation^v. This would in turn "operate a de-centering that leaves

no privilege to any center,” in the words of Mark Poster - not to do away with history but rather with the form of history that is related to “the synthetic activity of the subject”^{vi}.

Prevailing thought holds that there is little if any new media production or artistic use of communication technologies in Egypt. This thought is basically correct if one restricts the sphere of communications technologies to everything beyond the computer interface used as an editing platform for digital video, email correspondence and research. Internet technology is available in Egypt but has yet to be made systematically available to the majority population for us to talk about grassroots political groups and humanistic art projects conducted via IT. Two reports, the April 2003 ITT Report by the American Chamber of Commerce, and the December 2003 on-line report from the Oxford Business Group, provide useful statistics. In the last few years Egypt has begun several initiatives, among which is its Information Society Initiative that aims to “modernize the country, encourage the use of IT in business and spread computer literacy,” addressing the seven areas of infrastructure development: IT education, e-government, use of IT in business, adapting the legal framework to the computer age, using IT to deliver better health services, and applying it to “the preservation of Egypt’s cultural heritage.” Additionally, in 2002 the “Free Internet” and the “PC for Everyone” projects were launched and have greatly increased the use of IT in the public sector. More than 20,000 computers were sold during the first three months of 2003, under the latter program, which allowed Egyptians to buy computers through installment payments on their phone bill. Apparently, Internet users increased from 600,000 in 2002 to over one million by early 2003, although the reliability of this statistic has been questioned. A more reliable indicator of IT market growth and potential is the growth of cellular phone service, which now has 6 million subscribers to the two companies Mobilnil and Vodafone, quite an improvement over the initially reported statistic of 654,000 in October 1999. But this has not resulted yet in any critical art projects involving Internet based, or wireless interactive technologies.

Another effect ascribed to new media is its definitive break from technologies and discourses of modernity. Mark Poster has described the main characteristics of the resistance of new media to modernity as their “complication of subject-hood, their denaturalizing the process of subject formation, their putting into question the interiority of the subject and its coherence.”^{vii} In the Arab world, however, subject-hood is already complicated, subject formation is variously denaturalized and interiority made incoherent without the advent of new media. The de-centered subject is revealed in different ways than in the West, most typically understood in terms of increasing religiosity and fundamentalisms as responsive to regional instability and economic problems. But this understanding also makes it convenient for Westerners to look no further and in no other directions. Tunisian film director Nouri Bouzid has described the defeat of 1967, typically blamed for many of the socio-economic problems in the Middle East, as only one mark in the general decline in the Arab world that had been brewing for centuries. The Arab and the Middle Eastern subjects have long been de-centered, and this would naturally be reflected in the artistic works of the intellectual, including the film director and the experimental artist. Furthermore, it is worth reminding ourselves that the historical de-centerings of the third world have largely contributed to the formation of post-structural theories of the dispersed subject (as Ella Shohat and Robert Stam remind us, leftist structural linguistics of the 1960’s was deeply indebted to the anti-colonialist critiques of third world

Francophone writers like Aime Cesaire and Frantz Fanon.^{viii}), and thus critical questioning of hegemonic discourse is also part of the cultural fabric in a place such as Egypt, which has long been the repository for the best of the Arab cultural artifacts. It can be argued that the video artists in Egypt re-invigorate what is now the old order of experimental film and video, in their particular social critiques and meditative responses to the globalized culture in which they live. In this context the value of experimentation, of poetic speech in an electronic image-based form, has a primacy that in some ways is lost in a cybernetic suit of armor or taken for granted in the West.

When viewed next to a first world model, the experimental use of media in Egypt relies on communication technologies that are more simply configured, but no less technologies of communication. The first world pre-occupation with newness that always accompanies technological developments having to do with communications, seems to automatically confer meaning on form - when it is consciousness of the speaking/receiving subject, with all its de-centerings that attributes and produces meaning, not the actually machinery itself. Let us establish a few facts that determine the production of experimental video in Egypt: there are very few opportunities granted to artists to support their work; technology is prohibitively expensive to the majority of people who would want to invest in camera, computer, and software, to become independent video-makers; customs tax on imported electronics has been recently lowered by significant degrees but there are additional new costs to compensate for this drop; local prices of imported computers are as much as 30% higher than their original cost; the institutions that offer training in the digital video and film media are few and under-funded; the private sector has not invested enough money to properly support a local film industry; and the social attitudes towards art (under which non-commercial, independent and experimental film/video are subsumed) divide art into folkloric traditional craft forms, or classical or modern, art forms such as music, painting, etc., that, on the institutional level, are mostly studied by girls from affluent families. The existing world of experimental video floats ambiguously between those of the film industry and art.

We cannot dismiss the appearance of new media in the art world of Cairo simply because it is not the same kind of new media available and being employed in the developed world. From Foucault's notion of history as archeology and text as part of discourse, we can ask what is the discursive formation or body to which these (video) works adhere, speak, and transform their subjects. We can then trace a discursive formation that includes other visual artists like Wael Shawky (who, in his installations, plays with east/west oppositions, pastiche and parody, architectural spaces that replicate real neighborhoods around a video projection – playing with simulacrum). We can include contemporary novelists like Sonallah Ibrahim (who uses narrative agency to critique multinational corporations and the effects of globalization on Egyptians). We can include Egyptian film directors like Mohamed Khan and Khairy Bishara both of whom manage to make commercial and independently produced work; as well as the context of Egypt's film crisis. We can extend beyond the national site towards the regional (the Lebanese video artist Akram Zaatari) and then the directional and global.

We may well ask the following questions Foucault asks of the new historical subject, towards experimental video in Egypt. In response to his question concerning “what form of relation may be legitimately

described between these different series,” my tentative answer would be in their tone, form and order: the tone of irony, the form of anti-melodrama, and the order or dis-order of segmenting stories into disjunctive units, emphasizing their relations and their gaps. Foucault asks, “What vertical system are they capable of forming?” My response: the vertical system might be held together by a common thematic of rebellion against order, authority, patriarchy, militant nationalism and normative gender designations. Foucault asks, “What interplay of correlation and dominance exists between them?” In some aspects, Hassan’s video work approaches Lebanese video maker Akram Zaatari’s video work - with the emphasis on text and textuality. Sherief’s video approaches Akram’s compositionally, with the emphases on lighting, graphics and mise en scene; all three are very deliberate in their images, in their ordering of space, and the connections / boundaries between sections. Hassan’s work more transparently theorizes (with words/text or the speaking voice) in his pieces, while Akram’s critical foundations are implied by the structural elements of his work. These are just a few examples of the types of questions we could ask.

In his study of the statements of 19th century doctors, Foucault asked these questions to understand how the statements were formed: “Who is speaking? Who among the totality of speaking individuals is accorded the right to use this sort of language? Who is qualified to do so? Who derives from it his own special quality, his prestige, and from whom, in return, does he receive if not the assurance, at least the presumption that what he says is true? What is the status of the individuals who - alone - have the right, sanctioned by law or tradition, juridically defined or spontaneously accepted, to proffer such a discourse?” Such questions are implicit in some of Hassan Khan’s installation work. He considers the institutional sites, as Foucault does his 19th century doctor, from which Hassan produces his critique, and from which the discourse derives its originary legitimacy. Hassan takes Foucault’s analysis of the institutions of the hospital and/or prison (with their constant surveillance, codes, systematic observation, run by a hierarchized staff body) and transfers these qualities to the site of media as a similar kind of authoritarian institution in Egypt with its complicated relations to the West from its historical situation in the Middle East; with the relations between individual and state; with the immobilizing development issues that impact on subjectivity; and with the economic/political problems that translate into social problems on the gender, class and religion fronts. He poses a resistant speech/discourse via images. He takes on political critique in the awareness of his social formation and the structural formations of his environment; subsequently the politics of speech and of his speaking within and from this place operate on both grounds of form and content. In all of his works, video is very consciously the site of his discursive practice - made distinct in his particular use of the medium, in general, from Sherief El Azma, where the site of discourse is where the work extends outside itself, towards discussions of gender and identity construction. They both share Foucault’s orientation, where discourse is connected to politics - and discourse and practice are never innocent. The subject is the consequence of social and historical processes, not one we should assume as a source of intelligibility.

We can see echoes of Foucault’s questions, or at least their mode of questioning in Hassan Khan’s video and installation work: “What is a theory? What is a concept; what is a text?” Hassan focuses on discontinuities and ruptures in his environments, whether the specific locales or urban flows in Cairo, the reconstruction in Beirut, those between the practice of video-making and the subjects recorded, those within the speaking subject, or those between the discourse he invokes and his (discursive) practice. In

Tabla Dubb, (2002) he de-centers the usual divisions between sender/receiver, producer/consumer. This is a 45-minute live performance that fuses documentary and poetic images of Cairo, joining fragments based on rhythm, graphics, beat, punctuation, metaphor and repetition. It consists of 23 audio and video loops that are assembled live from two VCR's, two CD players, video and audio mixers, a live camera feed and a microphone. The images are driven by an ensemble of highly percussive and drum based sound; the visual relations are forged across various montages, which begin with tall buildings dissolving into subway trains and Citi-busses looping into themselves. Movement crawls across these repetitions, emphasizing enclosure in a circuit of location and culture-specific meanings. For example in "Tabla Dubb No. 9" one of his more recent tracks in this work, a stationary image of an underground pedestrian tunnel connecting Al Azhar and Al-Hussein mosques in Islamic Cairo is the object against which super-impositions of people crossing fade in and out. A recitation of the poem for prophet Mohamed's birthday (Mawlid al Nabi) is amplified, echoed, fragmented and looped, puncturing the space of performance with sentences about knowledge and its transmission, sent through the tunnel as if it were a telephone connection to the spiritual plane from the city. Religion is not the topic, nor is it fetishized as a cultural artifact; rather telecommunication is presented to us in the low-tech, urban Islamic milieu – the sacred and the profane are not separate in this scene of everyday life. Knowledge is transmitted in the process of engaging with this urban environment, living and moving around such historically signifying monuments. This is a tactile and sensorial knowledge of a place, which is the very least that the poorest people and the largest segment of the population in this environment can attain.

More recently Hassan completed a 52-minute 4-channel installation, *the hidden location* (2004), which opened in the Chantal Crousel Gallery in Paris, but has yet to be performed in Cairo. Never failing to engage critically, this demanding work is divided into no less than 10 sections which give us a selected "scan" (in the words of the artist) of his contemporary social environment: a woman's admission to a friend in a public bathroom of her affaire with a foreign man; a corporate executive explaining, in English, the skills-building games the company's employees must play; a conversation between Hassan the artist and his friend "Mo" in talk-show format about Mo's multiple and contradictory personalities, as perhaps brought out in his discussion of the role of furniture objects from his family's house; a cashier and his veiled girlfriend, a secretary, meeting on a bridge; tourists posing for the camera in downtown Cairo; cargo ships full of imported goods passing at Port Said; electronic gadgets piled up in a shop in a popular section of Cairo; an exclusive housing area on the outskirts of the city; an employee going to work in downtown Cairo while we see him changing from his day clothes to a soldier's uniform, and while the camera and he rotate circularly as the environment appears to change; a dog in a living room approaching the camera. In this work there appears to be a play between movement and stasis where things and people are shown to be moving, where the camera moves around things, and where the environment appears to move, through their fragmentations across the 4 channels; yet as a whole, the result seems to be a still-life of particular moments that compose an idea of a place, the hidden location perhaps that we are scanning but that is not located by precise coordinates.

Sherief El Azma's orientation is different from that of Hassan Khan. His videos engage in a self-conscious play with film genres within documentary and narrative modes, occasionally deploying the tools

of pastiche and irony, by which Frederic Jameson identified and described post-modern cinema of the early 1980's. Sherief also plays with what Jean Baudrillard has identified as floating signifiers (images, signs, words) that are distant from their referents (real things). In *Pilot for an Egyptian Woman's Soap Opera*, (2003), which Sherief describes as part B-movie and part melodrama, the real memoirs of a former Egyptian airline hostess are folded into an experimental narrative of gender dysphoria. There are four settings in the film: the training rooms where the airline hostess candidates are being prepared by a head hostess for their future roles by testing their presentation skills through tense questionnaires about social backgrounds and singing competitions; the airplane cabin during multiple flights which carries only male passengers, most of the time a grotesque "count" and his macho body guard; the behind the scenes area for the airline hostesses on the plane, and the staging of intimate exchanges between women, characterized by shaky hand-held camera work and harsh white lighting; and the desert where the hostess trainer struggles in her pumps and uniform to reach a rock and deliver some hard-earned wisdom to her protégé, the trainee who's nose bleeds, while she performs her duties in the cabin with an unflinching smile. The constructedness of gender is being exposed, most perfectly through the use of pastiche and irony as it refers to film genres and gender genres, the codes of which it violates at the same time.

Hassan Khan and Sherief El Azma have responded to the film and television legacy in Egypt by dispensing with tradition, influence, and the idea of "spirit," in a way that echoes Foucault. They distinguish themselves against mainstream, narrative and dominant cinema while they have frequently commented on television's cultural weight; their works are distinctly local in space and colloquial in reference, while also distinct from the trends, idioms and history of the film industry. This rejection of, or definition against the past is reminiscent of Ortega Y Gasset's early 20th century description of the modern artist as a man outside of culture. He theorized about modern art that was always inevitably unpopular, in his essay *The Dehumanization of Art*. He claimed that modern art is unpopular, has no commercial appeal and is not understood by the masses. It divides the world into the masses who cannot understand it, and the few who appreciate it and grant it its social value. These later few tend to be artists themselves. Rather than condemn the new art for excluding the masses, he implicitly critiques the masses for too easily rejecting what they do not understand - and reminds us that to understand something does not mean one has to agree with or like it. He points out other characteristics of the modern art: reliance on the tool of irony; the treatment of art as "a thing of no transcending consequence"^{ix}; and this, the most characteristic feature - its "dehumanization of art" in its movement away from 19th century realism, to which the masses identified through human sentiment. The new art is extremely ironic and ridicules itself - and although Ortega is describing modernist art, these tendencies are echoed in the context of contemporary experimental video in Egypt. It is not insignificant that these video artists, who dwell between the film and the art worlds, have much to resist and define themselves against - one of which is the overwhelming tendency of Egyptian cinema to follow melodramatic, comedy and musical genres, void of the spirit of innovation or challenging subject matter.

Conclusion

This focus on the video works of Hassan Khan and Sherief El Azma is not done to grant them a sovereignty in the world of experimental Middle Eastern video, nor to draw a contrived portrait of the state of non-commercial experimental video-making in Egypt, but rather to stress the diversity, complexity and difficulty of this environment that has debilitated what could otherwise be a vibrant and prolific video-producing scene - in a country long recognized for its cinema industry, and a region increasingly changing as it becomes both more technologized, and destabilized by Western economic and military interventions. One may wonder why Beirut, which has an active video art scene, is different, if it is not a particular zeitgeist or spirit. The answer appears to reside in the different history, development and legacy of colonialism; the different local economic and power structures; more funding for the arts and a closer network of artists; their promotion by a curator like Christina Tohme; a differently formed bourgeois class who consume and produce alternative art to a slightly greater degree; and perhaps the Lebanese artist's greater willingness to participate in the marketing of his/her own work, while demurring and expressing ambivalence about the "Arab-experimental" category.

Furthermore, video production developed very differently in Egypt than in Beirut, where the video culture developed as a result of satellite television stations LBC and Future TV, which tapped into the talent of either journalists who covered the war, or young graphic designers and others who had been trained abroad or at LAU (Lebanese American University)^x. What is happening now with digital video in Egypt is that regents of the older guard of independents - Mohamed Khan and Khairy Bishara (and similarly in Syria, Mohamed Malas) - are turning to independently produced digital video as a liberation from the constraints, bureaucratic, financial and otherwise, of working in the film medium and within the film industries in their own country. In 2004 Khan premiered his film *Klephty* at the 7th Biennale of Arab Cinema at L'Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris; in 2005 Malas premiered his film *Bab al Maqam* in Amman at the Francophone Arab screening. Both films have not been screened in commercial theaters in their own countries, and Bishara is still editing his film. Meanwhile, a younger generation, both graduates from the Higher Institute of Cinema and others, are buying their own digital cameras and editing gear, working collaboratively or solo, applying for international grants, and working in the industry to support the production of their own works.

But beyond peripheral glances, it is not terribly fruitful to compare Cairo and Beirut. In Cairo the individual wades through a sea of socio-economic problems, that greatly shapes the experience of time, space and subjectivity. Very soon there may be a more level playing field between the fringe video artist and the independent film directors, thanks to the digital video revolution. In this context, regardless of the high-religiosity of the society (Muslim majority and Christian Coptic minority), we find hint of the importance of spirit - which I broadly interpret as the spirit to imagine, to be imaginative, to create without concerns for profit, to stand apart from the majority of society, and to critique normative ideologies. This is a radical notion of spirit. The production of experimental video in Cairo, that questions surrounding grand narratives, that critically responds to its social environment, that critiques institutionalized power structures, and that travels beyond itself (through exhibition networks) is the affirmation of creative agency, and in

this sense, spirit, working against great odds and socioeconomic pressures. In this way, the burden of cinema (which could just as easily be the burden of normative society) is also a gift that forces newness and critical positioning into being. It does this perhaps violently and harshly, but this has frequently been the relationship between old and new forms. Experimental video is not going to come out from the shadows of the television and film industry in Egypt, but it has its place as a site of critical cultural production that questions how we comprehend the role of technology as an end and a statement in itself.

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ⁱⁱ Naomi Sakr, *Satellite Realms – Transnational Television, Globalization & the Middle East*, p. 23/24

ⁱⁱⁱ According to film critic Mohamed Al Assyouti, since the economic policy changes of the Sadat era and as a direct result of the 1967 defeat.

^{iv} Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge*

^v Foucault, p. 7

^{vi} Mark Poster, "Post Modern Virtualities", from *The Information Subject*, p.141

^{vii} Poster, "The Archeology of the Future" from *The Information Subject*

^{viii} Ella Habib Shohat and Robert Stam, "Film Theory and Spectatorship in the Age of the Posts" from *Unthinking Eurocentrism*.

^{ix} Ortega Y Gasset, *The Dehumanization of Art*, p. 13

^x This is further elaborated in Laura U Marks' article "What is That *and* between Arab Women and Video? The case of Beirut", *Camera Obscura*, 18.2 (2003). Duke University Press.

Bridging the Gap Between the Scholar and Society.

By Nicolas Mansito

“The best course for humanities departments to take may be to curtail the system of credentialism and specialization, to end the grip of the professionalist mentality, and to open their doors to the art and ideas, and the people who create them, that have always existed beyond their narrow walls.” ~from
Louis Menand’s, “The Demise of Disciplinary Authority” (109)

I

In his essay, “The Scholar in Society,” Gerald Graff rightfully argues that presently the “distance between the scholar and society is growing” as a direct result of the “publish-or-perish requirements” existing in the scholarly world today (343,346). What Graff explains, as I read him, is that since Humanities (read: English) departments have conducted so much research, researching, in order to progress, has become so overly specialized and cognitively intricate that the “layman,” to use David Lodge’s terminology, can no longer relate to it (Graff, “Scholar” 344). And it is not only those outside of academia who feel this way; many faculty members share the sentiment that our university’s publishing and research requirements for tenure and position advancement have created such a dauntingly huge body of research that “no one even pretends any longer to ‘keep up’ with everything published on even a single major author” (Scholes 173).

What has happened is that, as a direct result of our U.S. universities’ focus on publishing as a determiner of success, the body of research conducted has grown to overwhelming proportions, which in turn has forced us (in order to continue to publish and maintain our job security) to specialize our research to such a degree that it is no longer relevant to the world outside of the academy. I myself have been told by many of my colleagues that my professional research is more important than my pedagogical responsibilities. This immediately creates a paradox: How am I to give my students the attention they need and rightfully deserve when all my time is dedicated to my own research? As I see it, because of the way many English Studies curriculums are structured, and because of all the responsibilities we as instructors have, we will never be able to equally share our time between our students and our research if these publishing requirements continue to exist. Moreover, as I continue to specialize my research— which I must in order to remain competitive— and begin to formulate possible projects, I see how difficult it will be for my work

to be relevant outside academia.

For example, lately I have been thinking about retranslating the poems and autobiography of Juan Francisco Manzano, a Cuban mulatto slave, in hopes of gaining a new perspective on the relationship Manzano had with his translators and benefactor. Additionally, Manzano, in some of his letters, tells his benefactor that there are some things he will not include in his autobiography. In light of this statement, I've thought of filling in what Manzano left out in his autobiography. However, even though this may be a viable and extremely productive endeavor in the English field, I feel the material and topic I'm working with may be too specific and not current enough to be easily approached by and relevant to those outside the scholarly world. So I have abandoned this idea in order to pursue projects that will be more relevant to society—agreeing with Graff when he states that we as “academic humanists need to take some responsibility for controlling the way...[our] ideas and projects are represented to a wider public” (“Scholar” 354). Recently, I have been focusing more on Latino Studies, particularly those of Cuban-Americans in hopes of exposing my students to Cuban history and texts so that they may begin to see how Cubans represent themselves and how their sense of identity, in part, is shaped by and influences American culture.

I have recently finished a translation of José Martí's poem *Amor de Ciudad Grande—Love of the Big City*. This poem was written when Martí was exiled and was residing in New York. In her essay, “The (Political) Exile Gaze in Martí's Writing on the United States,” Susana Rotker states that in the nineteenth century, “the identity of the individual depended on that whole represented by nation/state; thus, the exile was seen as someone who had been divested of identity” (60). In Martí's case, we can see his writing as a form of redemption, a means in which to recuperate not only his home, but his identity as well. Furthermore, since Martí was in fact an exile, his perspective offers us a new, nontraditional viewpoint, because, as Rotker argues, “the exiled intellectual is seen as occupying a privileged place: not belonging ensures the distancing of the gaze and the denial of concessions to the institutions... (61). So what Rotker suggests is that Martí's poem can indeed present us with a portrait of America that is free of American nostalgia and ideology. So what is the pedagogical purpose of my research, of looking at Martí's representation of America?

By presenting Martí's vision of America to my students, I offer them a new perspective of their homeland, one much less celebratory than what they've come to believe. Micheal Harmes-García, in his essay, “Which America is Ours?: Martí's ‘Truth’ and the American Foundations of ‘American Literature,’” suggests Martí's “prescient understanding of the United States's coming role of hemispheric dominance” and his “astute observations about the nature of US society” presents us with “a more sharply honed sense of the dangers presented by the US example” (20-21). Harmes-García points out that Martí's work acknowledges and presents the “difference and discord in the United States,” which I think is readily evidenced in *Love of the Big City* (23). By aligning my research and pedagogical goals through this critical and interpretive exercise, I expose my students to a different version of U.S. history, inviting them to reevaluate their own notions of American history as they move towards thinking more critically about their own modern situation.

The problematic situation between research and teaching has led many outside the scholarly world to question what it is we as scholars do and how it relates to them. But the problems of overspecialization do not only affect those outside the universities. As I briefly mentioned earlier, the struggle to research and publish also affects the quality of education we offer our students: “But there is a vast effort here, an enormous expenditure of time and energy that might have been much better spent on matters that bear more directly on the classroom” (Scholes 173). Here, Robert Scholes, Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Humanities at Brown University, rightfully notes that researching cuts into our teaching time. In essence, we are pulled in two directions— we fight to find enough time to research in order to publish while we struggle to give our students and their work the attention they deserve. Scholes suggests that if publishing requirements were lessened, then the time we would have spent researching could be used to develop new pedagogical approaches and exercises.

In our struggle to research and publish, we neglect our most important pedagogical responsibilities, which are to teach our students how to read critically and write eloquently and efficiently. By having to focus so heavily on specialized research and our own publishing, our personal goals begin to diverge from our pedagogical responsibilities. The fact that we do not introduce and utilize our research in our classrooms results in the gap Graff highlights. What we need to do to begin bridging this gap is to start aligning our research and pedagogical goals:

Instead of trying to protect the interests of general education from those of research, it would be more productive for academic institutions to take advantage of whatever in research is potentially of general interest to nonprofessionals. Instead of discouraging scholars from letting their research obtrude into their undergraduate teaching, institutions would begin encouraging scholars to *teach* their research... (Graff, “Scholar” 355).

Not presenting our research to either the public or our students merely perpetuates confusion and misunderstanding. We can’t expect those outside academia to understand, let alone relate to what it is we do if we don’t share our work with them. As long as we continue to keep our work in seclusion, there will never be any true communication between academia and the public.

Another alternative, Helen Vendler offers, is that we stop expecting all teachers to be writers. Vendler argues that writing “is a different profession even from scholarly research and discovery, a different profession from the profession of critical thinking” (35). Even though this sentiment may not be true for all scholars, Vendler argues that many teachers who are forced by publishing requirements to write do so not out of love for their subject but out of necessity. What Vendler suggests is that we move towards researching and teaching what we love, and in doing so, we will allow our students and respective communities “to love what we have loved” (35).

By researching what we love, and subsequently incorporating our research into our pedagogical practice, we begin to realign our teaching and research goals— demystifying our work and making it more approachable for our students. Through this realignment we might even infuse some of our students with

the passion we feel for our work, which will narrow the gap Graff refers to, because, when they finish their academic careers, our students will carry this knowledge and passion with them as they enter into society. As Vendler suggests, “If we would awaken in our beginning students, in their first year, the response that they can all feel to the human story told in compelling ways, we would begin to form a general public who approve of what we are and what we do” (34). But unfortunately, this gap will only continue to widen as long as “the competitive ranking of universities” relies on “their annual research production rather than their excellence in teaching” (Graff, “Scholar” 346).

Essentially, what is occurring is that as we sacrifice our teaching responsibilities to pursue our research and publishing requirements, we are isolating our communities and our students. We are, quite literally, as seen through the eyes of those outside academia, turning into some type of elitist social club. By isolating our students and the communities they are a part of, we strip them of the very social dimensions we need to educate them. It is no wonder why those outside the scholarly world have trouble identifying what it is we do; it is because we are teaching in a “social void” (Graff, “Disliking” 48).

English Studies calls upon so many other academic disciplines that it is impossible to examine and teach a text in a social vacuum. In order to be fully appreciated and explored, a text must be placed within its social and historical context; we have to examine and consider when it was written, why it was written, and what social and historical conditions influenced the text. By secluding ourselves within a world of research, we are essentially isolating our students from the very critical community they need to be a part of in order to understand what it is we are trying to accomplish— to situate our students within their own community, culture, and more broadly, their world. When our “students are screened from this critical community and its debates, or when they experience only the fragmentary and disconnected versions of it represented by a series of courses,” what else can we expect from our students and society but confusion? (Graff, “Disliking” 47) What we need to do is “conceive of education as if it were a process of contemplating important truths, values, and ‘cultural literacy’ information” as it relates to our students’ social situation (Graff, “Disliking” 48).

Our students are unable to envision how the work conducted by English Studies professionals relates to their modern situation. They find it overwhelmingly difficult to draw connections between the various courses they take, and how what they learn in these courses relates to their public life, because our curriculums do not foster these connections. In our research pursuits, we have not only isolated ourselves from society, but we have also isolated ourselves within our own English departments, which has resulted in a fragmented curriculum. Not sharing our work with each other, and not drawing connections between the courses taught in English departments leads to an inter-departmental communication breakdown. As a result of this breakdown, our curriculum fails to become a unified body of knowledge; it fails to create a general picture of how the information presented in these courses and our research relates to the lives of our students and nonprofessionals. We need to be aware of the fact that the gap between the scholar and society directly reflects the professional striation and lack of communication within in our own departments. Richard Ohmann sums it up best when he states that the

centrifugal tendencies in theory and method over the past fifteen years have a lot to do with a deepening class division in the academy, which parallels that outside of it. Teachers of English in the more expensive private institutions and in some of the most prestigious public ones feel less pressure than before from students' vocational needs and anxieties... And many feel less professional solidarity with those who teach mainly composition to middle-class and working-class students. That division expresses itself not only in recent angry proposals by writing teachers to secede from the uneasy alliance of the English department, but in the freedom of the more privileged academic group to pursue theories and approaches not very directly related to classroom exigencies or to guild traditions (94-95).

Because our research has become so specialized, so compartmentalized, it is beginning to become only relevant to our specific, narrow field of study, which is leading us, as we pursue this specialized knowledge, to isolate ourselves from our own colleagues— from the very same people we need to be interacting with in order to create a more global, cohesive body of knowledge we can present to the public:

[...] universities, in particular, because their eyes are supposed to be firmly focused on the distant frontiers of truth, neglect the kind of social, psychological, and even in certain cases physical upkeep that makes the capacity to go searching for truth possible in the first place. What I'm saying is that more of a spirit of collectivity, a commitment not simply to finding the latest truth in your subfield but to the people you work with in your department and to the institution as an alma mater for the students who are coming through— a much more local focus for people's energies, drives and ambitions than a focus on becoming nationally known for this or that discovery or contribution— might help to defuse and make less tempting or desirable that kind of combat and grasping after visibility that seems to characterize the profession so much of late. The culture of the institution is what needs to change (Tompkins, "Interviews" 175-176).

What Jane Tompkins suggests is that instead of highly focusing on developments in our own subfields, we should be examining new ways to conduct our research that will begin to foster a sense of solidarity on a more local level.

In an attempt to create this sense of solidarity within Humanities departments— and between the community— William L. Andrews, E. Maynard Adams Professor of English and former chair of the English department at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, conducted a conference entitled, *Teaching for the Public Good: The Future of the Humanities in Public Higher Education* (ADE 2003). The goal of the conference was to discuss and present what Humanities departments should be doing "in the specific context of higher education" (Andrews, ADE 2003). The conference was driven by two fundamental questions:

First, what effect can and should the humanities have on public higher education now? This isn't simply a matter of how the humanities should be packaged in the curriculum of public

higher education but also what role it should have in shaping the priorities, values, and missions of public education in general. Second, what do we mean by public education, and who is public? (Andrews, ADE 2003)

Striving to create a connection with the local community, the conference also focused on determining what the North Carolina Universities' responsibilities were to the people of the state. The conference consisted of the following sessions: *Diversity and Growth in North Carolina Postsecondary Education*; *Instructional Technology and its Effects on the Humanities*; *Pedagogy and Teacher Education: What is the Role of the Humanities?*; and *The Future of the Humanities Curriculum* (Andrews, ADE 2003). As a result of the conference, a speaker's board of Humanities faculty members was created and entrusted "to address humanities issues to a wide range of audiences including high school guidance counselors... and business audiences" (Andrews, ADE 2003). But, unfortunately, one annual conference alone cannot fix the problem, although it is a great step towards finding solutions.

In sum, the problem with our university's "publish or perish" requirements is a two-fold one: First, it is isolating our students and communities from the very social contexts they require to situate themselves in the conversations English departments are currently participating in; secondly, particular fields in our English departments are isolating themselves not only from society, but from other English fields and academic disciplines. This problem is not a new one, nor has it been ignored by many in English departments; and since the problem is a two-fold one, it logically follows that there be a two-fold solution, a solution that focuses on restructuring the university itself and reintroducing our students and communities to what we do in ways that highlight the relevancy of our work to their social situations.

II

Building the Bridge

"Too much reliance is now put on perfunctory outside reviews, where internal evaluation might serve better. And far too much stress is placed upon quantity of publication than on the quality of learning and teaching displayed in writing, lectures, course designs, and assignments for student work" ~from Robert Scholes', *The Rise and Fall of English* (177)

In response to this dilemma, Scholes proposes a complete reevaluation and restructuring of the English Ph.D. Scholes' new curriculum would cut the number of graduate courses taught by faculty, which would allow them to teach more undergraduate courses. The reasoning behind this move is that if senior faculty members were to incorporate their research into their undergraduate teaching, then this would create a new student body equipped with the knowledge and practical cognitive tools that before were reserved only for graduate students. Essentially, this new approach would destroy the elitist knowledge barrier, because every college student, even non-English majors, would still be exposed to the types of critical

and analytical thinking more seasoned English scholars engage in. Since the number of students who possess this knowledge and will later enter into society increases, society, as a whole, will gain a greater understanding of what it is we as scholars do, thus, the foundation for the bridge between the scholar and society is begun.

Scholes also argues that his new program, which focuses highly on student education and teaching, would reduce the amount of debt Ph.D. students fall into because, since his new ten- year program would consist of fewer students, there would be more funding available for each of them. Even though I appreciate Scholes' new program, and indeed I agree much of it is favorable, I find it hard to imagine universities responding kindly to it because of Scholes' ambiguity in outlining his program. For one, Scholes does not mention when or how this new ten-year program would be introduced into English Studies curriculums, nor does he explain how students already engaged in a four-year Ph.D. or two-year M.A. program would situate themselves in his new program. Where would, let's say, a current third-year Ph.D. or second- year M.A. student stand if a university were to adopt Scholes' new program? Obviously, restructuring the English Studies curriculum would be a long and tedious process, surely something not done overnight, and since Scholes offers no time line as to how his new program should be practically approached to situate it within the English Studies curriculum, nor how current students would be placed in his program, even the most willing university would find adopting Scholes' program rather tricky. Furthermore, Scholes' program focuses highly on teaching not researching, which, if universities cannot reduce their publishing requirements as fast as Scholes' program releases its graduates, will then result in a body of graduates unequipped to compete in the academic world. Although I find Scholes' ten-year program problematic, I do believe his practical pedagogical restructuring of English Studies could bring about fruitful changes.

Scholes argues that English Studies curriculums place too much emphasis on *coverage* rather than *method application*. He argues that English departments' concerns must shift from *coverage* and *periodization* to producing students with high reading and writing competence. Scholes believes that the English program must refocus its goals from covering literary history through a canon of texts to constructing a canon of methods students can practically apply. His approach consists of using modern writers to entice or inspire students to travel backwards through a lineage of texts— to see who authors were reading and who inspired them. Additionally, by traveling backwards, the student will have to examine the author's historical and cultural place. Scholes stresses that students read various types of texts, learning to read both sympathetically— inside the text searching for intention— and critically— distancing themselves from the text, examining and analyzing intention. In doing so, Scholes believes that current students will subsequently be able to foster a connection between the past and their modern situation. He uses his Discipline of Textuality to do so. Scholes' Discipline of Textuality consists of four major components— Theory (a canon of methods used to evaluate the other three aspects of textuality), History (how to situate a text), Production (how to compose a text), and Consumption (how to read a text).

Before going into depth concerning Scholes' Theory on a canon of methods, since it is rather involved and leads to other tangential discussions concerning the problems with the traditional canon, I want to quickly highlight the other three components of his Discipline of Textuality. Scholes' History component involves

a cross-departmental approach in which our students are provided a historical, orientational framework by inviting history faculty members to teach our students political, intellectual, art, music, science, and technology history. The framework is created, as aforementioned, by working backwards—beginning with the present and working back through a lineage of texts—thus both creating a connection to the students' modern situation and providing a historical and literary time line to the present.

In his explanation of his Production component, Scholes argues that not enough serious attention is paid to student writing, and that our students are not reading enough. Scholes suggests that “Better reading and better writing go hand in hand” (160). He believes our students should engage in imitating and parodying the texts of the renowned authors of the past. His reasoning is that these texts serve as models of “syntactic and semantic possibilities” (160). Moreover, by examining the works of the past, students can begin to form a connection between the past and their modern situation.

Scholes' third component, Consumption, focuses on perceiving reading as a dynamic, creative process. He argues that the process of reading should be more important than the coverage of texts. Instruction should focus highly on close and careful reading, intertextuality—how to situate a text in relation to others—and extratextuality—how to situate the text in relation to culture, society, and the world. Again, the reasoning behind this approach is that it will build a bridge of understanding between the past and the students' present.

Scholes' concept of Theory abandons the traditional notion of the literary canon as it attempts to equip students with practical knowledge: “It is not what is covered that counts but what is learned. It is not what students have been told that matters but what they remember and what they can do” (149). Scholes proposes this can be accomplished by broadening the scope of English Studies outside of American and British Literature—to bring literature to the modern culture of the student by developing specialized literature courses. Essentially, what Scholes is suggesting is a multiculturalist approach. As society continues to ethnically diversify, in order for our work to remain relevant, we must begin to formulate new theories and pedagogical approaches that take into consideration the ever-changing ethnicity of our society. Regarding this notion, Jane Tompkins has stated:

The racial and ethnic composition of the student body in colleges and universities is fact number one; the racial, ethnic, and gender composition of the professoriate is fact number two. These demographic trends are not reversing themselves; they're moving further in the same direction. (“Interviews” 174).

This multicultural attitude is already manifesting itself in academies today, and has been for quite some time now; and it is especially evidenced in the remarks made by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Chair of the Afro-American Studies Department and Director of the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for Afro-American Studies at Harvard University:

We must redefine “theory” itself from within our own black cultures, refusing to grant the

racist premise that theory is something white people do, so that we are doomed to imitate our white colleagues... Our task now is to invent and employ our own critical theory, to assume our own propositions, and to stand within the academy as politically responsible and responsive parts of a social and cultural African American whole (177).

The argument Gates openly expresses and Scholes tacitly suggests is that the traditional canon is exclusive. Indeed, many scholars, including Tompkins, have argued that the traditional canon is a vehicle for separatism; “that works that have attained the status of classic, and are therefore believed to embody universal values, are in fact embodying only the interests of whatever parties or factions are responsible for maintaining them in their permanent position (“Masterpiece Theater” 138). By expanding our notion of the canon to include more multinational texts, “we bring them out of the neglect [to which] they had previously been condemned” (Said 196).

Contingent with Scholes and Tompkins’ notion is Edward W. Said’s concept of *worldliness*, which is

the restoration to such works and interpretations of their place in the global setting, a restoration that can only be accomplished by an appreciation not of some tiny, defensively constituted corner of the world, but of the large, many-windowed house of human culture as a whole. It seems... absolutely essential that we engage with cultural works in this unprovincial, interested manner while maintaining a strong sense of the contest for forms and values which any decent cultural work embodies, realizes, and contains (196-197).

But multiculturalists have been unsuccessful in creating a new, expanded master canon. Instead, what has happened is that many mini-canons, each representative of their own culture, have begun to form. However, these new mini-canons “have largely failed to dislodge the master-canon from its empirical centrality,” but they have “made certain specific works and authors newly available for inclusion in the master-canon,” a progression that has effectively challenged “the conceptual anonymity of the master-canon (Sedgwick 185). In sum, many multiculturalists have moved to create their own mini-canons in response to the separatist notion that “Canonicity itself then seems the necessary wadding of pious obliviousness that allows for the transmission from one generation to another of texts that have the potential to dismantle the impacted foundations upon which a given culture rests” (Sedgwick 188).

J. Hillis Miller, former president of the Modern Language Association and former department chair at Yale and Johns Hopkins University, is pleased with the direction some multiculturalists are taking. Miller sees their new focus on cultural studies as a move towards making what multiculturalists do “have some importance in our society” (115). And Miller perceives that these attempts will only continue to flourish since, as older faculty members retire, “younger professors... will for better or worse be all there is to hire” (141). Rightfully so, Miller envisions that these new, younger instructors will bring about “a lot of interesting transformations” (141).

Many of these changes Miller refers to are already occurring now in various English departments. Vendler

has noted that

more imaginative departments have invented courses, centered on themes or styles, that include a range of authors from Chaucer to Faulkner. And departments of English and foreign languages alike can press for, and participate in, core courses that will restore to our students, so unjustly deprived of a knowledge of cultural riches, a sense of how many great authors there are to know” (35).

Vendler also suggests that we take this notion beyond just the university or college curriculum. She argues that those “who end their education with secondary school have been cheated altogether of their literary inheritance” (39). The gap between the scholar and society exists partly because we are not exposing our students at an early enough age to what it is we do and love as scholars. To combat this problem, Vendler suggests that there are many texts appropriate to every age, and that we begin introducing these works to our students at every step of their development. What I think society does not realize at times is that we engage in literary scholarship because we love it; we love it, in part, because the texts of authors grant a sense that we are not alone in this world; their narratives provide us with a “private experience” from which we may build our own “identifying frame or solacing reflection” (Vendler 39). In a sense, literature not only invigorates us, but it comforts us as well. There should be no reason why we cannot introduce this notion to everyone at an early age. In doing so, we may begin to build a society that appreciates and understands what it is we as scholars do, and why we love it so much.

But this is a daunting, if not impossible task. No one instructor has the power to change the entire school system. In order to bring about this desired reform we must begin to work from within, beginning with ourselves and our own classrooms. We must “give, especially to our beginning students, that rich web of associations, lodged in the tales of majority and minority culture alike, by which they could begin to understand themselves as individuals and as social beings” (Vendler 40). Indeed, as Vendler so eloquently puts it: “We owe it to ourselves to show our students... what we are; we owe their dormant appetites... that deep sustenance that will make them realize that they too, having been taught, love what we love” (40).

Regarding making changes from within the English Studies program and in tune with Said’s notion of *worldliness*, Patricia Bizzel has said:

I think we need a radically new system to organize English studies, and I propose that we develop it in response to the materials with which we are now working. Instead of finagling the new literatures and the new pedagogical and critical approaches into our old categories, we should try to find comprehensive new forms that seem to spring from and respond to the new materials... I think we need an approach to the diverse world literatures written in English we are now studying that focus not on their essential nature, whatever that may be, but rather on how they might, not “fit” together exactly, but come into productive dialogue with one another (480, 482).

She suggests that one way this problem can be resolved is by using Mary Louise Pratt's concept of *Contact Zones*, which is the term that refers to the "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today" (Pratt 34). One of the functions and advantages to this approach is that it would fully integrate multiculturalism into English Studies. By having multiculturalism be the defining feature, we could begin to see how different languages attempt to communicate with each other, and we can thus further explore the unequal power distributions among these languages. Another function is that this approach would completely integrate "composition and rhetoric into literary studies," because studying these texts "as they respond to contact zone conditions is studying them rhetorically, studying them as efforts of rhetoric" (Bizzel 484). In studying these texts in this manner, we would have to focus on their historical context, which would provide a means to focus our rhetorical analysis. In doing so, we would offer our students a way in which to see how each particular author used their texts to situate themselves in the social, cultural, and historical situations they found themselves in, and this analysis would begin to demonstrate and explain to our students how they themselves may begin to use their own language as a means to discover and express their position in society today, to "see writing as a form of self-development and self-discovery," as a means to know and learn about oneself, "or just as a mode of learning pure and simple" (Tompkins, "Interviews" 164).

By structuring our courses this way, we could start to shift away from periodization, as Scholes suggests, because we would begin to

organize English studies not in terms of literary or chronological periods, nor essentialized racial or gender categories, but rather in terms of historically defined contact zones, moments when different groups within the society contend for the power to interpret what is going on (Bizzel 483).

Moreover, under Pratt and Bizzel's new paradigm, there would no longer be a need for two separate introductory English courses, because in a one-year long composition/literary course, if taught from this paradigm, "Students would learn to critique strategies of negotiating difference in the writing of others and to practice them in their own" (Bizzel 485). This reorganization and consolidation would decrease the number of classes required to be taught, thus reducing the number of professors needed to teach these courses, which would subsequently increase the amount of attention we could give to our students. Plus, since our class load would be reduced, and we would not need as many instructors, these decreases would free up capital within the curriculum, subsequently reducing the publishing pressures placed upon us, because we would no longer rely so heavily on publishing success to gain additional funds within the program.

Another move we as instructors can make towards more readily engaging our students is to begin to introduce into our classrooms the various mediums our students are bombarded by in modern society. Alan Purves has stated that

We strive to help students toward the larger and older perspective, to come to a particular understanding of themselves and their past, to enter that broader world that is defined as literature... But our work is flawed. Flawed because many of our students resist it— some wrongly, I think, but many rightly... our work deals with a medium— print— that is losing ground and neglecting the major change wrought in our literary and artistic world... There is no reason why students should not deal with film, video, audio, hypermedia, and other forms of presentation” (215).

This is not to say that we abandon printed texts altogether, but we should begin to use other mediums in conjunction with printed texts, drawing associations and connections between each type of medium. For example, one could teach Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* as the original precursor to hypertext. I could easily envision actually creating a hypertext document of Whitman’s poem in which links are imbedded that could instantly transport the student to other correlating parts of the text. In doing so, we could bring the past and present together, thus creating a connection between the past and our students’ modern situation. Introducing newer technologies and mediums into our classrooms would definitely “broaden the focus of our activities” and would bring about “an understanding of the world inhabited by our students as well as by ourselves” (Purves 217).

William Andrews has made many great steps forward in restructuring the English Studies curriculum along many of the lines suggested in this essay. At the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Andrews, responding to dean Risa Palm’s ideas, inducted the *First-Year Seminars Program*, which gives first-year students the opportunity to participate in courses consisting of fifteen to twenty students per class, taught by full-time faculty members on special topics created by the instructor (ADE 2001). This program is offered to all departments, and as an incentive to participate, any department committing to teaching four first-year seminars every year consecutively would be offered a new tenure-track hire (Andrews, ADE 2001). Andrews’ own department agreed to teaching eight seminars, so thus received two tenure-track assistant professors (ADE 2001). Of this new program, Andrews has stated that “The key thing for my department is that we have benefited from it, our first-year students appreciate it, and I can see no downside to it” (ADE 2001). Additionally, Chapel Hill offers a two-semester composition sequence, staffed primarily by English teaching fellows; some full-time faculty members do indeed teach in the first-year program, and they are primarily specialists in research and composition, which effectively allows these faculty members to align their research and pedagogical goals (Andrews, ADE 2001).

This program came about when Andrews analyzed the English department’s student body. He determined that 96% of Chapel Hill’s English department’s student body consisted of undergraduates, thus undergraduates outnumbered graduates approximately 15 to 1 (Andrews, ADE 2001). He found that his senior faculty members were only teaching one graduate course a year and three upper-level courses for undergraduates. Thus, he asked himself: “Is this the right distribution of teaching responsibilities, given the ratio of undergraduates to graduate students in our clientele...? Did we need so many faculty members— about twenty-five each semester— offering graduate courses?” (ADE 2001). The answer was an emphatic *no*. Andrews concluded his faculty, regardless of rank, had to decrease their graduate teaching while

increasing their undergraduate teaching. The faculty unanimously voted for a policy by which no faculty member could teach more than one graduate course every four semesters, and every faculty member had to teach one introductory literature course every four semesters. And no one— even administrators and endowed chair holders— were to be exempt (Andrews, ADE 2001).

There have been very little negative consequences to this program. Andrews has noted that since course offerings have somewhat diminished in number, some graduate students have complained about the lack of availability of certain courses. However, Andrews has argued this has had a beneficial effect on what faculty members offer when they teach their courses, because now, more planning and consulting regarding graduate students' course selection is required. Moreover, under this new system, if a graduate course does not enroll an acceptable number— five for seminars and ten for graduate courses— then the course is cancelled and the faculty member must teach an undergraduate course relating to the instructor's field (Andrews, ADE 2001). Another salutary effect of this system is that Andrews has not had to hire part-time lecturers to cover the costs of undergraduate courses, and his teaching-assistant pool has been significantly reduced, thus freeing up more capital for the program (Andrews ADE 2001). Andrews attributes the program's success to the "culture of his department... Although once the English department at Carolina was as hierarchical as any, over the last decade we have moved toward greater egalitarianism and equal opportunity in teaching at all levels" (ADE 2001).

Andrews, by taking into account and manifesting many of the solutions previous scholars have suggested, has successfully restructured the English Studies curriculum at Chapel Hill. Andrews readily admits that his department is not the only one undergoing these changes; he feels that if he did anything unusual at Chapel Hill it was that he set "an implicit parallel of time and value between teaching at the most advanced and at the most introductory levels" of his curriculum (ADE 2001). Chapel Hill's restructuring, at minimum, provides us with a template, a model to refer to, for which we can begin to restructure our own English Studies curriculums in order to combat the problems with publishing requirements, overspecialization, and the gap between us as scholars and society. In closing, I think Andrews, in speaking about his restructured program and the beneficial changes it facilitated, sums it up best:

No one in our department talks about teaching as a chore or a necessary evil; there is considerable camaraderie and genuine admiration for good undergraduate teaching, which makes it easy to present a commitment to introductory-level teaching as simply a part of what any responsible faculty member does, not a burden to be borne by a few who can't seem to get published... More striking than committing to regular introductory- course teaching was committing to not offering so many graduate courses and to ensuring that everyone had equal access to graduate teaching opportunities. That step could not have happened if undergraduate teaching was not taken as seriously as it was in my department... I do think that what we have done has given us a greater sense of mutuality and collegiality as a teaching community, while reinforcing our reputation throughout the college as a department with a manifest and demonstrable dedication to undergraduate teaching. At a public institution, that counts for a lot these days" (ADE 2001).

Our highest responsibility as scholars in the academy is to teach our students how to think and read critically, to write clearly, effectively, efficiently, and eloquently. It is imperative we do not let our research and publishing pursuits get in the way of our pedagogy, for in this pursuit we isolate ourselves from both each other and our communities. We must find ways to present our work meaningfully to our students and the public, drawing connections between our research, pedagogy, and public life so that our students and communities begin to relate to the work conducted within the academy. We must abolish the publishing requirements fueling the competitive fires that are destroying the Humanities from the inside out. We must reestablish a sense of brotherhood and sisterhood, of solidarity in our English Studies departments; only when we have created this bond will we be able to relate to society— only by uniting within will we then be able to bridge outward.

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