

# *the quint*

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Guardian Bear #1



White Feather/Joe Spence

## EDITORIAL

It is December, and *the quint* is celebrating the first issue of its eleventh volume. I am pleased to announce that Antonio Sanna is joining us at *the quint* as our Film Review Editor. Antonio earned his doctorate at the University of Westminster in London in 2008. His main research areas are in English literature, Gothic literature, horror films and TV, epic and historical films, superhero films, and cinematic adaptations. Over the past ten years, he has published over seventy articles and reviews in international journals. Welcome Antonio!

Having entered mid-life (without a crisis), this *quint* invites its readers to enjoy the holiday season by looking back. Taking time for reflection, our 2018 Christmas issue offers readers opportunities to enjoy the amazing insights and ideas that *the quint* has housed since it began. In 2006, none of us thought a small, regional journal would go global, attracting writers from Canada, the United States, Europe, Africa, Asia and Australia. But the *quint* did, and while doing so has retained its identity as an uniquely northern nexus. Every scholarly article in *quint* calls for careful attention. The interesting papers printed here are among those I remember best. You will find showcased a quintessential *quint*— a representative and eclectic sampling of the works that we have been proud to publish. I would like to thank our generous writers (*the quint's* authors rock!), hailing from Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, the United Kingdom, Spain, Nigeria, India, Austria, Italy and Palestine.

This, *the quint's* forty first issue, begins (so appropriately) in the Canadian North, returning to John G. Hansen's unforgettable meditation on the intersections of North and South, culture shock, and Cree philosophy in "The Autonomous Mind of Wasekechak." Megan De Roover's fascinating discussion of horror, sentimentality, and the Canadian Character in "Constructing the 'True North': Sentimentality and Horror in Canadian Nationalism" follows, introducing other national concerns with Canadian identity. Next, in "Racing Towards Nationalism: The Construction of Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance," Sarita Cannon examines the implications of Sylvester Long's adoption of a Native American identity in the United States. Jim Deams offers a compelling argument about the significance of comestibles and their preparation in colonial perceptions of the "Indigene" in "The Roles of Food Sixteenth Century and Seventeenth Century Colonialism in North America." Then, in a challenging examination of Suzanne Collins' dystopian vision, A. Luxx Mishou's "*The Hunger Games* and the Failure of Dystopian Maternity" considers the implications of maternity and Katniss' character. Following, Mia Martini's "West's Simulacra: Identity and Meaning in *The Day of the Locust* (1975)" interrogates Nathaniel West's life and his 1939 novel, *The Day of the Locust*. R. Erin Tippins "Evoking Heaven by Looking at Earth: Rudyard Kipling's Metaphysical

Materialism" considers treatments of the spiritual and the material in Kipling's works. Next, Katarzyna's thought-provoking "Joan Didion's California: Literary Representations of History, Melancholy and Transgression" asks readers to consider the influence that California has had on Didion's *oeuvre*. Her new book from Routledge on Didion and her works will be released in 2019. In "Proverbes Comme Interlangue Dans La Catastrophe Au Rendez-Vous (Rere Run) D'Oladejo Okediji Traduite En Francis Par Tunde Ajiboye," Joyce O. Alade presents an intriguing, pragmatic analysis of Yoruba proverbs in *La Catastrophe au Rendez-Vous (Réré Rún)* by Oladejo Okediran, translated into French by Ajiboye, and demonstrates how African writers establish meaning in European languages to express their African world view and their culture. Then, Matthew Pawlak reconstructs the early Israelite religion in the Iron I Period in "The Religion of the First Israelites." Deborah Ford's "I am driven mad with the printed word": The Poetry of Allen Polite" charts the fascinating career and work of Allen Polite's life and writing of this little-known artists who fulfilled the broadly based, democratic imperative of the Black Arts credo while geographically and psychically removed from African American life and literature. A playful and penetrating discussion of William Styron's manipulation of fact and fiction, "William Styron's Dubious Memoir: Sophie and Styron's *Sophie's Choice*" is, at times, a wonderful Derridean exercise in authorial slippage. In "Tarnished Dreams and Toxic Waste: The Slippery Meaning of Science and Rectification at Love Canal," Rahima Schwenkbeck points out how slippery science can be when used to promote the interests of corporations and government. "The Resilience of Women in the Face of Trauma" is Jennifer Vanderheydan's sensitive and courageous, personal and academic, meditation on the challenges faced by women dealing with trauma. Following, Meghna Mudaliar's "The Gendered Self and the Invention of the Kashmiri Identity in Lal Ded's poetry. Ying Kong's "Women's Selfhood Presentations: from Carol Shields to Indigenous Women's Writers" discusses the various ways in which women's selves are shaped. Next, Dean Kritikos' perceptive and nuanced discussion, "Angels of Latent History: A Borgesian Current in Contemporary Fiction," which traces Borges' lineage in contemporary fiction, continues to be a must-read for those interested in this author's influence on recent works of literature. Following, Tatiana Prorokova's "Documenting Vietnam: Verisimilitude, Political Propaganda, and Manipulation in Peter Davis's *Hearts and Minds*" is a thoughtful examination of the power of Davis's documentary as evidentiary film. *John Butler's* "King Kojong and the Foreigners: A Tale of Broken Promises", tells the story of how Japan acquired control of industry in Korea and set the stage for the endgame of the Yi Dynasty. Michael Angelo Tata's "Warholian Counter-revolution and the Culture of Celebrity" is a wonderful romp with Andy Warhol as he captures society's upper echelons in words and images. Next, Antonio Sanna's "Contemporary Anxieties and the Future of Humanity: Joss Whedon's *Avengers: The Age of Ultron* (2015)" considers our current paranoias via Whedon's treatment of global crises and moral legitimization of

extreme measures. Sue Matheson's "Re-reading McLuhanese: more on *The Mechanical Bride* and *The Gutenberg Galaxy*" reconsiders McLuhan's presentations of the notion that texts/type reconcile Descartes' duality of mind and body. *the quint's* final offering for 2018 is Haider Eid's important historical materialist interrogation of the ideological impact of theories of 'post-ality' in "(Post)modernism and Globalism."

No *quint* is complete without its creative complement. This Christmas we are delighted to host the beautiful work of Robert Nabess. Owner and operator of White Feather in The Pas, MB, Robert is a master painter, carver, and craftsman whose art is appreciated and sought after locally, nationally, and internationally. His sophisticated carvings are stunning embodiments of Northern culture, and his leatherwork speaks of the North just as clearly and beautifully as any painting or sculpture. Robert's use of traditional materials is as contemporary and interesting as Guy Cobb's and John Dey's, and all of his wearables are functional pieces of art. We are honoured to showcase his work on the cover of this issue. We are also privileged to be able display works by Patrick Nabess, Joe Spence, and Gary Campbell that are also on display at White Feather. *Tansi.*

Here's to good reading and viewing, happy memories, and warm nights inside with thought-provoking material and a cup of something hot. At *the quint* wish you all the best the holidays (and your stockings) can bring and look forward to a very Happy New Year. *the quint* will be back in March with more offerings for reading and viewing, in time for the Easter holiday.

**Sue Matheson**  
**Editor**



# The Autonomous Mind of Wasekechak

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## Introduction

Since ancient times, Wasekechak has been the figure of autonomy in the Cree world. Even today, Wasekechak is still part of a rich tradition for teaching ethics, decision-making, values, critical thinking and how to overcome adversity and so on. Such wisdom was developed in the time-honored ways of the *Inninee* -- Cree people. For the *Omushkegowuk*--Swampy Cree, Wasekechak is usually a male figure who imparts a unique, indirect understanding of how one ought to interact with the world. When it comes to teaching life lessons many of the old Cree people trust that Wasekechak is still relevant in contemporary times.

To the Anglos of Canada, Wasekechak is sometimes called 'Whiskey Jack'. The old Cree people however, still use Wasekechak which has its origins in the language and culture of the Cree. Wasekechak does not live in an ideal world—he lives largely in

the Cree world. This means that Wasekechak experiences colonial discrimination. In other words, Western society isolates and marginalizes Wasekechak as rigidly as it does the Cree people. There is no independent Wasekechak separate from the Cree nation: Wasekechak is part of the total Cree world.

Since I am a hybrid; a product of a Swampy Cree mother and Danish father, I have developed the theoretical discussion as much as possible from a Cree point of view. I never had a choice as to whether I would be Cree or Danish, from the moment I came into the world, Western society constructed me as a member of the colonized nation and it still does today. I hope that the discussion contained in this chapter will undermine both the patronizing and colonial view that Cree narratives are mere folklore without any valid connection to reality. The Cree perspective contained in this discussion takes the following into account: the understanding of Wasekechak's autonomous mind and a motive for discussing him, the ways Wasekechak teaches us to overcome adversity, the arrogance of colonial thinkers that stimulates my desire to explore Wasekechak using Cree narratives and primary sources.

## Wasekechak has a Keen Sense of Reality

Although a Western worldview has dominated Turtle Island for so long there is still a Cree way of looking at reality. For Wasekechak, he seems to be most concerned with looking at reality on the practical level. Wasekechak's wants to understand how to accomplish goals, what will make a difference to the outcome of a predicament, or what will not work. He wants to know what is important to accomplishing his goals and what

is not important. I recall a predicament I experienced as a graduate student in a Western university. I was trying to explain my understanding of a Cree theory to a group of professors. From the moment I stated “Cree theory” I felt that they rejected me, mind and body. It was my initiation into discussing Cree theory with colonizing professors. Obviously they considered me to be part of the “Indian Problem” that resists assimilation. They were condescending and rude, yet if I had the attitude I could have intimidated them with my muscle, because I could see that they viewed Aboriginals in terms of racial stereotypes—unsophisticated and crude. According to their colonial attitudes, they had the right to treat me like an inferior and foolish person, to insult my intelligence and silence me. I thought they were trying to figure out how they could prevent me from completing graduate studies, but secretly I plotted my vengeance. I would definitely complete my studies. I wondered if they belittled me just because I am an Aboriginal person from the north, or did they do that to all students—White or Aboriginal? I felt they degraded me because they did not understand a Cree way of thinking, and also because they were cruel. I viewed myself through their eyes—inferior, unintelligent and unworthy of their time. Obviously they would make me jump through unnecessary hoops. Interestingly, one of them was an Aboriginal professor who behaves like she is superior to others, particularly towards northern Cree’s like me. When I was mentioning that the elders’ wisdom is contained in the stories she mockingly said this statement was “naïve”. But maybe she and the other two professors thought they had the right to treat me like a naïve savage because I have a Cree perspective. I figured she had internalized the societal racism that caused her to think like and be like the colonizer. I was tempted to tell her that her wish to be a ‘White woman’ is not possible, but then I remembered

how Wasekechak accomplishes his goals, and realizing the trio of professors might try to prevent me from completing my graduate degree, I kept quiet. After all, the two other professors were colonizers and shared the same disdain for my Cree point of view.

But why should a trio of professors stigmatize a whole Cree way of knowing? Such things tend to happen to colonized people. As I listened to them belittle me, my anger arose. Should I tell them to shut their grumbling mouths and let them feel the wrath of a colonized man? No, I am a Cree man, so I simmered down, and passively accepted my subjected status as a member of the colonized. I lacked the confidence and motivation to stand up to these authoritarian bosses, confront them and struggle to have my perspective taken seriously. I only wanted to do my research, and quietly complete my studies. So, in order to overcome this kind of adversity I will use Wasekechak to explain how to bust through colonial barriers.

In his autonomous existence in the Cree world, Wasekechak often overcomes adversity largely because of his capacity to accurately assess predicaments in which he found himself and outsmart or out think his opponents. Sometimes it seemed he was a giant in a world of little people, a wolf in a pack of coyotes. How was he able to accomplish this? How exactly does Wasekachak’s mind function? I first heard about Waskechak in the 1970’s when I was a young boy, so I’ve had much time to observe him and how he interacts with the world. Wasekechak’s way of thinking is appreciated when it comes to accomplishing a wide range of goals but he also taught the people how to attain great results for living a good life.

past, our spirituality, how we are educated, and how our values, ethics and laws functioned to the benefit of the collective community. My own understanding of Wasekechak emerged out of being raised by an *Inniew Esquew* (Cree woman) who passed down Omushkegowuk stories to me. Perhaps the most important thing is why such stories should persist, as it would be a shame to see them disappear forever. Cree stories serve to reproduce our social and cultural way of life and worldview, based on caring, healing and balance in life, which are still practised despite hundreds of years of imperialism and the Western-based education we receive in schools. Cree narratives present, after all, a real alternative to a dominant worldview. Wasekechak narratives demonstrate how philosophy is understood, educated and processed by the listener. The sense of the story has to be determined by the listener, not by the storyteller. The influence the trickster is recognized by Hallowell:

The trickster figure insists things can't be pinned down to a single meaning. Native American storytelling passes down its collective wisdom to new generations, so they can make sense of the stories in their own lives. Stories content cannot be separated from the knowledge and experience of the storyteller or from the circumstances of telling to an outside recorder. Who becomes thereby a partial insider. There is no omniscient narrator (Hallowell, 2001: 249).

The stories I received from my family narratives developed my own understanding of Wasekechak. I share these stories in order to help me make sense of Cree reality and because it would be a shame to lose this knowledge forever. As Stella Neff, a Swampy Cree elder from Grand Rapids Manitoba once told me:

We used to hear about Wasekechak and those stories were told on many different occasions and some of it was just to laugh and get together in the evenings. To hear the stories being told by different people, we had many

stories to tell and they would ask you to tell your story or tell this story and it was such an entertaining thing. My biggest regret when I think of it now is that some of the stories are forgotten. They didn't get carried on because our culture and our language it wasn't considered even equal to the English language because when I went to school a lot of these stories were lost and a lot of our story tellers. Those storytellers we had are gone, and they can't tell us those stories again and yet I know that our world our worldview was shaped by those stories...(Cited in Hansen, 2013:158).

Stella indicates that *Omushkegowuk* history and culture was passed down through our oral narratives and it also indicates that the trickster character Wasekechak is present in the stories that were told in various educational or entertaining contexts. The trickster was used as a means to teach gently about values, ethics, and lessons for living.

### **Wasekechak can make mistakes and correct them too**

Watching Wasekechak preparing to meet a goal, I was always struck with how intelligent or foolish he could be about his decision making. He would look at his choices and see exactly what he needed to do. Yet, he could also be very foolish about his choices and his mistakes are often very funny causing him to be the laughing stock among the people. Whether by instinct or wisdom, Wasekechak came to understand that personal gain at the expense of others is no path to living a good life. Instead the good life is attainable by keeping things in balance. In terms of teaching offenders appropriate behavior William G. Lathlin, a Swampy Cree elder from Opaskwayak Cree nation states that:

In the old way people sat you aside and told you what happened and how to correct it. And they didn't do it by themselves, they used the elders to

come and explain it and they told it in a story form about something you can relate to. They used Wesakachak. Wesakachak was a man of many talents. And they used Wesakachak to teach you if you keep doing this, this is what's going to happen. And they used something that people can really like animals and birds and things like that. In the other, in the white culture that is, they just throw you in jail and this is where you stay. There is no, to me you don't learn anything from going to jail and being locked up because you don't know why or the consequences of what you did. The consequences of what you did are being locked up but it just doesn't make any sense or any what they say rehabilitation. There is no room for that, so it's a perpetual way of creating employment for the people of the whole justice system (Cited in Hansen, 2013:143).

This quote by William is a good description of how stories were used. I want to emphasize that *'how to correct it'* refers to healing. In fact, all of the above three responses show that healing is the foundation of justice and that the trickster *Wasekechak* does not waste time in teaching appropriate behavior. The stories, the narratives and *Wasekechak* are tools used for correcting bad behavior.

Wasekechak doesn't waste time on inessentials; he only is concerned with what will work. This has made him a success as a teacher and a hunter, and has earned him a reputation as a trickster. In difficult situations, Wasekechak makes decisions but always lives with the consequences. Otherwise he has observed, the repercussions will always catch up with him. To a large extent, the suppression of Wasekechak coincides with the development of colonialism. The numerous strategies to assimilate Cree people into the Western society has invariably alienated the people from their past.

## **Wasekechak is a Spiritually Directed Being**

On my reserve finding Wasekechak was always difficult because none of us had ever seen him. It mattered little that we could not see him: the elders knew he existed. Seeking Wasekechak on the physical level was more than looking for a trickster, it was asking to fail. A fundamental factor in understanding Wasekechak is that he isn't somebody who lives principally in the physical world. He isn't particularly seen or heard. This doesn't mean that he does not exist; he is far from being non-existent. Wasekechak's mind is working all the time, but it isn't the physical workings of the mind that concern him. He is not very interested in exploring his own physical thought processes in detail. Instead, Wasekechak focuses his thoughts on the spiritual world, on what's going on holistically—who the plant people, animal people and two legged people are what they are feeling and thinking, and how that is going to shape what happens in the world.

The narratives I heard from my mother represent the accumulated stories that she received from her parents and her elders, adapted (not changed) to the situation she wanted me to be aware of, but, in Couture's words, nonetheless though. Some of these stories connect our family memories, our culture and values by using Wasekechak. For the Omushkigowuk, our mother was our first teacher; this is what the old ones say, and this is what I have experienced in my own time. And our mothers educate us by stories. Such stories and teachings have been an important factor in the development of my Cree consciousness, the way I perceive and understand the world. I recall a story I received from my mother who used Wasekechak so that I may understand the meaning of courage:

A long time ago granny's brothers went to fight in the Second World War.

Only one of them was her real brother, the others were her first cousins. But they were all raised in the same household and they all were treated the same; there was Paul, Charlie, Gordon, Margaret and they considered themselves to be brothers and sisters. They grew up in Cumberland House Saskatchewan. The old people say that Wasekechak helped your grandfathers fight in World War II. Lots of Cree people went overseas to fight in the war that time. Wasekechak was with them in that fight. It is said that at nighttime the guns and bombs lit the sky so much that you could see the land as clear as day. One night it rained so hard that the trenches filled with water. Seeing dead bodies floating in the trenches, Charlie hollered at everyone that if the enemy wanted to kill Gordon they would have to kill him first. The brothers protected each other in battle. At the end of the war all the brothers came back home to Cumberland. But, they say Wasekechak never came home. As well, many Cree people never came home after the War (Cited in Hansen, 2013:16).

This story provides an interesting example of how Omushkigo narratives are told, how traditional characters, like Wasekechak, are used for teaching, and how the listener has to find out her/himself what lesson should be learned by the story. The story, of course, also illustrates the process of how I learned about my family's involvement in the Second World War. But there is a lot more. As every story, this narrative tries to convey traditional values, the accumulated knowledge and stories I was referring to above. One of them is courage. As active participants in battle my grandfathers demonstrated their capacity for courage. Another one is caring and self-sacrifice. It is interesting to note that Charlie the oldest brother was willing to sacrifice his life so that the youngest brother Gordon could live. These values are part of our cultural awareness. Such stories seek to transmit our cultural values by using Wasekechak, and, as I will show with further analysis below, Wasekechak represents our culture, represents what it means to be *Inniew* (Cree). This is particularly true at the end of the story, the last two lines I was brooding on after I first

heard it. And I had to figure the meaning out all by myself.

I mentioned already that there were values taught to me through that story. Now, the story teller, my mother, did not tell us children that she would teach us values. We were just listening, figuring out ourselves what the story was about, and that it contained values, albeit that the storyteller herself, of course, was aware that she taught us values and culture and had prepared the story accordingly. The values, like courage, were not named though but rather described with the actions of the persons who displayed them. Values are part of the accumulated knowledge conveyed by the elders who taught us those values. Accumulated knowledge used for teaching can be defined as wisdom. There is nothing naïve about that. It is not enough though to just refer to values as wisdom from elders, and I did not only refer to that when I made the statement. So, how does the story get intellectually challenging? What intelligent, coded message does it contain, particularly in the last two sentences? My mother said that although all the siblings came back from war, Wasekechak never did, as well as other Cree people. What message does this statement contain, what tragedy? This is not naïve or foolish thinking. Using the dark corners of my Cree mind, using my feelings as well as my intellect, the whole tragedy eventually became painfully aware to me. It was Wasekechak who had given strength to the people fighting in war, told to me by the line “and Wasekechak was with them”, meaning that the values displayed by the persons in the story refer back to our cultural teachings. Now, my mother told us that Wasekechak did not return. What she meant was that the people lost or were in danger of losing their identity, their culture, which is represented by Wasekechak.

The loss of culture, as I interpreted from the story, is represented by the loss of Wasekechak. So, the following is a definition of Wasekechak. This character is what it means to be Cree, representing our culture, our ancestors, our teacher who tricks us into learning, and in some stories he even represents the Creator.

And he never returned in the story my mother told me. To make it philosophically even more challenging, the very last sentence of some Cree not returning as well could mean two things: Many people did not come back physically because they were killed, but there were also a lot of them who, although they did return, did not return as Cree. Instead they returned as damaged, fully colonized Aboriginal people, subservient and obedient.

Now I demonstrated how I made my analysis of the story. That is, by the way, also an example of an Omushkegowuk theory. My mother wanted to teach me about my identity, my culture, and tell me that it was threatened by *western* influence, which is represented by the war my relatives were fighting in for Canada, the representation of *western* culture and worldview to which we are exposed. She did, however, not tell me that directly or analyze it for me in an academic way. She respectfully left this to her son, trusting that his mind will become a Cree mind and figure out the meaning of the story. Now, I have talked about Cree methodology as it relates to Waskekechak. I hope I made the argument why Waskekechak is important to academic research, and I do not see this sort of Cree analysis as naïve, and I hope I made the case that the elders' wisdom is in the stories. As mentioned the Cree methodology is to have the listener figure out the analysis of the story.

Besides experiencing culture through the stories and the gentle teaching by my mother, I have also studied this knowledge, the more *academic way*, which includes the reality that now I also have written it down so that someone might learn about an Omushkegowuk experience. Yet I also tried to write it down in a way an Omushkegowuk storyteller would tell the story. My mother told me the following story about spirituality:

An old man and a young boy went on a canoe trip at Rocky Lake. Soon they encountered another canoe filled with unknown people who were paddling in the opposite direction. They had a meeting in the middle of the lake. The unknown people were chanting a song that sounded like this; Lavalee, Lavalee' Lavalee. As the unknown people approached the old man and the young boy; the old man took out his pipe and offered the unknown people an opportunity to smoke it. Although the old man felt nervous of the unknown he found the courage to offer the spirit people the pipe and so they smoked the pipe. After they finished smoking, the unknown people resumed on their way; chanting Lavalee, Lavalee' Lavalee as they paddled away. The old people used to say that we should not be afraid of the spirit world (Cited in Hansen, 2013:18-19).

The unknown people in this story are spirits. In this context it is interesting to note that the name Lavalee is a French name, which reveals that a relationship existed between the Cree and the French. It also says that the Cree took this relationship serious, respecting the unknown people even on the level of the spirit world. The offering of the pipe shows that the respect to unknown people includes the sharing of one's own worldview and way of life. It shows that, although the pipe is definitely part of Omushkegowuk culture and represents the sacredness of life, it is shared with other people. Sharing means, in this way, not imposing our culture but rather teaching an understanding and respect of it. When I asked my mother why the spirits in the story were chanting this name, *Lavalee*, she said

she did not know, which could be an indication of the responsibility of understanding the story being with the listener, not the storyteller. I want to share another story my mother once told me:

I was three years old when my grandmother passed away. I remember how she used to take me for walks and spend time with me. Before she died she used to see the little people in her tea cup. The old people say that somebody put a curse on her and the medicine was being used in a wrong way. It was used to make her sick, so somebody killed her. After she died I used to wait on the side of the road for her like I always did hoping that she would be walking home. I waited for her everyday but, she never came home. One day, I had a dream that people were praying for my grandmother; and I felt good in this dream. When I woke up I knew that I did not have to wait for my grandmother on the side of the road anymore. So I was given the message through the dream (Cited in Hansen, 2013:20).

This story demonstrates that dreams and visions are taken seriously in the Omushkigo world. For my mom, the dream gave her the message that she no longer had to wait for her grandmother beside the road. Johnson (1976: 114) has discussed the capacity of dreams and visions to give us insights into existence: “the vision is not to be sought outside of oneself: nor is it to be sought outside of one’s being. Rather it must be sought within one’s inner substance and found therein.” Thus, the phenomenon of dreaming informs one about various aspects of existence. It is a subjective experience that for the dreamer becomes knowledge.

There are also stories of little people who steward certain doorways to wellbeing. I have witnessed old people in Opaskwayak talk about the need to respect these spiritual beings. When contemporary Cree people tell of strange noises in their homes, young children talking to imaginary friends, or of the phenomenon of small shiny objects such

as keys going missing, one understands that these are spiritual manifestations of the little people, not, as it might be interpreted by non-Omushkegowuk, just inventions of a child or childish mind. According to Omushkegowuk storytellers the little people usually live in the water and near the trees. When I was a young boy some of my cousins claimed that they saw the little people dancing in the windowsill at my grandmother’s house. Not long ago I had a discussion with my elder John Martin about the little people:

The little people like to play with very young children; but they never do any harm because they are our helpers. Sometimes one may hear strange noises in the homes; these are the little people who are making us aware that they would like an offering of food or tobacco. It is important to respect these spiritual helpers and to honor them with gifts such as cookies or tobacco. They like to eat sweets. But, nowadays, not too many people are feeding the little people anymore, but they are still around. We need to honor these little people because they are our helpers (Cited in Hansen, 2013:19).

The elder illustrates that stories from the Omushkegowuk community refer to the little people as beings that offer us a means for healing. I have to make sure that the reader understands that these little people as well as all the other spirits are real. They are part of our reality, and a lot of what is called *science* or explanations through *analysis* cannot be understood without respecting the reality of the spirit world.

My great Grandfather George Alfred McGillvary used to talk about the Sasquatch. He said Sasquatch. is always in high regions and he moves about only in blizzards so no one can see him. These spiritual beings continue to be a subject of interest among many Omushkegowuk in the north. The old people say that Sasquatch, Wasekechak and the little people are spirits. It is for this reason that it is extremely rare for someone to see a

Sasquatch, a little person or even Wasekechak.

## **The Inninew—Cree people**

Perpetuating stories about Cree spirituality makes me feel like a human being, an autonomous human being in the Cree world. Traditionally, there are no written records by Cree people; the history of our people has had to depend on oral tradition. However, the old Cree people say that we also carry the memories of our people in our bodies. Still, it is now evident that the Cree interpretation of the past is being written down. The more Cree stories are examined, the more potential they have to be heard by the succeeding generations. Since these stories are meant to be educational and to entertain, it is understandable that subsequent stories on the subject are also educational and entertaining. It is basic to Cree philosophy that the people came to see these stories are relevant in their own culture. Wasekechak stories can be considered a Cree way of articulating an Omushkegowuk reality that allows one to think outside the colonizers box. McLeod (2007: 98) has discussed the notion of Indigenous theory:

Many people have attempted to articulate Indigenous models of theory. One way is to conceive it as a philosophical activity of reflective consciousness and an activity of thinking outside a state of affairs in the world. One could also argue that the aim of Cree philosophy is to think beyond colonial barriers is a theoretical activity. Others may say that “theory” is an inherently Western idea and cannot be rendered within Indigenous philosophies, or that there is no need for a discussion of Indigenous theory or philosophy.

In relation to the Cree tradition of storytelling, McLeod (2007: 13) comments that his grandfather “never said what the points of his story were; he forced the listeners to

discover this for themselves. Consequently, the people make up their own minds about what they think about something; they have to decide what they believe to be true and the listener is given the chance to internalize the stories.” And that might go contrary to any academic method which, as I see it, often tries to give the definition that everybody accepts in a generalizing way but also in a confining way, the way it is presented, rather than giving the reader the responsibility to make sense according to their own experience. However, recently many qualitative researchers have produced uninhibited interpretations of narratives that are congruent with Aboriginal storytelling and research.

The power of research for the Omushkegowuk has been principally that of ‘open-endedness’ and storytelling; however, the many questions I was asked by colonizing professors about which theory I position myself in, what theory had influenced thinking etc., seem to originate from a misunderstanding of this Cree way of processing philosophical thought. When I stated my stance that I am positioned in a Cree theory I was ridiculed. When I insisted that I position myself in a Cree theory, I was punished. The Aboriginal professor gave me hell for insisting the wisdom of elders is contained in the stories and for supposedly being defiant and she demanded an apology. I really wanted to tell her to go to hell, but instead I apologized, “I am very sorry, professor it won’t happen again” even though I hadn’t done anything immoral. Since I knew the academic world is based on Western philosophy and how it supports Western theories, I decided to be like the trickster Wasakechak and call my Cree theory postcolonial theory. This, despite that no traditional elder has ever taught me that Wasakechak and Cree ways of knowing has to be defined in terms of postcolonial theory. As Smith (1999:

14) advises “Many indigenous intellectuals actively resist participating in any discussion within the discourses of post-coloniality. This is because post-colonialism is viewed as the convenient invention of Western intellectuals which reinscribes their power to define the world.”

I was very fearful of colonial professors—they caused me to feel extremely anxious-like butterflies in my stomach. I often found them condescending and harsh. Their attitudes of superiority were excruciating. As soon as they gave me instructions, I became passive and subservient, grateful for every comment, no matter how patronizing. These academic conditions angered me. The hostility I nurtured during my agonizing graduate experiences motivated me to write about the situation. And I send this message to any struggling thinkers seeking protection from colonialism, Wasakechak is real, and he can help you develop an autonomous mind. Wasakechak however, is very tricky in this respect, and when one is not used to that kind of learning, one might not find the true wisdom that Wasekechak tries to teach; and the trickster himself is sometimes dismissed as being irrelevant in the university.

## **Conclusions**

In my Cree experience, conducting research was extremely difficult because the university is based on Western culture and uses Eurocentric philosophy as the norm. It mattered little that I am a Cree/Danish hybrid: I grew up in northern Manitoba and identify with the Swampy Cree. Conducting research from a Cree perspective was more than searching for knowledge--it was asking for a fight. As long as colonial professors are

available, a Cree would have an easier path using Western theories as their basis.

However, Wasakechak and his autonomous mind represent the Omushkegowuk University. The wisdom, academic knowledge, culture, and spirituality of the Omushkegowuk people are all contained in Wasekechak stories. I shared some of these stories in this chapter, and I hope the readers will find meaning in them one way or another. After all, the trickster does not do his tricks to confuse the people but rather to educate them, to prompt them to think and to open their autonomous minds to the meanings he wants to convey.

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## Constructing the “True North”:

### Sentimentality and Horror in Canadian Nationalism

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*Oh Canada! Where pines and maples grow.  
Great prairies spread and lordly rivers flow.  
How dear to us they broad domain,  
From East to Western sea.  
Thou land of hope for all who toil!  
Thou True North, strong and free!<sup>1</sup>*

“The True North Strong and Free” is a line from the Canadian national anthem that has long struck a chord with me. As a Belgian Canadian that grew up everywhere but the countries where I held nationalities, I was entranced by the idea of “the North” as a location that somehow held clues to my identity. Somewhere in the tundra that David Attenborough narrated was a home I had never experienced, in Jack London’s descriptions was adventure that seemed like a birth right, and in Farley Mowat’s critiques, a sorrowful yet sentimental sense of belonging. Now that I reflect on my associations

1. The second stanza of the Canadian National Anthem

of “the North,” I am compelled to wonder what that place really is. As an ideological construction, “the North” functions as a method for conveying Canadian nationalism, but what are the representations at play? What is “the North” if not the “True North”?

Of course, the idea of “the North” is a social construction relative to one’s position and understandings. All directions are. Consider our definition of what the “West” is—out of the large population that sees themselves as Westerners few are consciously referring to the bisection of the Roman Empire that prompted this discursive tradition. “The North,” then, is always oppositional to “the South.” An oppositional rhetoric reflective of the Canadian/American relationship, that in Canadian nationalism is almost always oppositional. In fact, I recognize that I have only ever been considered a “northerner” when I was not in “the North.” Due to the cultural similarities constructed by the proliferation of American media in Canada, attempts at Canadian nationalism are often constructed as simply “not American,” or, through recognisable stereotypes that achieve this difference without saying it outwardly. The majority of Canada’s population hugs the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel making the differences between our physical proximity to the US and our rhetorical conventions obviously ideological.

Understanding how “the North” differentiates Canadians nationally from Americans, we must now ask how this functions within a larger international arena. Why is “the North” such a specific construction when in reality, the terrain is not all tundra and our seasons are more than just winter? The seasonal realities do lend themselves to regional aesthetics, but how do tundra and icebergs reflect the lushness of Quebec, or the golden prairies of Saskatchewan? What are the purposes and the effects of such a construction, or of an obsession with polar bears—even though the majority of Canadians will only

ever encounter one at the zoo, or, worse, through a Coca-Cola ad campaign? And why am I referring to the natural world to define my nationality, rather than cultural practices or traditions?

The sentimentalization of the environment reflects the Canadian nationalist construct. We can already see it in the way I have been discussing Canada as a geographic mass, rather than a political, historical, and culturally adhesive place. While this might problematically erase peoples and cultures from the concept of “Canada,” the sentimental construction of “the North” is not a completely negative thing. Sentiment, a somewhat difficult to define idea, has been interpreted broadly to be a negative and overly emotional way of viewing the world. Despite this charge, Robert C. Solomon’s *In Defence of Sentimentality* argues that sentimentality “is not an escape from reality or responsibility but, quite to the contrary, provides the precondition for ethical engagement rather than being an obstacle to it”<sup>2</sup>. In using a sentimental “North” as a linchpin for Canadian identity, there is a host of semiotic linkages that facilitate a positive and useful national construct. If Solomon is correct, Canada’s sentimental iconography of the natural world as definitive to its identity would preclude an ethical responsibility to its protection of natural resources. Therefore, “the North” as I examine it in correlation to Canadian identity is not only a geographic location and a social imaginary, it is also indicates a set of values and responsibilities that then intertwine with identity (whether this translates into actual environmental protection is left ambiguous). Arctic sovereignty and environmental protection become unified in the discourse through a sentimental lens that, while kitsch in its representations of Mounties and shining glaciers, offer a

2. Robert C. Solomon, *In Defense of Sentimentality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 4.

more interesting interpretation.

But why this format and not another? If this “North” is relational, nationalistic, and socially constructed, it is inherently nebulous. Is it the magnetic pole? An ecosystem? Where Santa spends 364 days out of the year? A construct? Clearly, the images associated with “the North” rise out of the circumpolar region and then stand in as a synecdoche for the rest of the country.

The designation of the Arctic as a geographical region is already problematic based on where one identifies the southern limit. As Elizabeth Kolbert writes, “to use the Arctic Circle as the boundary means including parts of Scandinavia so warmed by the Gulf Stream that they support frog life, while at the same time excluding regions around James Bay, in Canada, that are frequented by polar bears”<sup>3</sup>. In this example, the Arctic is constructed as cold, so that the presence of Scandinavian frogs actually compromises its arctic status. Additionally, the recognition that the circumpolar region includes multiple countries breaks down the idea of the authentic “North” as a solely Canadian symbol. While the truth of the circumpolar region as international is undeniable to anyone with even basic geographical knowledge, this is rarely the way “the North” is represented in continental American media. Often,

we see that political gestures and declarations seem frequently to have surpassed diplomatic speech and action, leaving Canadian citizens with the idea that the Arctic is entirely theirs, that it contains unimaginable riches, and that its territory is under threat of being deprived of its golden and black treasures by greedy foreign countries.<sup>4</sup>

3. Elizabeth Kolbert, “Introduction,” *The Ends of the Earth: An Anthology of the Finest Writing on the Arctic and the Antarctic* (New York: Bloomsbury USA, 2007.), 2.

4. Geneviève King Ruel, “The (Arctic) Show Must Go On”, *International Journal: Canada’s Journal of Global Policy Analysis* 66 (December 2011): 829-30.

As Geneviève King Ruel goes on in her article “The (Arctic) Show Must Go On”, this representation has the effect of “stressing the sense of northerness as a central aspect of Canadian identity” regardless of its veracity<sup>5</sup>. Even though Canadian nationalism and identity is tied to “the North,” it is equally evident that “the North” functions as an apolitical region in media in order to provide a surface for global projection, working opposite to King Ruel’s first claim—unless of course, we assume, like I did growing up, that this apolitical region could never be anything but Canada and so explicitly stating it would be redundant. But for the sake of argument, let’s put aside nationalism for a moment and consider the other ways in which “the North” is constructed internationally and more sentimentally.

Coca-Cola has featured an international marketing campaign highlighting polar bears since the 1920’s<sup>6</sup>. In the past decade, polar fantasies where polar bears and (at times) penguins tumble about the impressionist glacial landscape and sip coke from glass bottles has evolved alongside Coca-Cola’s popular ‘Santa’ campaign. “The North” is exotic and fantastic as it fuses polar fauna into a single space—a bridging that uses the appeal of the charismatic animals and a global audience rather than any kind of environmental reality. The family of polar bears often featured in T.V. commercials and ad campaigns play out a narrative of childhood without using specific ethnicities or cultural codes that Coca-Cola might later regret (as they have with some of their recent campaigns). It’s more broadly readable than the Santa campaign which appears on pop cans every winter.

Swapping a Polar bear in for Santa is also wildly effective since the same imaginary of

“the North” sets the scene but now the polar bear reaches a wider audience culturally and seasonally. By culturally, I mean those who might not ascribe to the commercialization of Santa but can still be lured in by the nostalgia of a nuclear family construct. Still, why a polar bear? Why not another animal—another construct? Even without the media connection between the polar bear and Santa schemes, there are interpretative benefits of using this mega fauna and this space as a fantasy.

The first benefit is that the polar bear is not immediately recognizable as a culturally specific animal, at yet still transmits charismatically the allure of big game and whiteness. Consider the interpretive overtones of, say, a black bear—whom, incidentally, more Canadians would have had contact with in their daily lives. The imagery of different bears hold other nationalistic overtones, including the Russian Black Bear from the Cold War era, or the Americanized Grizzly, Smokey the Bear, or the cuddly pan-oriental Panda already in use by the World Wildlife Foundation. A Coca-Cola campaign with any of these bears would not reach a global audience in the same way. There is something wonderful about the pristine white snow and the likewise coloured polar bear that keeps us captivated as an audience. Unfortunately, there is also an element of nostalgia at play, created by the original Coca-Cola bottles, family values, and Christmas-y narratives in the commercials while hinging on the impending ecological disaster that is already destroying polar bear territory. Sentiment and nostalgia feed the semiotic interpretation of the polar bear, successfully intertwining our wonder and pity into commerce and consumption. For a Canadian audience, this pity could be more specifically located within the environmental responsibility I aligned with Solomon’s definition of sentimentality, but since there are no overt Canadian nationalist overtones, anyone can participate in the sentiment. The choice

5. Ibid., 826.

6. Ted Ryan, “The Enduring History of Coca-Cola’s Polar Bears,” *Coca-Cola Company* (Coca-Cola Company 2012), accessed 11 December 2012.

of the polar bear evokes wonder, excitement, and the self-satisfaction that comes from speaking to an environmentally friendly, sentimental, but possibly ignorant consumer. After all, even though Coca-Cola's joint campaign with WWF to save polar bears (and therefore "the North") is laudable (and to a degree, lucrative,) the production practices of mass consumerism contributes significantly to the same endangerment.

As mentioned above, there are two reasons why this mega fauna and space are particularly interesting for advertising and commodification. The polar bear is a poignant example of the first: pulling on heart strings as the cubs symbolize hope while also being the fierce survivors of the swiftly vanishing ecosystem they call home. But why the polar bear? What about a lion instead? Or a giraffe? Or an elephant? There is something to be said for the ways in which space allows the animals and our imaginations to construct a cohesive fantasy. The exotic, the dangerous, and the nostalgic elements can easily signify both polar and African mega fauna. The shared element in both these regions? Their emptiness.

Not literally, of course. Both massive areas (one a region the other a continent) are filled with a rich diversity of peoples, cultures, seasons, animals, plants, geological formations. But this diversity is not often represented in popular media, and in both the Arctic and Africa, this perception of "emptiness" grows from historically colonial modes of representation. Just as early colonial representations of Africa as a wild jungle—a space to be explored and conquered by European super powers—"the North" was similarly constructed, ideologically and physically.

During the scramble for Africa, the continent was split up among European countries, many of whom hadn't the slightest idea what the geographic terrain was

actually like, or where certain tribes held land. This is indicated by the proliferation of straight border lines, some of which have since become more wandering, and many still maintained. Similarly, Canada's borders are defined by its straight lines (nationally and provincially) that neatly bisect peoples and bioregions. These lines are made possible by the colonial imaginary that envisions these spaces as empty—or, if populated, only by large impressive animals that can be shot and mounted. "The North" as a fantasy comes straight out of these colonial origins, much in the same manner as the imaginary "Africa" as a cohesive whole, represented by a larger-than-life setting sun as backdrop to the silhouette of a spindly tree and an iconic mega fauna.

This comparison is not erroneous, nor should it be dismissed in light of a post-colonial era—an era which we often want to pre-emptively celebrate, despite the reverberations of colonial legacy that continue to echo in the Americas. In fact, linguistically, there are clear connections, several of which are mentioned in King Ruel's article such as the "great scramble for the Arctic" and the "Arctic Five"<sup>7</sup>. While the 'great scramble' is overt, the "Arctic Five" is perhaps less so. While King Ruel uses the phrase "Arctic Five" to reference the major international players in the circumpolar region, this phrase is more commonly associated as an adaptation of the Big Five in Africa. Coined by colonial hunters determined to bring back the most impressive game, the Big Five refers to the African lion, African elephant, Cape buffalo, African Leopard, and either the White or Black rhinoceros. To collect all of the five is to prove one's worthiness as a hunter and outdoorsman. Feeding into the same European hunting fervor comes the Arctic's own Big Five, including the walrus, caribou, musk ox, whale, and polar bear. Although the

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7. King Ruel, 828, 831.

hunting of these animals is under contestation, photo safaris are becoming increasingly popular today so that now the word ‘safari’ is just as likely to come up in the circumpolar region as it is in central Africa.

Apart from the now-iconic mega fauna, the current advertising scheme to lure explorers, tourists, and imaginations to “the North” depends on the idealistic construction of the landscape. The fantasy of “the North” takes on another common colonial trope—the feminine vista waiting to be penetrated by the manly adventurer. As Lisa Chalykoff describes the tropes of the genre in the forward to Geoff Kavanagh’s play *Ditch*,

...within this narrative schema, protagonists are represented typically as rational agents of the highest order and of the highest rank; they are shining examples of the European male at his peak of physical endurance and emotional invulnerability. Though such men invariably encounter dangers, these challenges are overcome with equal predictability ... the only desire acknowledged typically by such heroes is that which draws them upward and onward towards terra incognita. And given that such lands are frequently gendered as feminine, even this desire is rendered heterosexual.<sup>8</sup>

Terra incognita captured not only the hearts of the explorers themselves as they trudged onwards to increasingly inhospitable locations but also the minds of the waiting public back in “civilization.” In order to fund expeditions, propaganda in the form of paintings and journals were hot commodities for harnessing the mother country’s imagination and gaining their support financially. Just as Stanley and Livingstone became famous for their descriptions of the African interior (the dark heart, as it was constructed at the time), the explorers of the Arctic became the visionaries of “the North,” and their

8. Lisa Chalykoff, “Introduction to *Ditch*,” *Staging the North: Twelve Canadian Plays*. (Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press, 1999), 137.

descriptions appealed both to the romanticism of adventure as well as the realities of the harsh conditions. In reference to the search for the Northwest Passage, Kolbert writes:

It is sometimes suggested that this search was motivated by commerce and sometimes by nationalism. But neither force seems quite adequate; as the historical Glyn Williams has observed, the quest “became almost mystical in nature, beyond reasonable explanation.”<sup>9</sup>

By activating both the sentimental and the thrilling aspects of the unknown landscape, the explorers appealed to the public’s imaginary in unprecedented ways. Because of the nationalistic impetus for many explorers, they had to additionally appeal to their country’s ideology to fund the trek, but rather than clearly relying on nationalistic tropes, the mystical construction of the Northern “quest” created something far more powerful in the public’s psyche. This, in hand with nationalism, is a powerfully persuasive duo.

In the early 1900’s, still situated amongst the excitement of Arctic explorers such as American Robert Peary (who claimed to have reached the North Pole in 1909) and Knud Rasmussen (completed the fifth Thule Expedition in 1924 by travelling 20,000 miles on dogsled from Greenland to Siberia<sup>10</sup>), images and accounts of the Arctic began to be rendered more solidly within the bounds of Canadian nationalism (rather than, say, British or American nationalism). The Group of Seven, a collection of landscape painters working from 1920-33, initiated the first major Canadian national art movement<sup>11</sup>. The members of the group traveled across Canada in order to paint the country, in some cases, such as the Arctic, they were the first European descendants to ever paint the landscape

9. Kolbert, 2.

10. Ibid., 205.

11. “The Group of Seven and the Art Gallery of Ontario: Past, Present and Future,” (Toronto: *Art Gallery of Ontario*, 2005) accessed on 11 December 2014.

(aside from some painters on Royal Navy expeditions) and therefore their productions were the defining representations of “the North” in Canadian iconography. The artists themselves became explorers—adventurers at a time in history when the fervor of Arctic exploration was in full swing. A dangerous journey, these stories of exploration were being relayed back to eagerly waiting publics in North America and Europe, whose imaginations were held fast by a frozen wilderness. At the same time these paintings received wide acclaim in North America and Europe, concretizing the setting of such rousing accounts. Not only did they imaginatively set the stage for the sentimental and horrific tales of adventure and exploration, they additionally stamped Canadian nationalism on the project, and therefore, the terra incognita that they represented on canvas.

Although the landscape paintings are formidable in and of themselves, they are also symbols of Canada moving into a concretized national imaginary founded on its geographic and natural beauties. Group of Seven paintings are now heavily commercialized on mugs and t-shirts, and Canadian students are taught about them in history classes. “The North,” defined artistically by artists such as Lawren S. Harris comes into being through a specific color palate, with the blues and whites of ice and snow defining the area. Gentle flowing lines, giving a cool and frozen impression<sup>12</sup>. Not much of the harsh north is present, although perhaps its emptiness belies this idea.

These artistic examples are not frozen in history, as it were, but rather continue to define and inform Canadian nationalism through the media used to advertise the Vancouver Olympic Winter Games in 2010. In an advertising campaign launched by

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12. Lawren S. Harris, “Lake and Mountains,” 1928, Oil on canvas,

the Canadian Design Resource’s Leo Obstbaum, there are athletes foregrounded on an abstract and flowing landscape comprised of blues, greens, fading into white<sup>13</sup>. This design had a specific construction, palette, and images that were then applied to backdrops for the sports themselves so that the photos of the athletes mimicked the poster renditions almost exactly. The superimposed athlete on the Group of Seven inspired landscape of an ambient “North” references the Canadian nationalism that the landscape painting style implied as well as the excitement and mesmerizing era of Arctic exploration. The coloured patterns in the landscape hold clues as to the location, sometimes with faint outlines of Vancouver buildings or other iconic structures. Interestingly, no matter which sport is represented, there is always a tree in the background. A wide variety are included as silhouettes, some clearly pine or spruce, and another more vaguely deciduous, perhaps maple. All of these trees hold significance in Canadian regionalism, none so much as the maple. However, if the deciduous silhouettes are maples, it is left ambiguous by an absence of leaves which are the iconic Canadian symbol. Instead what is more immediately semiotically readable are northern icons: the pine, the spruce, the coniferous. Semiotically, these images tell a narrative of how Canada is being portrayed as foremost an apolitical “Northern” location before grounding itself in the recognizably nationalistic. Structurally, this arranges an apolitical arctic within a Canadian nationalist construct, so even when the images could easily apply to another circumpolar country, there is never any doubt that the Olympic host is Canada. Perhaps this is to situate the 2010 games within Canadian readability. More likely, it is placing Canada and the Winter Games in a semiotics of explorers, conquerors of the harsh, unforgiving wilderness

13. Leo Obstbaum’s Vancouver 2010 Olympic Advertisements “RIP Leo Obstbaum,” *The CDR* (Canadian Design Resource, 2009), accessed 11 December 2012.

that is associated with “the North” as represented. If Canada is “the North”, and “the North” is tough and fierce physicality associated with Arctic exploration, then Canada is the perfect host for the Winter Olympics. But in order to really unpack the legacy of the dangerous and fierce north that I allude to—those qualities that have benefitted the construction of a Canadian identity in winter sports and Arctic sovereignty—we must look at an alternative imaginary which is as equally influential in the construction of “the North.”

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There are strange things done in the midnight sun  
By the men who moil for gold;  
The Arctic trails have their secret tales  
That would make your blood run cold<sup>14</sup>

Now that the Arctic has been established as a fantastic imaginary as well as a geographic and political region, there is an alternative form of sentimentality in its construction that needs to be unpacked. While I have thus far analyzed the construction of “The North” as a shining expanse, with icy vistas and impressively charismatic mega fauna, there is another construction of “the North” that contributes just as much to Canadian nationalism, if not more: the horror of the Arctic.

One doesn’t have to look far to find instances in history and fiction of the Arctic as a realm of nightmarish accounts of starvation, lost trails, cannibalism, murder, and even the supernatural. Many well-known Arctic writers heavily emphasized the hellish conditions

14. Robert Service, “The Cremation of Sam McGee” *The Best of Robert Service* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1940), 16.

in order to both portray accurately the struggles they were up against as well as pandering to an English audience that lapped up the thrilling accounts. In her introduction to *The Ends Of The Earth*, Kolbert explains that the high number of Arctic narratives by outsiders to the region reflects the “fact that those who have been drawn to the area have, to an astonishing degree, felt compelled to record their impressions” and that “for a writer, the image is reversible, so that the blank page—and all its terrors—can also become a metaphor for the ice”<sup>15</sup>. James Clark Ross, Sir John Franklin, Robert Peary and dozens of now iconic explorers of the Arctic region were made famous by exploration which they themselves narrated in journals and logs. As they explored, they narratively constructed the region in their accounts—an act that is reminiscent of aborigine songlines where the walker sings the world into being as they travel (a colonial bastardization in this instance). The explorer was the link to the imagination of the English public, and unsurprisingly, the more thrilling and horrifying the tale, the more captivated the audience. This isn’t to say that the accounts were not horrifying in reality—they most certainly were—but it is undeniable that the construction of “the North” became entwined with the sentimental and horrific in ways through this narrative process that we see still echoing in Canadian nationalism today.

Consider, for example, a novel that has become the hallmark of the horror genre: Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. While often boiled down to the monstrous creation, examinations of the novel often omit or dismiss the setting of the framing epistolary narrative: Robert Walton, a failed writer attempting an expedition to the North Pole. The story of Dr. Frankenstein and his horrific creation are relayed to us by Walton’s letters to

15. Kolbert, 2.

his sister—an epistolary framework popular at the time in fiction as well as in journalism about Arctic expeditions. At the beginning of the novel, Walton writes “I try in vain to be persuaded that the pole is the seat of frost and desolation; it ever presents itself to my imagination as the region of beauty and delight”<sup>16</sup>. This appeal of the delightful Arctic transforms by the end of the novel with Walton’s repeated descriptions of the trapped vessel in the ice: “We are still surrounded by mountains of ice, still in imminent danger of being crushed in their conflict. The cold is excessive, and many of my unfortunate comrades have already found a grave amidst this scene of desolation”<sup>17</sup>. As the plot of the novel unravels into the horror narrative we are now extremely familiar with, the beauty of the Arctic deconstructs into a fearful landscape that not only threatens the lives of the explorers, but harbors the monstrous as well. Far from being an unusual construct, this narrative structure of the arctic as a location of beauty and horror is a repeating trope worthy of consideration.

Noël Carroll’s *The Philosophy of Horror* spends a great amount of time examining what he terms Art Horror which “is meant to refer to the product of a genre that crystalized, speaking very roughly, around the time of the publication of *Frankenstein*—give or take fifty years”<sup>18</sup>. While he hardly mentions the setting of the Arctic or tropes of “the North,” he does offer that

[t]he onset of the monster begins the horror tale proper, though, of course, the onset of the monster may be preceded in the narrative by some establishing scenes that introduce us to the human characters and their locales, and perhaps to their horror relevant occupations, e.g., they’re Arctic

16. Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2007), 13.

17. *Ibid.*, 206.

18. Noël Carroll’s *The Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 13.

explorers or germwarfare researchers.<sup>19</sup>

Carroll never again mentions the circumpolar expeditions in his book, so it is interesting that he chooses to include Arctic explorers in a list intended to automatically signify that something monstrous is afoot. It is evident, therefore, that there is something to the Arctic explorer that has been devised in the public imagination to be automatically horror inducing, as much as any other association (adventure, romance, etc.). Given the era when *Frankenstein* was written and Carroll cites Art Horror as crystalizing, Arctic exploration (and the public’s consumption of it) was in full swing, therefore setting the tone for the genre that combined romanticism, gothic aesthetic, and adventure. Even though we might not automatically associate the Arctic with this genre today, we must accept that at the time of its conception (if we agree with Carroll’s theory) the Arctic was a powerfully influential imaginary because of its horror.

While Carroll argues that monsters of the horror genre are interstitial in that they are simultaneously living and dead (thus making them monstrous), one could argue that the lost explorer occupies a similar space because of his ambiguous fate<sup>20</sup>. The explorer, while heroic, adventurous, and awe inspiring, is also narratively doomed to suffer in ways that enhance the horror genre previously discussed. Even modern Arctic thrillers like *The Grey*, directed by Joe Carnahan in 2012, where the survivor-protagonist played by Liam Neeson is plane wrecked in Alaska, offers only an ambiguous conclusion so that even after every other character has gruesomely succumbed to the monstrous wolves, we remain unsure as to Neeson’s fate. The final shot of Neeson laying on the breathing

19. *Ibid.*, 99.

20. Carroll, 32.

belly of the alpha wolf prompts the viewer to ask which of the two is alive, and if, should the victor be Neeson, whether he will survive much longer<sup>21</sup>. In the Man versus Nature formula, it is evident that nature easily becomes monstrous, whether that is the harsh below freezing temperatures or the contemptible misrepresentations of wolves in *The Grey*. The fate of the protagonist must always be under threat in order for the suspense and dread to take effect; the phrase “dead man walking” comes easily to mind. Sadly, while I’ve previously cited Solomon’s definition of sentimentality being a “precondition for ethical engagement rather than being an obstacle” it appears that within the horror genre, the manipulation of the viewer for desired effect can obstruct ethical engagement<sup>22</sup>. Where sentimentality might provoke ethical behaviour in a positivist light, in *The Grey’s* representation of wolves the sentimental attachment to the survivor narrative creates a damaging and demonizing construct of wolves that is not based on any biological or scientific truth. In making the wolf monstrous for the sake of the Art Horror and our sentimental attachment to the protagonist, years of ethical engagement with northern wildlife populations is undone.

The monstrous is not always fictive as in the cases of Frankenstein’s creation or the larger than life demon wolves of *The Grey*. Sometimes the all too real becomes monstrous because of destabilizing of sentimental constructs like morality or righteousness.

In the dramatic anthology *Staging the North*, the (originally radio) play *Terror and Erebus*, by Canadian playwright Gwendolyn MacEwan, chronicles the search for the lost Franklin expedition by Knud Rasmussen, with historical characters Rasmussen, Sir

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21. *The Grey*, Film, directed by Joe Carnahan (2011; Los Angeles: Universal Studios Home Entertainment, 2012.), DVD.

22. Solomon, 4.

John Franklin, Francis Crozier, and ‘Eskimo’ guide Qaqortingneq. The title, *Terror and Erebus*, refers to names of the two expedition vessels that, once locked in the ice of the Northwest Passage, doomed their occupants to slow, painful deaths. The ship’s names are worth emphasizing briefly considering their own etymological connections to both the horror genre and Hell (Erebus being a region of the underworld in Greek mythology, as well as a titan—often interchangeable with Tartarus). Whomever christened these ships shared a painful irony in the fates of the expedition, although the lasting allure of the expedition was surely heightened by the lost vessels’ names. After all, who could resist publishing the thrilling tale of the search for the *HMS Terror*? Particularly when the captain of the expedition was none other than Sir John Franklin who, in a previous failed expedition, “had suffered like no other Northwest Passage adventurer before him... [and] [t]he British public loved him for it”<sup>23</sup>. In fact, the public opinion was so expectant of a long and arduous account of the Erebus and Terror expedition that

When Franklin sailed off with the Erebus and the Terror in May 1845, fully equipped and with several years’ provisions, the public expected him to return with a hard-luck tale at the very least. But once the ships had entered the depths of the Arctic they were never seen again. Back in Britain, everybody was initially so unconcerned that serious consideration was not given to a rescue mission until 1848.<sup>24</sup>

In the three years that it took for a rescue mission to be mounted, the devastating events that comprise MacEwan’s play took place, making it an expedition that for Franklin “ensure[d] his immortality and enduring popularity with the British public but also ...

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23. Jon Balchin, *Explorers: Journeys to the Ends of the Earth* (London: Arcturus Publishing Ltd., 2014), 206.

24. Balchin, 208.

cost him his life, together with those of all the crews of the two ships”<sup>25</sup>.

In the play “*Terror and Erebus*[, ...] MacEwan explores the interior boundaries of the possible and permissible in the human mind, and their echo in action”<sup>26</sup>. The characters each poetically describe in verse the events of the three years the captains and crew survived before succumbing to death, offering their own impressions of the tragic and horrific expedition. References to the blood stained ice, the frigid cold, and unforgiving passage of time that brought with it death upon death litter the play, along with mentions of the expedition’s disintegration (in terms of its progress and the dispersion of expedition members as they roamed the area). As Crozier says “We scattered our instruments behind us/and left them where they fell/Like pieces of our bodies, like limbs/We no longer had need for;/we walked on and dropped them”<sup>27</sup>. It was these clues—the bodies, fragments of letters, instruments, etc.—that told the story of the lost expedition, put together piece by gruesome piece.

Notably, and in keeping with the horror genre, MacEwan includes hints of more sinister behavior when a recitation of the Lord’s Prayer by Crozier is interspersed with ominous descriptions of the starving, dying men: “Though all our senses fall apart/we still must eat./ Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us/The kind of bread and blood and meat we’ve tasted”<sup>28</sup>. Alluding to cannibalism—something that had already occurred in the earlier failed expedition that had gained Franklin the admiration of the British public—within the framework of the Lord’s Prayer perverts and heightens the

25. Ibid., 208.

26. Eve D’Aeth, “Introduction to *Terror and Erebus*,” *Staging the North: Twelve Canadian Plays* (Toronto: Playwrights of Canada Press, 1999) 119.

27. Gwendolyn MacEwan, *Terror and Erebus*, *Staging the North: Twelve Canadian Plays* (Toronto: Playwrights of Canada Press, 1999) 130.

28. MacEwan, 128. Original emphasis.

horror of the act. With the added fact that the cannibalism that is not directly addressed but merely implied within a framework that clearly constructs it as evil, the romanticism of survival is injected with the horror of what that actually entails. Just as the horrifying details of the lost expeditions came to the waiting public in the forms of discovered frozen bodies and stone cairns with fragments of journals describing the grisly events, the fleeting images and Art Horror implications of the deaths in MacEwan’s play offer a dramatic and sentimental insight as to how the event was depicted in the media of the time.

Combining the fictive with the realistic, Robert Service, the British-Canadian ‘bard of the Yukon,’ wrote poetry about the Arctic region and the Yukon gold rush, most famously, “The Cremation of Sam McGee”. While this poem is a fictional and fantastical account of two Arctic travelers, it is a direct play on the conventions of the Arctic explorer travelogue (as non-fiction) and the horror genre (as fiction). Where *Frankenstein’s* creation and The Grey’s wolves are obviously fantastical monsters that live within a fictional world we know to be fake by the rules of the Art Horror genre, the monstrous in “The Cremation of Sam McGee” takes on the horror of the more concrete dead body. In the poem, Sam McGee is a prospector from Tennessee that would “sooner live in hell” than the frigid Yukon, thus immediately constructing the Yukon as a location worse than hell. With McGee’s last breathe, he elicits a promise from the narrator to find a way to cremate McGee so that he will be warm once more, a challenging feat in a frozen wasteland. Most bodies lost in the Arctic are preserved by the sub-zero temperatures, “demonstrating the cold, hard truth that in the Arctic nothing is ever really lost”<sup>29</sup>. Of course, in Service’s

29. Kolbert, 3.

poem, this frozen preservation is constructed through Art Horror to be a purgatorial fate somehow worse than death for McGee.

The discovery of dead bodies often remained after failed expeditions as grisly trail markers for the living, a fact the audience would have been sadly familiar with, so the act of cremation was not only unusual, but a heroic and sentimental kindness in its own way. The frozen body, like the monstrous body, “elicit[s] disgust from fictional characters, and, in turn, [is] supposed to elicit a congruent response from the audience”<sup>30</sup>. Far from being a natural construction, the notion of the frozen body as an object of horror or disgust is a particularly European idea produced by the enthralling-yet-disturbing results of lost explorers being recovered too late. Knud Rasmussen, a Danish-Inuit explorer and anthropologist, has a novel, *Across the Arctic America*, in which he describes the discovery of an Inuit woman’s frozen body that had gone missing the winter before. He argues that

[t]here was nothing repulsive in the sight; she just lay there, with limbs extended, and an expression of unspeakable weariness on her face. It was plain to see that she had walked on and on, struggling against the blizzard till she could go no farther, and sank, exhausted, while the snow swiftly covered her, leaving no trace. The body was left lying there as it was; no one touched it.<sup>31</sup>

In this account, there is no fear or disgust constructed—in fact, it is the exact opposite. Rasmussen’s narrative emphasizes the lack of horror in the situation, and, in doing so, the very mundane nature of death by freezing as understood by many indigenous Arctic peoples. This story offers an alternative that does not see the frozen body as monstrous, just

30. Carroll, 54.

31. Knud Rasmussen. “Songs of the Inuit from *Across Arctic America* (1927),” *The Ends of the Earth: An Anthology of the Finest Writing on the Arctic and the Antarctic*, Ed. Elizabeth Kolbert. (New York: Bloomsbury USA, 2007.), 80-1.

human. It offers a regional perspective that sees the frozen body as just as unremarkable as death by the common cold would have been a British reader. In Service’s poem, the frozen body is sensationalized as horrific, inhumane, immoral and cruel. In Rasmussen’s account it is unfortunate, but neither the body itself nor its location is an object of terror.

The consequent stanzas in “The Cremation of Sam McGee” follow the narrator as he sleds about the icy wasteland with the dead body growing heavier and heavier, eerily grinning at him, until finally, on Lake Lebarge he finds the remnants of an old boat and cremates McGee. In the final moments, the narrator, struck with terror, peeps into the boat only to be reprimanded by the burning body: “please close that door./ It’s fine in here, but I greatly fear you’ll let in the cold and storm”<sup>32</sup>. Humorous and horrific at the same time, the speaking dead body of McGee gets the last word in the narrativized portion of the poem which then ends with the now-iconic framing stanza (a portion of which began this section of the essay).

While polar opposites (forgive the pun) of the fantastic and the horrific constructions of “the North” as a region standing in for Canadian nationalism appear at first to be as distant from one another as any dichotomy, it is evident that the positive fantasy of the Canadian North is *dependent* on the horrific, and that these two sentimental approaches to the same region are what make it potently nationalistic.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) has long been icons and stereotypes of Canadian nationalism, contributing to the sentimental romance of the Mountie in various melodramatic ways. However, at the heritage center in Regina, Saskatchewan, they draw clear connections between the romance of the Mountie and the horror of the

32. Service, 19.

Arctic explorer narrative in their accounts of RCMP missions in northern regions.

The “Protecting the North” exhibit at the RCMP Heritage Museum is particularly captivating as they not only include detailed and informative displays of expeditions and missions, but also have audio recordings of travelogues being read aloud. In small alcoves, visitors can peruse the documents and listen to the dramatized journals of the Lost Patrol as they became increasingly desperate, or the crew of the *St. Roch* as it travels through the Northwest Passage, or even the thrilling manhunt for Albert Johnson, “the fugitive ‘Mad Trapper of Rat River’”<sup>33</sup> (RCMP website). In these accounts, the narrative tropes of the Arctic exploration era collide with the Canadian nationalism of the Mounted Police and create a shining hero to stand strong against the Art Horror background of “the North”. In other words, for the Mountie to even exist as a sentimental hero that panders to Canadian nationalism and American stereotype, he has to have first been constructed as a legitimate hero in the face of a dangerous North. Without the foundation of “the North” in the public imagination as a dangerous and horrifying terrain, the Mountie could not stand in as the saviour of this expanse. And if we assume the Mountie to represent Canada nationally, then the strength of Canada’s identity as “northerners” assumes that we, like the explorer and the Mountie, have conquered the horrific. In a colonial tradition, the shining fantasy of “the North” only exists because we transformed it by survival, as popularized in the Northern survival genre. And the use of the Mountie puts a particularly Canadian stamp on these otherwise multinational expeditions and narrative forms.

So how do we get from the ‘Arctic Trail’s Secret Tales’ to the ‘True North Strong

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33. “Protecting the North,” *RCMP Heritage Center* (RCMP Heritage Center 2014), accessed 12 December 2014

and Free’? Canadian nationalism and the depictions of “the North” go hand in hand so frequently that distinguishing the process of this association is a feat in and of itself. Yet in the effort of discovering this correlation, it is at least apparent that the ways in which space is created sentimentally—whether that is romanticized or terrifying—explains the legacy of the northerner as an object and position of admiration. The now stereotypical fantasy of “the North” which feeds the international impression of Canada as a hardy (if silly) nation arose from a far more terrifying backdrop of exploration and danger. To identify as being from “the North” is to connect with all of these legacies: the idealized and the Art Horror, both of which stem from colonial roots. However, in each of the sentimental constructions of “the North,” the Arctic remains a fantastic imaginary that obscures the realities of the region, particularly as it is now affected by climate change. The environmental politics of “the North” are obfuscated in the flowing lines of an ambiguous Arctic-scape. To continue to identify with this heritage is to accept the charge of sentimentalism as a real construct with real effects, as well as the duty to negotiate its potential in ethical engagement. If not, the fantasy of the “the North” will begin to morph into a new and ecologically horrifying reality.

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## Racing Towards Manhood:

### The Construction of Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance

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“Kill the Indian, save the man.” This was the motto of Richard Henry Pratt, founder of the Carlisle School, a boarding school for Indian children that served as the archetype for scores of similar institutions in the late nineteenth century. Pratt’s chilling phrase refers to the brutal process, begun in 1879 and reaching into the mid-twentieth century, by which Indian children were forced to abandon their indigenous languages, beliefs, and traditions in order to become “civilized” in the eyes of the white man (Huhndorf 51). The language of Pratt’s slogan demonstrates collective notions of race and manhood that circulated in postbellum America. At the heart of this ideology was the belief that Native peoples, if left to their own devices, were not human beings (or, in the patriarchal parlance of the time, “men”). Although they were primitive beings who were inferior to white Anglo-Saxons, they did have the potential to become men. They simply needed to slough

off all remnants of Indian-ness to reveal the man beneath. While an Indian could never truly become white, he could become white enough to assimilate to European American culture. To paraphrase postcolonial critic Homi Bhabha, the process of colonization renders the subaltern almost white but not quite (Bhabha 280).<sup>1</sup>

This process of shedding one's Indian skin to reveal the civilized man within was especially complex for one Carlisle student in the early 1900s, a handsome young man named Sylvester Long. Born in Winston-Salem, North Carolina in 1890, Long claimed white and Native ancestry, but because of the binary racial paradigm that structured public identities in this time and place, Long and his family lived in the "Colored" section of town. From a young age, Long knew that he could not tolerate life as a black man in the Jim Crow South, and so he began a process of self-creation and recreation that would continue until his suicide in 1932. In search of opportunities that would allow him to escape life as a black man in the early twentieth century, Long matriculated at the Carlisle Boarding School by claiming that he was part-Cherokee and part-Croatan (D. Smith 41). Ironically, in order to "kill the Indian," Long first had to construct an Indian identity for himself. While many critics (including his biographer, Donald B. Smith) have characterized Long as an impostor – a black man who passed as an Indian man – the notion of passing does not quite apply to the man who would later be known as Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance, notably because now in 2013 he would be considered Lumbee. Although rumors swirled at Carlisle that Long had some African ancestry, he was generally accepted by his peers and teachers. After writing a letter to President

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1. Although Bhabha writes primarily about British colonialism in India (and I acknowledge the ongoing discussions about whether the term "Postcolonial" truly applies to American Indians), his treatment of colonial mimicry is relevant to the discussion of other colonized groups, including indigenous peoples in North America.

Woodrow Wilson in 1915 in which he claimed to be a full-blooded Cherokee, Sylvester was accepted as a presidential appointee to West Point, an institution that excluded black people at that time (D. Smith 51).

But just as Long was about to take his entrance exams, he fled North to Canada, the first of many flights to escape possible inquiries into his past. He earned a reputation as an excellent journalist in Calgary, Alberta, doing field research and writing articles about various Native American tribes. It was during this time that Long changed his official life story and claimed to be a full-blooded Blackfoot chief (D. Smith 109). Yet even as he documented the lives of Native peoples, some Indians were suspicious of Long Lance's version of his own life story. As a result, he consistently made attempts to legitimate his status as an Indian, including the 1928 publication of an autobiography entitled *Long Lance*, a tale of growing up as a Plains Indian (D. Smith 206-7). Even as he gained fame as a prominent figure in New York high society, as a well-known writer, and as an actor, many people, mostly Indians, openly contested his claim of being a full-blooded Indian (D. Smith 242-3). Over time these scandals took an emotional toll on him, and as a result Long Lance became depressed, started drinking, and eventually killed himself with a single gunshot to the head in 1932 (D. Smith 312-3).

Defining "authentic" Indian-ness is a centuries-old process performed by both Natives and non-Natives to distinguish between insiders and outsiders (Cook, "The Only Real Indians are Western Ones," 143), and eight decades after his death, Long Lance remains a victim of that game (Cook, "The Only Real Indians are Western Ones," 142). The Lumbee Nation of North Carolina, in particular, has a long history of fighting

for federal tribal recognition and authenticity in the eyes of Indians and non-Indians alike, a history I will outline shortly. The issue of authenticity is a particularly vexed one for the Lumbee, as demonstrated by an event in the mid-twentieth century. In order to stem the growing factionalism among the Indians of Robeson county in the 1930s and 1940s, the Farm Security Administration and the Office of Indian Affairs initiated the production of a community pageant that it hoped would “heal. . . . social wounds by fostering community pride” (Lowery 220). In 1940, Ella C. Deloria, a Yankton Dakota anthropologist, was recruited by the FSA and OIA and brought to Robeson County to develop the pageant (Lowery 221). Deloria lived with the Indians of Robeson County and “structured the pageant, titled ‘The Life-Story of a People,’ around the area’s traditional agriculture and Indians’ self-made social institutions – the schools and churches” (Lowery 223). Less important than presenting a factually accurate account of Lumbee/Cherokee/Siouan history was establishing a progress narrative of success and “educational and economic advancement” by people who did not rely on support from the U.S. government (Lowery 223). Phil Deloria (Ella’s grand-nephew) also argues that “playing with the primitive” gave them some kind of agency because they were taking control of their representation (cited in Lowery 223). While the pageant (though embraced by many community members) did not halt strife among the Indians of Robeson County (and, in fact, in some ways “it illuminated a social and economic division within the Indian community that had been brewing for many years” [Lowery 227]), it did underline the potential for empowerment through self-creation that resonates so powerfully with Long Lance and his life.

While most critics have focused solely on Long Lance’s putative racial transvestism, I am particularly interested in the role of gender in Long Lance’s self-creation. For many years, Long Lance rejected any cultural or biological connection to blackness and embraced an identity as an Indian through a nuanced performance of gender. I argue that his constructions of manliness not only informed but also bolstered his image as an “authentic” Indian. For Long Lance, masculinity and Indian-ness were two strategically constructed and intersecting identities that he manipulated in order to create a public identity that would allow him to escape life as a black man in a segregated society. Long Lance manipulated both the racialized discourse about gender and the gendered discourse about race in North America in the early twentieth century, operating as a trickster figure who both reinforced and unsettled cultural norms. In his public persona, his autobiographical writings, and his role in the 1929 film *The Silent Enemy*, Long Lance often sought cultural authenticity through a masculine yet non-threatening performance of Indian-ness that appealed to men and women alike. First I will discuss prevailing notions about the intersection of race and gender at the turn of the twentieth century, when Long Lance was coming of age and developing his public persona. I link this history to more recent poststructuralist theories of performativity as they apply to intersecting identity categories of gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity, which serve as useful critical lenses for examining the intertwined performances of gender, sexuality, and culture that constituted Long’s life. Then I discuss the complex history of the Lumbee Nation, the group to which Long and his family belonged, in order to contextualize his relationship to Indian-ness. Finally, I explore how Long Lance’s public persona, his autobiographical writings, and his performance in *The Silent Enemy* all demonstrate his

masterful negotiation of prevailing notions about masculinity and Indian identity in the early twentieth century.

In her book *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*, Gail Bederman outlines the ways in which manhood was remade in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She states the three questions that drive her project: What is manhood? What happened to middle-class manhood at the turn of the century? How is the discourse of civilization linked to male power and racial dominance? (Bederman 5). Particularly relevant to my discussion of Long Lance is her last question, as the cultural and political trends of this time period demonstrate the link between imperialism and white manhood that allowed for a refashioning of gender roles and ideals. Bederman identifies the 1910 Jack Johnson-Jim Jeffries fight as an important moment in popular culture that revealed the anxieties of Americans in the early part of the twentieth century. Johnson's win was seen as a blow to white supremacy. The race riots that followed his victory (and the animosity towards Johnson shown by mainstream press and average white Americans) destabilized the prevailing binarism of the fighting, primitive Negro versus the rational, brainy white man (Bederman 2-3). Jack Johnson, who not only beat the so-called "Hope of the White Race" in the ring but also openly consorted with various white women, served as a threat to white dominance (Bederman 2, 10). The link between manhood and whiteness was articulated on a larger scale by Theodore Roosevelt, who, around the same time as Jack Johnson's victory, established a public persona as a civilized white man that was intended to serve as an archetype for white American manhood (Bederman 171). Particularly in his writings, Roosevelt created

the national narrative of unmanly, savage Indians overcome by virile, civilized white Anglo-Saxons (Bederman 181). As Bederman writes, imperialism was "a prophylactic against effeminacy and racial decadence" (187). While turn-of-the-century discourse linked blackness with physical and sexual aggression, discourse during the antebellum era associated blackness with weakness, as Paul Gilmore writes in his article "The Indian in the Museum."

In relationship to the case of Okah Tubbee, a man of mixed (most likely white, Black, and Native) heritage who was born a slave around 1810 in Mississippi but created a public identity for himself as the son of a Choctaw chief, Gilmore outlines prevailing attitudes about Blackness and Indianness. Gilmore argues that Tubbee's construction of a Native identity relied upon "racial distinctions between Indians and blacks [that] already circulated in the museum and in the writings of people like Thoreau" (Gilmore 43). The racist thinking of the time went something like this: while blacks were happy-go-lucky submissive creatures who "were content to dance and sing on Southern plantations," American Indians were "stoic" figures who refused to submit to the "advance of a white civilization" (Gilmore 26). Not only was there a supposed "natural" distinction between Africans and Indians, but each group was also explicitly gendered. Gilmore argues that the antebellum museum "mapped race along a gender axis – blacks represented effeminate submission, Indians manly resistance" (Gilmore 26). Like Okah Tubbee, Long Lance fled from blackness by asserting his manhood – and he articulated his distance from blackness by embracing rugged masculinity.

As historians and cultural critics have argued, the link between gender and race/

ethnicity was more complicated than a “White equals manly” and Black/Native equals effeminate” formula might suggest. While some white men did see manliness as a quality that was inextricably tied to whiteness, others acknowledged that men of all races have a primitive sensibility that must be nurtured (Bederman 22). As a result, the turn of the century saw the growth of groups like the “Improved Order of Red Men” and other clubs that encouraged white middle-class men to express their inner primitive selves (Bederman 25). Shari Huhndorf has written extensively about the ways in which Indian-ness was fetishized by white men in the late nineteenth century. She asserts:

Indian-inspired men’s and boys’ clubs began to spring up around the middle of the nineteenth century and proliferated in the decades that followed. One commentator, writing in 1897, even describes the last third of the century as the ‘Golden Age of Fraternity.’ During that period, up to one-fifth of all adult males belong to one or more of the seventy thousand fraternal lodges in the United States, many of which had Indian themes and sponsored Indian-type activities. (Huhndorf 65)

Citing the work of John Hugham and Gail Bederman, Huhndorf makes an important link between public displays of manliness and nation-building: “What physical strength accomplished for the individual, imperialism (as a form of physical and racial dominance) accomplished for the nation” (Huhndorf 68). Appropriation of Indian (or pseudo-Indian) cultural practices and military techniques by male organizations such as the Boy Scouts were attempts to instill a sense of masculinity in young American men. As Huhndorf points out, though, using Indian life as a model for young European American boys who would grow strong and contribute to the imperialistic activities of the United States seems quite contradictory (Huhndorf 71). One of the ways this contradiction

was resolved was that Boy Scouts were taught both to emulate and to conquer Indians: “Indeed, Indian fighters such as Kit Carson, Buffalo Bill, and Daniel Boone numbered among the movement’s official heroes, and it was the very act of fighting Indians that made them men. It was, in fact, this experience that scouting intended to replicate and to replace” (Huhndorf 72). In a broader cultural context, mimicking Indian cultures was viewed as an important stage in the development of civilization: “This regression into savagery, however, was not an end in itself but instead a means of playing out and finally overcoming boys’ savage instincts as they grew into manhood, a process that parallels and confirms white society’s rise to civilization” (Huhndorf 74). That is, playing Indian as a youngster could regenerate what many saw as a decaying and stagnant European American civilization around the turn of the twentieth century, but the goal was not to become Indian or embrace their cultures. “Playing Indian” was a vital but finite phase in the development of a virile, strong, white civilization.

While Huhndorf, Bederman, and Gilmore refer to the literal performances of Indians and Africans in public venues such as museums, minstrel revues, and Wild West shows, their studies also call attention to the performative quality of raced and gendered identities. Poststructuralist theories of the performative nature of identity have sometimes been misunderstood in fairly narrow terms. Performing gender is conflated with being in drag, and performing race is conflated with racial passing. While gender and racial passing are important modes of performance, they are not the *only* modes of performance. Judith Butler puts it thus: “The act that one does, the act one performs, is, in a sense, an act that has been going on before one arrived on the scene. Hence,

gender is an act which has been rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular actor who make use of it, but which requires individual actors in order to be actualized and reproduced as reality once again” (Butler 160). All identities are constituted by a series of actions, actions that are always already informed by cultural norms, values, and practices. Although we have the power to exchange old identities for new ones, there is a limited number of identities to choose from, and those identities cannot be constructed from scratch. While Sylvester Long Lance’s identity may seem analogous to a series of outfits that he donned at different times for different purposes, his identity as an Indian man was, in fact, much more complex.

The reasons for Long Lance’s unusually complex relationship to Indian identity are numerous; but one of the most important factors is the history of the Lumbee tribe of North Carolina, about which Karen Blu, Gerald Sider, and Malinda Maynor Lowery have written extensively. Despite this large body of work, the origins of the Lumbee people remain in question, and Anne McCulloch and David Wilkins assert that “these conflicting origin theories have contributed in no small part to some of the identity questions Lumbees have confronted internally” (376). I would further argue that these different origin stories have also made the Lumbee quest for federal recognition more challenging because the perceived lack of unity among the tribal members does not mesh with constructed images of “real” Indians” (McCulloch and Wilkins 369).<sup>2</sup> Citing the work of Adolph Dial, David K. Eliades, and Jack Campisi, McCulloch and Wilkins offer

three possible theories of origin for the people now know as the Lumbee. Some assert that

2. McCulloch and Wilkins identify four factors that determine a tribe’s chances of federal recognition: (1) “How well the tribe and its members meet social constructions of the image of an Indian”; (2) “How cohesive. . . the self-identity of the tribes’ members” is; (3) To what degree the general public finds “moral value” in the tribe’s claims of legitimacy; and (4) The extent of the tribe’s resources in terms of “population, wealth, land, etc.” (369-370).

the Lumbee are descended from “several small Southeastern tribes: the Hatteras, Saponi, and Cheraw, who from the 1780s through the 1840s worked their way into Robeson country where they intermarried and gradually developed a distinctive tribal identity” (376). The most widely known theory is that Lumbee descended from the “Hatteras Indians living on the Outer Banks of North Carolina [who] intermarried with John White’s ‘Lost Colony’ of Roanoake Island sometime in the late 1500s” (376). This theory of origin was developed and publicized by North Carolina state legislator Hamilton McMillan in 1885 after interviewing Indians in Robeson County, and it explains why the term “Croatan” was used to apply to Lumbee people in the late nineteenth century. Malinda Maynor Lowery explains that the term “Croatan” referred to “the name of the place to which the English colonists are said to have gone after they abandoned Roanoake Island” (26). Yet another account of the genesis of the Lumbee people “asserts that the Lumbees are primarily descended from the Cheraw tribe of South Carolina and related Siouan speakers who were said to have inhabited the area known as Robeson County since the later eighteenth century” (McCulloch and Wilkins 376). This account of the origin of the people now known as Lumbee reflects the history presented on the official website of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina (“Lumbee Tribe History and Culture”).

These multiple origin stories also help to explain, in part, the numerous names by which the Lumbee have been called by state and federal governments. In 1885, North Carolina acknowledged the Lumbee “as Croatan Indians of Robeson County” (McCulloch and Wilkins 378). But “Croatan,” which was shortened to “Cro,” soon became a pejorative term used by whites in Robeson County (Blu 78). Karen Blu explains

the term's connotations:

“Cro(w)” is, of course, a White term for Blacks (as in “Jim Crow”). When I asked one of my Indian friends what kind of bird a crow is, he replied “a nasty black thieving bird.” Another explained that Whites used the term “Croatan to mean “half-breed, mixed-blood someone with Negro blood.” (Blu 78)

Because of the name's negative associations, in 1911, the “Croatan” successfully lobbied to change their name to “Indians of Robeson County” (Blu 79). However, this shift did not help their bid for recognition, as “the federal government does not recognize ‘Indians,’ it recognizes particular Indians with historically documented ‘tribal’ names and affiliations” (Blu 79). Two years later in 1913, the legislature once again changed the name to “Cherokee Indians of Robeson County,” though the Eastern Cherokee “protested this phrase because they felt it would lead to pressure to share what few entitlements and benefits they received from the federal government” (Sider 3). Yet the Lumbee continued to be referred to as Cherokee (a historical fact that legitimates Long Lance's claim that he was part-Cherokee, a claim that earned him a spot at the Carlisle School) until the 1930s, when the federal government considered designating them as Siouan or Cheraw Indians but was defeated by the BIA who opposed this change (McCulloch and Wilkins 379). Over the next two decades, tension brewed regarding the proper name for the Indians of Robeson County. In 1953, community leaders successfully lobbied the North Carolina government to acknowledge them as “Lumbee Indians of North Carolina,” a name “derived from the Lumber River that flows through the county” (McCulloch and Wilkins 379). The Lumbee Act of 1956 acknowledged the Lumbee as Lumbee in the eyes of the federal government, but made them ineligible for federal services

(McCulloch and Wilkins 379). Incredibly, “the tribe was recognized and terminated in the same legislation” (McCulloch and Wilkins 379). Since then, Lumbee have worked hard to change the legislation to obtain the rights and protections of all other federally recognized tribes, and they recently came one step closer to achieving their goal when the Senate Indian Affairs Committee passed the Lumbee Recognition Act in July 2011. Richard Burr, a Republican senator from North Carolina stated: “I am hopeful that this bill will be brought to the floor for a vote so that the Senate can fulfill its commitment to achieve fairness and justice for the tribe” (Cornatzer). President Obama also supports this bid for true recognition of the Lumbee, and after a half-century, it appears that their access to federal recognition (and the rights and responsibilities that status inheres) may be at hand.

Another element that needs to be considered when sorting out Long Lance's cultural identity is the practice of adoption into Native communities. Long traveled extensively in Canada and wrote about the plight of Blood Indians there in the early twentieth century and formally became a part of an indigenous community in Canada. As sociologist Eva Garroutte writes in her 2003 text *Real Indians: Identity and Survival in Native America*: “In recognition of such efforts [to advocate for Indians and to write newspaper articles about their lives], the Blood Indians, a member tribe within the Blackfoot Confederacy, adopted him and invested him with a ceremonial name, one that had been carried before him by an honored warrior. It was the name he always used thereafter: Buffalo Child” (Garroutte 3-4). Indeed, Long's connection to the Blackfoot community was long-lasting and ceremonially sealed; moreover, there are many examples of people who

identify with a particular indigenous community but cannot trace their bloodline to that tribe. Garrouette discusses how Indian-ness past and present has been defined legally, biologically, culturally, and individually (Garrouette 135). While many scholars have written about the complexities of Indian identity, Garrouette provides new insight into words that have become so charged in the discussion of how to assess of Indian identity, including “blood,” “essential,” and “authentic.” Garrouette offers her own working definition of Indian identity that is expansive but not limitless: “Individuals belong to those [Native] communities because they carry the essential nature that binds them to The People and because they are willing to behave in ways that the communities define as responsible” (Garrouette 134). Importantly, though Garrouette uses the phrase “essential nature” in her definition, she suggests that in “many Native philosophies. . . it appears that essential nature is usually but not necessarily” passed on through birth but that “can also be created ceremonially,” as in the case of adoption within certain tribes (Garrouette 125). It is telling that Garrouette begins and ends her book with the case of Long Lance, asserting that he is a prime example of these challenges of identity and performance faced by Native peoples today. The vehement reactions to Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance both during his lifetime and several decades later illustrate the destructive and painful process of “attack[ing] and demean[ing] the identity claims of others” that occurs in some Indian communities (Garrouette 143).

Long was known for his work as a writer and as an actor, but he was also a celebrity, a public personality who was, to a certain extent, “famous for being famous.” In particular, his physicality constituted a large part of his charm. Long was an athlete in several

sports, a judge for sporting events, and a stuntman who engaged in various physical feats, including balancing on his head on the wall of a Winnipeg skyscraper (D. Smith, 152). And one anonymous guest at a dinner party given by Irving Cobb in the 1920s describes Long Lance in these terms: “A full-blood redskin and a genuine aristocrat this same gentleman, chief of the noble Blackfoot tribe. A magnificent athletic boy, strong jaw, white teeth, golden-brown skin, black glittering hair, black glittering eyes” (“Indian Chief in Park Avenue”). In the eyes of this anonymous dinner guest, Long became an object praised for his aesthetic value and rugged frame. (It is interesting, however, that while he is described as strong, manly figure, he is also infantilized and emasculated through the word “boy,” a derogatory term used at the time to refer to black men who were chronologically well past boyhood. At the time of this dinner party, Long Lance would have been in his early twenties).

As the quintessential trickster figure, Long Lance constantly straddled the lines between femininity masculinity, between civilization and primitivism. A cartoon from the *New York Evening World* illustrates Long’s negotiation. In this strip, we see Cicero Sapp dressed in full cowboy regalia at the Banff Springs Hotel. Sapp is telling a woman, presumably another employee, that he wants to be dressed appropriately to meet a “Real Indian chief” whose arrival at hotel is imminent. The woman warns Sapp that his attire is ridiculous for the occasion, but Sapp insists on the appropriateness of his outfit, saying, “I want the chief to know I’m a man of the wide open spaces.” In the final frame, a formally dressed bespectacled man introduces Sapp to Chief Long Lance, who is wearing an elegant tuxedo. His hair is slicked back, and his facial features are striking, almost

effeminate. He is smiling and exudes gentility. In the same frame we see Sapp holding his side with one hand and scratching his head with the other hand, his mouth agape, his hat hovering above his head. The cartoonist has drawn droplets of sweat and a question mark above Sapp's head to underscore his utter disbelief. This short cartoon says a great deal about how Chief Long Lance was perceived by the general public in the 1920s. Sapp's vision of a "real Indian" must have looked something like the images of Native Americans that Hollywood was just beginning to produce: "noble savages" dressed in loincloths and feathers, armed with arrowheads, and equipped with a deep connection to the natural world. Yet upon meeting Long Lance, Sapp's prejudices are clearly exposed as mistaken assumptions. Long Lance's simultaneous ability to serve as an "authentic" symbol of the disappearing Native American and to inhabit the white mainstream world was a huge part of his appeal. Long Lance appealed to the average American's desire to know the "real" Indian experience, yet he was palatable enough to be a member of high (white) society. As this cartoon suggests, Long Lance was able to use his "exotic" Native background and looks to his advantage, but he also knew how and when to present himself as the exquisitely packaged Native who has assimilated completely to Anglo-American cultural values.

Not surprisingly, women swooned over Long Lance, and the narration of the 1986 documentary *Long Lance* emphasizes his numerous sexual liaisons with white upper-class women. He possessed not only a charismatic charge, but also a sexual magnetism. Long Lance's virility and manly sexuality correspond to stereotypes of black men as well-endowed "bucks" who preyed on white women. Yet in Long Lance's case, his sexuality

was not threatening but rather exciting and exotic because he represented the ultimate forbidden fruit for the average white female socialite. The thrill of miscegenation, a social and legal taboo at the time, may have drawn white women to Long Lance's bed. Bessie Clapp remembers that it was "love at first sight" when she first met Long Lance, and that her adoration has never ceased. Clapp's "love" for Long Lance seems contingent upon his identity as an Indian. He was exotic, but still "tame" enough to be part of New York society. Clapp says that she had "always loved the Indian people" (*Long Lance*). She says this in the same manner she might if she were saying that she had always loved Cocker Spaniels. Indians were curious to her, and Long Lance embodied the "real" Indian, complete with "royal" heritage. Many Native American writers have articulated this uniquely European-American desire to become Indian. Louis Owens argues that myriad white American fictional heroes from Huck Finn to John Wayne's role as Ethan Edwards in *The Searchers* embody "America's five-hundred-year-old desire to become Indian, that unconscious but oft-articulated yearning to empty the space called Indian and reoccupy it. Only thus, America instinctively feels, can it ever achieve a direct and intimate relationship with the place it has stolen" (Owens 106). Clapp's desire to possess Long Lance may be read as a desire to claim Indian identity. Indeed, Long Lance's body titillated and inspired white people without threatening them in the way that a legibly black male body might have.

Long Lance's journalistic and autobiographical writings reinforced his public performance of an all-American kind of masculinity. He consistently asserted his belief in the value of rugged individualism and the idea of America as a land of meritocracy.

In an article written for *Cosmopolitan* in June 1926 entitled “My Trail Upward,” Long Lance perfectly articulates the American myth of equal opportunity for all: “I’m proud of my Indian heritage—and I’m proud, too, of the land and people of my adoption. I have reached no dizzy heights of material success, but I have succeeded in pulling myself up by my bootstraps from a primitive and backward life into this great new world of white civilization. Anyone with determination and will can do as much” (Lance, “My Trail Upward,” 138). Here Long evokes the twin discourses of American individualism and exceptionalism, a tradition that begins with the self-made man of Benjamin Franklin’s autobiography, resonates in Horatio Alger’s Ragged Dick stories, and exists today in the rhetoric of those who believe that the United States is a meritocracy in which anyone can succeed in America as long as he pulls himself up by his proverbial bootstraps (despite the fact that, metaphorically speaking, many people lack arms or boots or both).

This link between rugged, self-sufficient masculinity and “authentic” Indian-ness also emerges in Long Lance’s 1928 autobiography *Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance*. The publication received favorable reviews, including one from *The New York Times Book Review* noting that the book was “interesting in its subject matter and told with notable mastery of vivid and forceful English” (“Recollections of an Indian Childhood” 42). This narrative, which reflects not Long Lance’s life but the life of a close friend of his on the Blackfoot Reserve, Michael Eagle Speaker, was originally written as a work of fiction. As Jonathan Brennan writes in the introduction to *When Brer Rabbit Meets Coyote: African-Native American Literature*, Long Lance “did not intend to publish [the narrative] as his own autobiography. . . . he apparently accepted *Cosmopolitan’s* insistence on publishing

the fictional work as his own autobiography” (Brennan 29). Long Lance states in the introduction to the first edition that he is writing not to glorify himself, but to uplift the Indian race: “They [his friends in the Northwest] and my publishers persuaded me that it is an interesting narrative. And, so, here it is” (Lance, *Long Lance*, xxxviii). His motives are figured as purely altruistic. While I have no reason to question Long Lance’s commitment to indigenous peoples, this text no doubt gave him another opportunity to prove himself as Blackfoot Indian to the American public.

*Long Lance* is full of scenes of violence that would appeal to an adventure-loving reading public, and the author taps into a collective desire on the part of European American readers to read about young “braves” proving their manhood in gory battle” (Cook, “The Only Real Indians are Western Ones,” 147-8). Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance equates manliness with real Indian-ness throughout the text. For example, he recalls that his older brother told him as a child: “You are four years old, and if you cannot ride a horse now, we will put girls’ clothing on you and let you grow up as a woman” (3). He also makes sweeping claims about Blackfoot cultural attitudes towards gender divisions: “Indians are extremely fond of children, and to have no offspring is regarded as a calamity, a curse. Boy children were always preferred; they would grow up to be hunters and warriors, while girl children could be of little economic use to the family or the tribe” (181). And his disparaging description of the boarding schools is gendered as well: “To have to work like women, when we had thought that we were going to be warriors and hunters like our forefathers” (277). Long Lance implies that such a fate was shameful and unmanly. Nancy Cook’s assertion that Long Lance not a “complete imposter but . . .

an Indian man who plays Indian in order to gain cultural capital and to retrain whites in their thinking about Indians” is useful to consider when analyzing his discussion of gender in his memoir (Cook, “The Only Real Indians are Western Ones,” 147). Whether or not Long Lance’s description of gender norms resonates with “actual” practices in Blackfoot community, Long was aware of the potency, masculinity, and aggressiveness historically attributed to the Blackfoot people, and he used that perception to his advantage. As Cook writes, “In an era when anyone who was not white could ill afford a temper, or any physical expression of anger, especially in Long Lance’s hometown of Winston-Salem, Long Lance’s Blackfoot (and indeed the Assiniboines and Crees he writes about) remain fighters long after other people of color have been subdued. Long Lance presents this fact as point of pride” (Cook, “The Only Real Indians are Western Ones,” 150).

In addition to performing a version of Indian manhood in his life as a socialite and in his writings, Long performed as a Native hero in the role of Baluk in Douglass Burden’s film *The Silent Enemy*. The 1929 film featured scenes of a virile Long Lance dressed only in a loincloth, his copper-colored skin gleaming and his muscles rippling. As Donald Smith writes in his biography of Long Lance, Burden chose Long Lance to portray Baluk, “the epitome of manly development,” according to the script, because of his “arresting portrait in the frontpiece of his book *Long Lance*” (D. Smith 232). Indeed, Long Lance was cast because of his looks, and his looks sold the movie. With the release of *The Silent Enemy*, Long Lance became a national celebrity. Yet being in the public eye also made him the object of intense scrutiny. In particular, his background was questioned, and William Chanler, the film’s coproducer, sent Ilia Tolstoy (an acquaintance of Long Lance)

to investigate the validity of Long Lance’s life story. This was particularly important for Chanler and Burden because the movie was billed as a documentary starring “real” Indians. Any confirmation that the star of the film was not Indian (or, worse yet, was black) would have undermined the integrity of the project in the eyes of its producers. Tolstoy did garner statements from whites in North Carolina who testified that Long Lance “although not a full-blooded chief on the Blood tribe of Western Canada, was nevertheless considered part Indian not a negro” (Cook, “The Scandal of Authenticity,” 120). This discovery satisfied Chanler and Burden, and Long Lance continued filming. The movie was released, but the “rumors about his dubious racial heritage” lingered, and “he was shunned by many acquaintances and friends in New York’s ‘smart set’ who had once been drawn to the authenticity with which he embodied the exotic” (Cook, “The Scandal of Authenticity,” 120). Although the producers did not promote Long Lance as the star of the film after learning that he was not the full-blooded Indian chief he claimed to be, the movie studio of Paramount Pictures did use Long Lance’s image to sell the film. As Cook argues: “Long Lance figures prominently in the display advertising for *The Silent Enemy*. In fact, with proclamations of ‘Real Dangers! Real Indians! Real Romance!’ and ‘Wild Country! Wild Animals! Wild People!’ or ‘Wild Love! Wild Life!’ the ads titillate us with the promise of the primitive and Long Lance is the emblem for it” (Cook, “The Scandal of Authenticity,” 121).

One particularly powerful scene occurs later in film, after the Ojibway have been suffering from hunger (the eponymous “silent enemy”) for several months. The tribal members have decided that one of the leaders of the tribe, Baluk, (played by Long

Lance) must be killed because he led the band on a dangerous journey (during which Chief Chetoga died) to a spot where he predicted the caribou would be, but the caribou never materialized. Despite this grim fate, Baluk is determined to die on his own terms. Dressed only in a loincloth, Baluk beats a drum and chants on his funeral pyre in the night. There are shots of people shivering in the cold (the film was shot a forty degrees below zero) and weeping for Baluk, and a dog howls (D. Smith 241). The scene of Baluk chanting while surrounded by flames is haunting in its pathos and intensity. Luckily for Baluk, however, just as the fire begins to engulf him, the other tribal members see the caribou (D. Smith 242). Baluk's life is spared, and the tribe will not die of starvation. Long Lance's portrayal of an Indian man who is determined to die with dignity resonates with stereotypes of stoic Indian men who suffer physical trials but maintain their honor. In a sense, Long Lance plays the quintessential Noble Savage, a portrayal that, from a 21<sup>st</sup>-century perspective, ostensibly undermines his own efforts to render visible and human the experiences of indigenous peoples in North America. Yet for Long Lance, this film role provided the opportunity to authenticate his Indian-ness on the big screen for a broad and largely non-Indian audience whose knowledge of American Indians was limited to stereotypes of solemn figures in headdresses or scalp-wielding "savages" in loincloths. As Eva Garoutte reminds us, "while individuals certainly formulate ideas about their race, it is the larger society that ultimately invests their assertions with legitimacy – or refuses to do so" (141). I would further argue that ethnic, cultural, and gendered identities also require the viewing, investment, and consent of an audience, which made the stakes of Long Lance's portrayal of a strong Indian (and presumably heterosexual – he and Neewa, the chief's beautiful daughter, played by Penobscot actress Molly Spotted Elk, end up

together) man on film so high (D. Smith 233, 244).

Long Lance's sustained ability to inscribe himself as an Indian man who was handsome and culturally "authentic" without being sexually, physically, or politically threatening positions him as a trickster, a figure that, as David Elton Gay and Sandra Baringer have articulated, is central to both African and American Indian traditions. While trickster has many manifestations in these two traditions (and in the African-Native American tradition that Jonathan Brennan theorizes<sup>3</sup>), he is often defined as a "ubiquitous shape-shifter who fell on borders, at crossroads, and between worlds" (J. Smith 1). Indeed, one of the most common traits of the trickster in multiple cultural contexts is his liminality, a characteristic that is also shared by the mixed-race figure. Drawing upon the work of William G. Doty, William Hynes, and Victor Turner, Jeanne Rosier Smith catalogues the identifying marks of a trickster figure. In addition to being situated at "crossroads and thresholds," tricksters are "uninhibited by social constraints," can "escape virtually any situation," and have a "boundless ability to survive" (J. Smith 8-9). While the trickster figure exhibits behavior that places him on the margins of society, he is simultaneously central to the survival of culture and actually reinforces the importance of cultural values: "The trickster's role as survivor and transformer, creating order from chaos, accounts for the figure's universal appeal and its centrality to the mythology and folklore of so many cultures" (J. Smith 3). Indeed, Long Lance was a literal shape-shifter who continually remade himself in order to survive. He simultaneously capitulated to prevailing notions about race and gender in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and subverted the idea of race as a stable and knowable entity by crossing boundaries and creating himself anew.

3. See Jonathan Brennan's Introduction to *When Brer Rabbit Meets Coyote*.

If we understand Long Lance's life as a series of performances in accordance with a particular set of intertwined gendered and racialized scripts, then perhaps his most enduring performance consists of the scrapbooks and mementoes he left behind. Housed at the Glenbow Museum Archives in Calgary, Alberta, these documents provide important evidence of how Long Lance understood himself. It is unclear for whom these scrapbooks were intended, but the fact that Long Lance went back and changed his tribal affiliation in the scrapbook each time he changed it publicly suggests a deep investment in maintaining a coherent life narrative. Yet it is precisely in those gaps (for example, where "Cherokee" has been crossed out in early newspaper clippings that refer to his identity) that Long Lance reveals the incoherence and messiness of all of our lives. The scripts according to which we define our identities are constantly in flux and sometimes contradictory, as they were for Long Lance. He was constantly negotiating among the various ideas of racialized manhood that circulated in his era: the rugged and stoic Indian man, the self-sufficient yet civilized White man, and the sexually and physically aggressive black man. He used his body and his intellect to carve out an existence that allowed him to survive in a society that feared black men and fetishized Indian men. His mimicry demonstrated not simply a capitulation to colonial, chauvinist, and racist ideals but also a harnessing of the potential power of the trickster figure. Despite the tragic circumstances of his death, Long Lance was not simply another tragic mixed-race member of the Wannabe Tribe. An examination of his life fruitfully complicates our understanding of the knotty intersections between performance and performativity, race and gender, and the real and the authentic.

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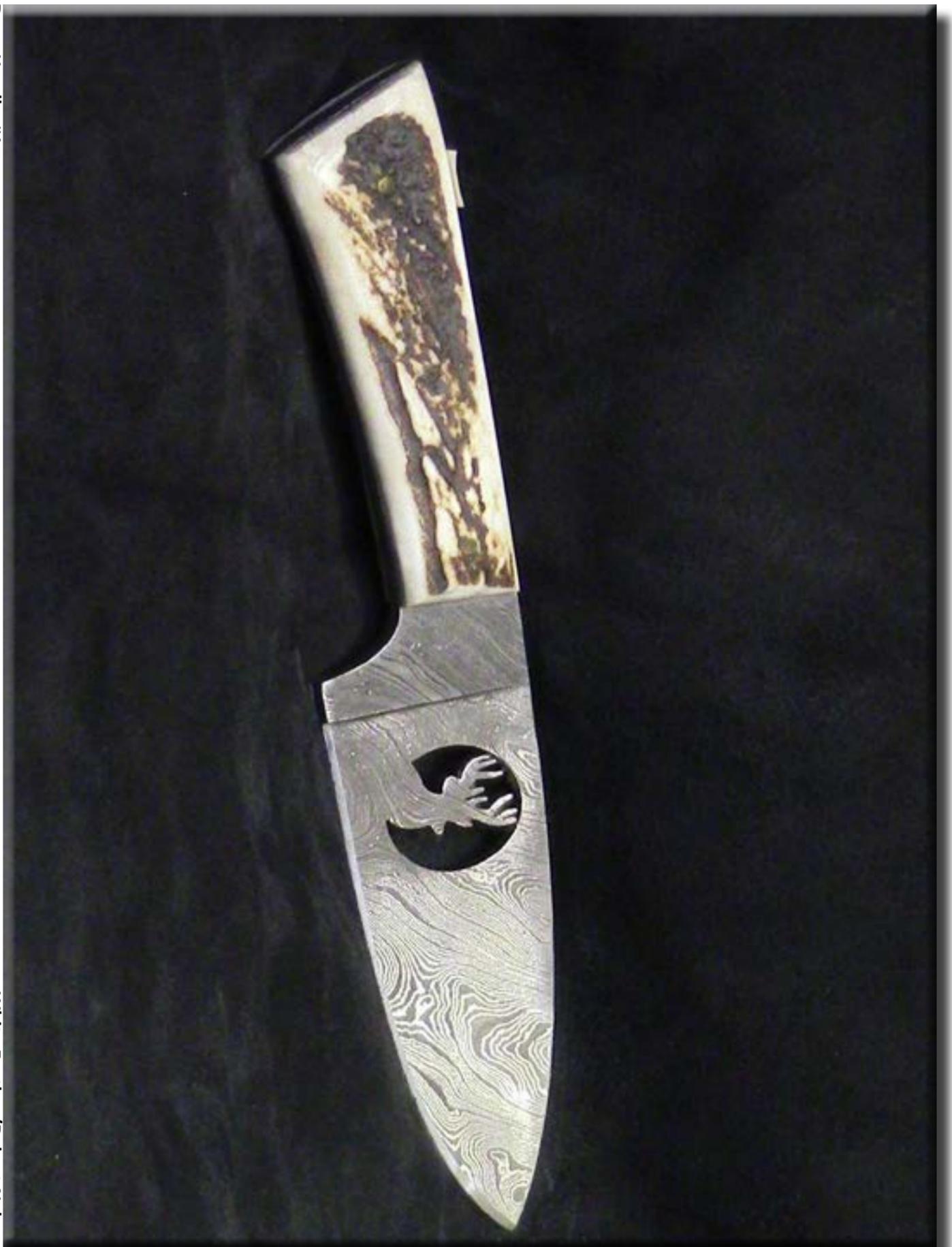
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Done Handle #1



White Feather/Robert Nabess

# The Roles of Food in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century English Colonialism in North America

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We might think that food served similar purposes, beyond the obvious physical necessity, for people in the early modern period, but, how people culturally and religiously view what they eat and how medical discourses view the way that the body processes that food have changed significantly over the centuries in the western world. What the English, and the Spanish that preceded them, met with in the “New World” were Indigenous peoples that prepared and ate a largely unfamiliar diet. The point may seem an obvious one today; however, strange foods and peoples raised a number of concerns grounded in the limitations of early modern theories regarding the human body, digestion, climate, and, what we may, with certain qualifiers, call race. Food and its preparation—or, indeed,

the issue of whether a people cooked their food at all—was of great significance in the construction of binaries of “civilized” and “barbaric,” commensurate with “English,” or “European,” and “Indigene.” As the structural anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss noted, “The raw / cooked axis is characteristic of culture; the fresh / decayed one of nature, since cooking brings about the cultural transformation of the raw, just as putrefaction is its natural transformation” (142). Even today, we may still see what we eat and how we prepare it as “normal” in contrast to peoples that eat and prepare food that are unfamiliar to us, or in some extremely bigoted examples, as eating food only fit for animals. Yet, for the majority of us, there is no fear in eating Chinese food on Monday, a burger and fries on Tuesday, Mexican on Wednesday, etc. To the early modern European, however, this was potentially, dangerously transformative due to their belief in bodily humours. My argument, then, will focus on how European beliefs about food constructed the relationship between colonizer and colonized. What I will argue, following the work of scholars such as Jorge Cañizares-Esquerria and Joyce E. Chaplin, is that the attempt to construct the Indigenous other through food both problematized early modern European theories while contributing to a pseudo-racial construction of difference based on diet that played a key role in justifying the colonial enterprise.

I want to begin by sketching out the predominant theory, through much of the period covered by this essay, that influenced how Europeans saw food—the theory of humours. The human body was seen as comprised of the same four “elements” as the rest of God’s creation: earth, air, fire, and water. As E. M. W. Tillyard notes,

Man’s physical life begins with food, and food is made of the four elements. Food passes through the stomach to the liver, which is lord of the lowest of the three

parts of the body. The liver converts the food it receives into four liquid substances, the humours, which are to the human body what the elements are to the common matter of the earth. (76)

Each element contributed to a specific “humour.” Earth was equated with a melancholic, air with a sanguine, fire with a choleric, and water with a phlegmatic temperament. Further, these elements and their corresponding humours related to specific qualities. Earth / melancholic is cold and dry; air / sanguine is hot and moist; fire / choleric is hot and dry; and water / phlegmatic is cold and moist (Tillyard 76). Health was an issue of maintaining the proper balance within the body of these four elements. Climate, environment, and diet (itself related to climate and environment) all contributed to how these elements and qualities were mixed and maintained in terms of national / racial characteristics. Yet, precisely because such attention was needed to maintain a correct balance, humoral theory could not effectively constitute a stable, fixed identity—it is radically, potentially fluid because of the influence of diet and the exacerbating factors that could be imposed by climate and environment. As Rebecca Earle points out,

Colonial writers throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries agreed that ‘those who come from other climates through [eating] new foods generate new blood, which produces new humors, [and] the new humors [create] new abilities and conditions.’ A change in food, like a change in climate, was liable to provoke a change in both body and character. (693)

One of the primary concerns, beyond the mere necessity of sustenance, was in securing food sources that would prevent such physical and behavioural transformations. This

may involve, as Joyce E. Chaplin notes, some practical testing that was accomplished through the exchange of food between coloniser and colonised:

If natives could eat English food, that indicated that the two peoples’ food-stuffs [...] might be interchangeable [...]. Still, it was possible that Indian digestion was more forgiving. Some colonists believed that it would take some adjustment to live on corn, or to learn which kinds (and what amounts) suited English people and their animals. (150)

Early modern colonizers used the theory not only to characterize their own identities, but also to negatively characterize the identities of Indigenous peoples. They sought to discover what foods were safe, and in what amount, in order to prevent the negative consequences of being subjected to a “New World” climate, environment, and diet which may result in a constitutive change in their own identities and bodies. The colonisers may, in what was seen as the worst case scenario, become like the Indigene if they could not discover the proper balance that would maintain their English humours. This realization points, again, to the radical instability of the humoral model.

This concern was evident from the time of Columbus’ “discovery” into at least the middle of the seventeenth century. Earle notes Columbus’ belief that European food would maintain Spanish identity in the New World and counteract the negative affects of climate and environment (688). Because humoral theory made the human body a microcosmic representation of the macrocosm created by God, transforming from “civilized” European into “barbaric” Indigene was possible—and Christian theology reinforced the shared origin of the “civilized” and the “barbaric” in the genealogy of human-

ity descending from Adam and Eve. The differences occurred because “through eating this inadequate food, as much as through the impact of climate [...] the Indians had lost their Old World temperament” (Earle 693). But this difference could also prompt some rather peculiar debates about why Indigenous peoples were different from Europeans. For example, the perplexing question of why Indigenous males did not generally have beards, and whether the Spanish colonisers might, therefore, lose their beards (a prized sign of their masculine virility) by ingesting the Indigenous diet and living in a hot moist climate. Gregorio García, however, argued that, “The Spanish were unlikely to lose their beards because the ‘temperance and virtue that the Spaniards born in the Indies inherited from their fathers and grandfathers’ were continually reinforced through the consumption of Spanish food” (Earle 692-3).

The writings considered in this article consistently address such concerns. Thomas Hariot’s cataloguing of “merchantable commodities” and foodstuffs, for example, is marked by frequent comparisons of things currently found in Virginia, or which can be successfully introduced, that can grow because of the “same climate” and latitude with some area in Europe or Asia to provide known food sources to counteract any negative New World affects. This all points, however, to the fact that, “There was little knowledge of the dynamics of climate and of the effects of the movement of the atmosphere from west to east, which makes the weather on the east coasts of continents so different from that on the west” (Kupperman 215). As Karen Ordahl Kupperman points out, this contributed to “The general agreement that English people would be healthiest in the temperate climates they were used to [...] as a reason to concentrate colonization on New England and Newfoundland” (216). Hariot addresses fears of transformation and disease

through diet, and his comments on similar foodstuffs points towards such concerns and are rhetorically intended to correct them. Finally, he also notes that the temperate climate is suitable to introduce European crops and animals based on latitudinal calculations. This, too, appears directed toward the same concerns. Hariot states,

For the holesomenesse thereof I neede to say but thus much: that for all the want of prouision, as first of English victual; excepting for twentie daies, wee liued only by drinking water and by the victual of the countrey, of which some sorts were very straunge vnto vs, and might haue bene thought to haue altered our temperatures in such sort as to haue brought vs into some greuous and dangerous diseases [...]. Furthermore, in all our trauales which were most special and often in the time of winter, our lodging was in the open aire vpon the grounde. And yet I say for all this, there were but foure of our whole company (being one hundred and eight) that died all the yeere and that but at the latter ende thereof and vpon none of the aforesaide causes. For all foure especially three were feeble, weake, and sickly persons before euer they cam thither, and those that knewe them much marveyled that they liued so long being in that case, or had aduentured to trauaile. (31-2)

Hariot’s stress on the limited deaths and the lack of any transformation of the English dispel fears expressed vividly in an account of Jerónimo de Aquilar’s eight-year sojourn with the Maya after a shipwreck. Unable to eat Spanish food when found by Spaniards, de Aquilar stated that,

‘after so much time he was accustomed to the food of the Indians, and his stomach would regard Christian food as foreign.’ [...] His digestive system had gone native; in humoral terms, he had acquired a ‘second nature,’ and as a result, his body was not quite Christian as it had been prior to his shipwreck. He had begun to turn into an Indian. (Earle 699)

Theory, though, could be forced aside by mere necessity—starvation. But, even here, such concerns manifest themselves. For many, the journey to either Virginia, Massachusetts Bay, Newfoundland, or in search of the Northwest Passage, was a trying time in terms of food. Provisions, if adequate for the journey, were often spoiled or destroyed during the passage. Other issues included the fact that, even reaching America with sufficient rations for the journey, there may not be much left upon arrival. In part, this was a result of colonial promotional literature’s recurring chorus of New World bounty of recognizable foodstuffs. Or, as is the case with the Pilgrims, a delayed departure meant arrival during the winter, with little food to be found in nature and no possibility of planting their wheat seed or for providing food for the few animals they had. Wolves, too, exacerbated the threat. John Winthrop records starvation and scurvy among the humans, while wolves attacked their livestock (31). Regardless, food had to be found upon arrival within a relatively short time—for either continuing a journey of exploration and re-provisioning for the return to England, or for the establishment and maintenance of a colonial settlement. While some of the flora and fauna was similar to England’s, and other, less familiar food items were known from earlier Spanish and English accounts, the colonizers had to trade with the Indigenous people for food in order to survive, or

learn to plant and harvest like the Indigenous people. At Plymouth, for example, Squanto, an Indigenous man who had been kidnapped by the English and escaped slavery in Europe, taught the Pilgrims how to “set their corne, wher to take fish, and to procure other commodities” (Bradford 229) in their first spring. Some initial interactions may have brought the two peoples together, but in many cases, these situations created strife between the colonizers and soon-to-be colonized.

For example, the Virginia Company’s initial voyage arrived with limited provisions and faced starvation through its first year, until John Smith arrived in Jamestown in 1608. Smith, Trudy Eden argues, taught the colonists lessons learned as a soldier—forage for food and “imitate the natives. In addition, “He [...] managed to obtain a supply of maize from local Indians. If he expected gratitude in return for his efforts, however, he was disappointed. The English colonists told Smith flatly that they would not eat ‘savage trash’” (3). But, Eden initially downplays how Smith “obtained a supply of maize.” The Virginia colonists first traded with the local Indigenous people for some foodstuffs that they did not classify as “trash,” but Smith, “seeing the Salvages superfluitie beginne to decrease,” was forced to explore and make contact with another group of Indigenous people to find more food:

Being but six or seauen in company he [Smith] went downe the river to *Kecoughtan*, where at first they scorned him, as a famished man, and would in derision offer him a handful of Corne, a peece of bread, for their swords and muskets, and such like proportions also for their apparell. But seeing by trade and courtesie there was nothing to be had, he made bold to try

such conclusions as necessitie inforced, though contrary to his Commission: Let fly his muskets, ran his boat on shore, where at they all fled into the woods. So marching towards their houses, they might see great heapes of corne: much adoe he had to restraine his hungry souldiers from present taking of it, expecting as it hapned that the Salvages would assault them, as not long after they did with a most hydeous noyse. (45)

Smith's small band of men are successful in repulsing the attack and seize the people of Kecoughtan's "idol," the Okee, to use as a bargaining advantage to get the food they want—allowing Smith to represent the clash at Kecoughtan as evidence of English superiority, the Indigenous people's savagery, and the enforced negotiation as a fair exchange when the Natives emerge from the woods in which they took refuge. Smith tells them,

he would not only be their friend, but restore them their *Okee*, and giue them Beads, Copper, and Hatchets besides: which on both sides was to their contents performed: and then they brought him Venison, Turkies, wild foule, bread, and what they had, singing and dauncing in signe of friendship till they departed. (45)

This account justifies English raids as "necessitie," and while Smith initially recognizes that the first group of Indigenous people no longer have a surplus supply of food to trade or seize, his actions endanger the lives of another Indigenous group by not being particularly concerned whether they have any surplus to spare. The consequence of such actions reach beyond just creating strife between English and Indigenous, having one's

food taken created tension between Indigenous groups in need of food from such depredations.

In other instances, it appears that the Indigenous people avoided conflict by fleeing their settlements upon the approach of the colonizers. Similarly in need of food and "a place for habitation" (Bradford 213), the Pilgrims sent Miles Standish out to explore the area. Following a group of Indigenous people that flee their approach, Standish and his men come upon a settlement where they,

found a pond of clear fresh water, and shortly after a good quantitie of clear ground wher ye Indeans had formerly set corne, and some of their graves. And proceeding further they saw new-stuble wher corne had been set ye same year, also they found wher latly a house had been, wher some planks and a great kettle was remaining, and heaps of sand newly padled with their hands, which they, digging up, found in them diuerce faire Indean baskets filled with corne, and some in eares, faire and good, of diuerce collours. (Bradford 215)

Standish and his men take the corn, and repeat this shortly after when they come upon another apparently abandoned settlement. These events occur in November, shortly after the Pilgrims' arrival, so taking the Natives' store of corn must have had devastating consequences for them.

In contrast to Smith's violent response to the superior bargaining position of the supposed inhospitable Indigenous people at Kecoughtan and Standish's misappropriations of corn, Thomas Morton makes several comments on Indigenous hospitality. In

their houses, Morton writes,

either the kettle is on with fish or flesh, by no allowance: or else, the fire is employed in roasting of fishes, which they delight in, the aire doeth beget good stomacks, and they feede continually, and are no niggards of their vittels, for they are willing, that any one shall eate with them, Nay if any one, that shall come into their houses, and there fall a sleepe, when they see him disposed to lye downe, they will sprede a matt for him of their owne accord, and lay a roule of skinned for boulder, and let him lye: if hee sleepe untill the meate be dished up, they will set a wooden boule of meate by him that sleepeth, & wake him saying [...] if you be hungry, there is meat for you, where if you will eate you may, such is their Humanity. (25-6)

Understandably, however, many Indigenous groups became increasingly suspicious of the newcomers, fostered by distrust of food raids and other conflicts over land that were often, at least in part, caused by pressures placed on food resources from the arrival of the Europeans.

But humoral fears about eating Indigenous foods, and the perception of it as “trash,” persisted through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Indeed, “Starvation was a more chronic concern in the early settlement of Virginia, where the majority of colonists refused to cultivate—much less eat—native maize, obstinately planting fields with English wheat that grew poorly in tidewater Virginia” (Walden 39). Again, Hariot directly challenges fears of transformation through diet when he writes, “I will set downe all the commodities which wee know the countrey by our experience doeth yeld of it selfe for

victual, and sustenance of mans life; such as is vsually fed vpon by the inhabitants of the countrey, as also by vs during the time we were there” (6). In fact, Hariot asserts that the English rejection of Indigenous foodstuffs was because of their own rather “soft” European diet:

Some [detractors of the enterprise] also were of a nice bringing vp, only in cities or townes, or such as neuer (as I may say) had seene the world before. Because there were not to bee found any English cities, nor such faire houses, nor at their owne wish any of their olde accustime daintie food, nor any soft beds of downe or feathers: the countrey was to them miserable, & their reports thereof according. (6)

Theodor de Bry’s etchings from John White’s Virginia drawings reinforce Hariot’s point on the decadence of some of the English colonists by stressing the moderation of the Indigenous diet as an “exemplar,” (as does Morton) while the comparison of the Pict illustrations visually reveal a stronger-stomached descent that is the ideal colonist of the tract. If any transformation occurs, this implies, it will be to a hardier precursor of English identity that has been endangered by soft beds and “daintie” foods. Smith’s *Virginia* contains a startlingly similar claim about the “softness” of the enterprise’s detractors:

Being for most part of such tender educations, and small experience in Martiall accidents, because they found not English Cities, nor such faire houses, nor at their owne wishes any of their accustomed dainties, with feather beds and downe pillows, Tavernes and Alehouses in every breathing

place, neither such plentie of gold and silver and dissolute liberty, as they expected, had little or no care of any thing, but to pamper their bellies, to fly away with our Pinnaces, or procure their meanes to returne for *England*. For the Country was to them a misery, a ruine, a death, a hell, and their reports here, and their actions there according. (39)

For both Hariot and Smith, the ability to withstand the New World climate, environment, and diet confirms an English “Martiall” identity—it also asserts that the English body itself is suited to the colonization of this new place, a pseudo-manifest destiny of belonging.

Bradford’s initial description of the Massachusetts’ coast expresses a lament for the lack of similar elements of Hariot’s and Smith’s critique of “soft” Englishmen. Arriving in the “desolate wilderness,” “they had now no friends to welcome them nor inns to entertain or refresh their weatherbeaten bodies; no houses or much less towns to repair to, to seek for succour” (Bradford 161). However, what is significantly different is the Pilgrims’ strongly expressed reliance on the spirit. Sustenance, much of which came from foraging and Indigenous foodstuffs, reaffirmed Bradford and his fellow Puritans’ godliness. Here, in a sense, “trash” is turned to spiritual affirmation. This process can also be seen in the captivity narrative of another Puritan, Mary Rowlandson. Taken captive during a raid conducted in February 1676 by the Nipmuck, Wampanoag, and Narragansett on the settlement of Lancaster—a retributive raid following the massacre of six hundred Indigenous people by the colonizers during King Philip’s War (Kolodny 184-5).

Rowlandson’s initial reaction to the food offered by her captors, like the Virginia

colonists to Smith, is to call it “filthy trash” (Rowlandson par. 27). But, much like the affirmation Bradford asserts, Rowlandson scripturally justifies her ordeal and its dietary impositions. She comments on eating horse liver, although interrupted while frying it and forced, “so that I was fain to take the rest and eat it as it was, with the blood about my mouth” (Rowlandson par. 29). She eats, “Indian Corn,” horse hooves, bear, pulses, acorns, horse, and ground nuts. At one point, she carries a piece of raw bear in her pocket two days before she has the opportunity to cook it (Rowlandson par. 34). The issue in Rowlandson’s account is not just *what* she is eating, but *how* she is eating it—often raw, undercooked, or rotten. However, her accounts of eating this food is usually followed by some sort of scriptural allusion—often that such “filthy” food tasted “savoury” in her mouth—what Heidi Oberholtzer Lee notes as “One of the most common taste topoi in the Bible in early American captivity narratives [...] the transformation from bitterness to sweetness” (69). As Oberholtzer Lee argues, Rowlandson, as is Bradford (and to a lesser degree these attitudes are inherent in other examples of colonial discourse that I have cited above), employs a “gustatory theology” which she defines as “a system of belief that articulates religious truths and understandings of the divine and spiritual world through gastronomical language” (65). Thus, while “Rowlandson began to describe her mode of eating in ways that appear more Indian than English” (Herrmann 46), the scriptural overlay within the narrative delineates “the idea that captivity transforms taste and that the sinner and the saved can be divided along lines of appetite” (Oberholtzer Lee 72). Thus, as Oberholtzer Lee concludes, Rowlandson’s “tastes have become more godly, not more native” (80)—her digestive system has not “gone native.” Nor does she experience any difficulty later in digesting “Christian” food like de Aquilar did after living for eight

years with the Maya.

For both Bradford and Rowlandson, the “gustatory theology” of Puritanism is a form of spiritual trial. Bradford sees it in terms of the Puritan exodus to the New World; Rowlandson is seeing it in terms of both an individual trial (her survival) and as God’s punishment of the Puritan community, some of whom had turned away from God—as she ends her text, Rowlandson catalogues things eaten by the Indigenous people that held her captive and concludes,

It is said, Psal. 81. 13, 14. *Oh, that my People had hearkned to me, and Israel had walked in my wayes, I should soon have subdued their Enemies, and turned my hand against their Adversaries.* But now our perverse and evil carriages in the sight of the Lord, have so offended him, that instead of turning his hand against them, the Lord feeds and nourishes them up to be a scourge to the whole Land. (par. 64)

Much more so than the survival of Bradford’s Plymouth or Winthrop’s Massachusetts Bay colonies by incorporating Indigenous foodstuffs into their diets, Rowlandson’s trial strongly affirms the godly ability to maintain identity because of not only what she eats, but also in terms of how she eats and prepares it. The humoral body as microcosm of God’s creation makes Rowlandson’s body a microcosm of the godly Puritan community.

Although the foraging conditions imposed by King Philip’s War are responsible for the dietary conditions that the Narragansets and Rowlandson experience in her narrative, the supposed “poor,” often uncooked diet of the Indigenous peoples also plays into representations of their pseudo-racial inferiority. As Chaplin states, “The early racial

idiom that the English applied to Indians was distinctive because it declared that the natives lacked the physical ability to thrive in their homeland” (231-2). The European diseases that ravaged the Indigenous population also reinforced these beliefs; however, again, some dissented from this view, including Morton who praises Indigenous bodies and sees them as a result of a temperate diet and de Bry’s etchings at the end of Hariot’s tract. Yet Hariot’s latitudinal comparisons ultimately play into the negative representation of the Indigenous people, as Kupperman states, “Early experience did not destroy the belief that tropical and Mediterranean crops would grow in Virginia. Thomas Hariot and Ralf Lane maintained that such plants were not found there because the Indians did not have the knowledge to develop the area’s potential” (1982, 1267). Morton, too, comments on their lack of salting meat:

And I am perswaded, that if they knew the benefit of Salte (as they may in time,) and the meanes to make salte meate fresh againe, they would endeavor to preserve fishe for winter, as well as corne, and that if any thinge bring them to civility, it will be the use of Salte, to have foode in store, which is a chiefe benefit in a civilized Commonwealth. (43)

The notion that the Indigenous peoples did not take advantage of their environment to develop and preserve foodstuffs, some of which they ate raw, is a significant marker of difference, as well as further justification of European colonialism. Anthony Pagden notes that,

The consumption of raw things—especially of raw living things—was, like

nudity, a sign of technological inadequacy, of the barbarians' inability to modify significantly his environment [...]. But eating raw things was also, in some sense, 'unnatural' because it indicated a failure to understand that food, like everything else in nature, exists *in potentia* and must suffer change before it becomes actual and hence, in this case, edible. (88-9).

What lies *in potentia* in the New World is a "nature" that needs to be brought into its "natural" state of "civility"—in essence, to borrow a term from Alfred Crosby, a "neo-Europe."

Rowlandson's captivity narrative includes one final point to discuss in this article, which is another important marker of difference in colonial texts of the period. Separated from her children, Rowlandson at one point asks an Indigenous man if he has seen her son:

he answered me, that such a time his master roasted him [her son], and that himself did eat a piece of him, as big as his two fingers, and that he was very good meat: But the Lord upheld my Spirit, under this discouragement; and I considered their horrible addictedness to lying. (par. 40)

Although she deflects the concern for her son onto another stereotype—the lying Indigenous—her comment points to another dietary error. In the early modern period, as Pagden notes,

cannibalism was, above all else, a failure to distinguish what is fitting as food from what is not. Cannibals were guilty not only of evidently anti-

social acts: in eating their fellow men they were committing a simple, but radical, category mistake [which violated] the hierarchical divisions of [... God's] creation. (85-6)

But, significantly, Claude Rawson asserts, "cannibalism' did not exist before 1492" (69). The term comes from an erroneous identification by Columbus, who either only heard what he wanted to hear or misheard "Cariba" as "Caniba," "which is to say, the people of the khan. But he also understands that according to the Indians these persons have dogs' heads (from the Spanish *cane*, 'dog') with which, precisely, they eat people" (Todorov 30). "Cannibalism" comes to mark a significant difference from the European context to the New World in terms of climate, foodstuffs, geography, and ethnicity:

The word 'cannibal' [...] is not, like 'anthropophagy,' a word that signals its own meaning etymologically, and which could not easily mean anything else. Instead, it is a geographical and ethnic term. It points a finger at a particular people. (Rawson 68-9)

Once Columbus records his misunderstanding, colonial discourse becomes marked by the word "cannibal," and the term spreads widely throughout the geography of the New World—from Columbus in the Caribbean, to Raleigh's Guiana, to Gilbert's Newfoundland, to Davis' and Frobisher's far North. Indeed, some English accounts, such as *A true Report of the late disoueries, and possession taken in the right of the Crowne of England of the Newfound Lands* even includes Columbus' canine misunderstanding of the term in reporting of cannibals "whose foode is mans flesh, and haue teeth like dogges" (Hakluyt

706). And English accounts of the West Indies often include Spanish reports that mark their expectations of encountering cannibals. *The voyage made by the worshipful M. Iohn Haukins Esquire, now knight, Captaine of the Iesus of Lubek* states that the slave-trading expedition,

came to an Island of the Cannybals, called Sancta Dominica [...]. The Cannybals of that Island, and also other adiacent, are the moste desperate warriers that are in the Indias, by the Spaniards report, who are neuer able to conquer them [...] by all the Spaniards reportes, who make them [the “Cannibals”] Deuils in respect of men. (Hakluyt 529)

The tract is dependent on Spanish “reports,” rather than any evidence of such practices witnessed by the English.

John Davis’ and Martin Frobisher’s voyages in search of the Northwest Passage demonstrate the conceptual link between eating food raw and cannibalism. Davis’ second voyage recounts the assumed beastliness of the Inuit who “eat all theyr meat raw” (Hakluyt 782). The account of Frobisher’s second voyage is more detailed on the eating habits of the Inuit:

They eate their meate all rawe, both fleshe, fishe, and foule, or something perboyled with bloud and a little water, which they drinke [...] such grasse as the countrie yeeldeth they plucke upp, and eate, not daintily, or sallet-wise to allure their stomaches to appetite: but for necessities sake, without either salt, oyles, or washing, like brute beasts deuouring the same. They

neither vse table, stoole, or table cloth for comelines: but when they are imbrued with bloud, knuckle deepe, and their kniues in like sort, they vse their tongues as apt instrumentes to licke them cleane: in doing whereof, they are assured to loose none of their victuals. (Hakluyt 627)

In both narratives, this behaviour leads, without any eye-witness evidence to the conclusion that the Inuit are cannibals: “I thinke them rather Anthropophagi, or deuourers of mans flesh, then otherwise: for that there is not fleshe or fishe, which they finde dead (smell it neuer so filthily) but they will eate it, as they finde it, without any other dressing. A loathsome thing, either to the beholders, or hearers” (Hakluyt 627). Although Frobisher uses the term “Antrhorpophagi,” his conclusion is, arguably, based on the geographical and ethnic associations of “cannibalism” that go back to Columbus’ initial contact.

However, while Europeans may have perceived cannibalism as entirely beyond the pales of human society and Godly order, this distinction between colonizer and colonized was also problematic because, in English writings, eye witness accounts of cannibalism often involve the English themselves, challenging the etymology of “cannibal.” As Eden points out, “Accounts of [shipwreck] survivors who ate their dead companions was nothing new to English readers. It was a practice called the law of the sea” (10). Richard Hakluyt’s *Principall Navigations*, for example, includes a number of English shipwreck cannibalism stories ranging from the possibility to the act. In *A discourse written by one Miles Phillips Englishman, one of the company put a shore in the West Indies by M. Iohn Hawkins in the yeere 1568*, some of Hawkins’ crew,

being thus oppressed with famine on the one side, and danger of drowning

on the other, not knowing where to find reliefe, we began to be in woonderfull despayre, and we were of many mindes, amongst whome there were a great many that did desire our Generall to set them on lande, making theyr choyse rather to submit themselues to the mercie of the Sauages or Infidels then longer to hazard themselues at Sea, where they very well saw, that if they should all remayne together, if they perished not by drowning, yet hunger woulde inforce them in the ende to eate one another. (Hakluyt 566)

Notable is the fact that Phillips does not specifically identify the Indigenous peoples, the “Sauages or Infidels,” as cannibalistic threats to the crew to be set ashore; rather, the possibility is with the crew itself. Similar to the “necessity” that drives Smith to forcibly appropriate Indigenous’ corn, it is “necessity” that drives the English to cross the boundary into cannibalism. In addition, the abhorrence of English reactions to purported Indigenous cannibalism can be contrasted with not only the rather matter-of-fact account cited above, but also with another representation that employs romance conventions. In *The Voyage of master Hore and diuers other Gentlemen, to Newfound land, and Cape Breton, in the yeere 1536*, a tale for which Hakluyt himself “rode 200. miles onely to learne the whole trueth” (518), we can trace a progressive degeneration of “civilized” behaviour and the confusion of dietary categories negatively ascribed to the Indigene. Trapped in ice, the starving crew initially takes to eating “rawe herbes and rootes” before turning to cannibalism (Hakluyt 518). While there is a sense of abhorrence to the cannibalistic practices of some crew members when they are discovered, the narrative resolves this through a romance reincorporation of the cannibals into English society—“M. Buts was

so changed in the voyage with hunger and miserie, that sir William his father and my Lady his mother, knewe him not to be their sonne, vntill they found a certaine secret marke which was a wart vpon one of his knees” (Hakluyt 519). Whereas the term “cannibal” “points a finger at a particular people” (Rawson 69) who inherently confuse dietary categories and transgress divine order, Buts is not substantially changed by his ordeal and is rehabilitated through familial recognition and reincorporation into English society.

Food provided more than just subsistence for early modern colonizers; it provided them with a way to structure their perceptions of Indigenous peoples as inferior or even bestial. As Earle argues, early colonial tracts demonstrate that “‘Race’ [...] was in part a question of digestion” (697). While humoral theory gradually gave way to more scientific understandings of how the human body digests food through the latter half of the seventeenth century, many of the assumptions made in the period of first contact and the initial establishment of English colonies that were based on diet persist even today as unfortunate stereotypes of Indigenous peoples in North America.

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*Remained vnder the gouernement of twelue monethes, At the speciall charge and direction of the Honourable Sir Walter Raleigh Knight lord Warden of the Stanneries Who therein hath beene fauoured and authorised by her Maiestie and her letters patents: This fore books is made in English By Thomas Hariot seruant to the abouenamed Sir Walter, a member of the Colony, and there employed in discovering*. London: 1590.

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Detailed - Pipe



White Feather/Robert Nabess

# *The Hunger Games* and the Failure of Dystopian

## Maternity

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Throughout Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* trilogy, Katniss Everdeen's greatest wish is for autonomy – for the tranquility that comes from independence and self-sufficiency. The story opens with Katniss sneaking into the woods, where she is able to exercise her skills as a hunter, and finds company with “the only person with whom [she] can be [herself]” (*The Hunger Games* 6). Though fraught with peril – hunting outside of the tall fence is strictly forbidden – the forest is a place of refuge for Katniss, and “Gale says [she] never smile[s] except in the woods” (*HG* 6). Throughout the series, Katniss is not altruistic; her participation in the revolution of *Mockingjay* is born of this desire for independent freedom<sup>1</sup>, as opposed to political ideals<sup>2</sup>. From her time sneaking to

1. And, in no small part, by a desire for revenge for the damage done to those she cares for.

2. Even her assassination of President Coin is an act of revenge and self-preservation, rather than an act for the greater good of Panem.

the woods to hunt in *The Hunger Games* to her acceptance of her role as rebel mascot in *Mockingjay*, Katniss' motivations remain the same: protection of the few to whom she feels a sense of loyalty, and the hope to one day live in isolation, far from the expectations of society or community. Huddled together in their bunk in District 13, Katniss confesses to Prim, “Tomorrow morning, I'm going to agree to be the Mockingjay,” and when her sister perceptively asks if the decision is the result of desire or coercion, Katniss responds, “Both, I guess” (*Mockingjay* 33-4). Unlike Gale, who seeks political authority,<sup>3</sup> Katniss wants neither power nor influence, and expresses disgust for those with whom the Games and revolution have brought her into contact.

I no longer feel any allegiance to these monsters called human beings, despise being one myself. I think that Peeta was onto something about us destroying one another and letting some decent species take over. Because something is significantly wrong with a creature that sacrifices its children's lives to settle its differences. ... The truth is, it benefits no one to live in a world where these things happen. (*MJ* 377)

Though fatalistic and aggressive, this denunciation of humanity forcefully illustrates both Katniss' rejection of society and the consequences of community, and her steadfast loyalty to the young man who makes her think of dandelions, and with whom she may be able to find personal peace. After the turmoil and torture of the Games, and her

3. Greasy Sae reveals that Gale has “some fancy job” in District Two, and is featured regularly on television (384). Katniss, whose occupation is no longer necessary, and whose emotional instability is recognized as a liability, is left to her own neglect in the District of her birth. Significantly, her mother abandons her daughter in favor of vocation, bringing the text full circle and confirming Katniss' early assertion that “Family devotion only goes so far for most people” from the Districts, which have taught individuals to look first to their own well being (*The Hunger Games* 26).

coerced revolutionary participation, Katniss has arguably *earned* this peace, and on the surface, the epilogue of *Mockingjay* offers Katniss her reward – the “happily ever after” that is desired by readers and Capitol citizens alike. These brief pages give Katniss a future – one of love and companionship, a family. However, this epilogue fails Katniss as an individual.

Katniss at the end of *Mockingjay* is not autonomous – she is a part of a unit, working to support her husband and offspring, but asked to do so in a role that she detests most from the beginning – that of a mother. Despite her desire for independence and the serenity it offers, she is instead the permanent victim of a final manipulation that promises an existence haunted by anxiety. By forcing Katniss into the role of motherhood – a job that requires 20 years of diligent coercion – Peeta effectively wins the final game, and Katniss becomes the perpetual victim of the manipulation that begins when the name “Primrose Everdeen” leaves Effie’s lips (*The Hunger Games* 20).

Katniss’ description of the Games in *The Hunger Games* is as succinct as it is terrifying:

Taking kids from our districts, forcing them to kill one another while we watch – this is the Capitol’s way of reminding us how totally we are at their mercy. [...] the message is clear. “Look how we take your children and sacrifice them and there’s nothing you can do.” (18-9)

The protagonist is aligned both with the children and the parents in this passage, at once herself a juvenile victim of the Reaping, and experiencing the anxiety of a parent in her

assumed role as provider and protector for her sister, Primrose. Children are a major source of angst in Panem, primarily because their future is tenuous. Guardians are powerless to protect their young against the Capitol’s harvest, creating tension within both families and the community as a whole, often leading to acts of aggression that suggest a caregiver’s need to emotionally distance herself. Early in *The Hunger Games* Katniss describes Peeta’s mother striking him for burning bread (which he gifts to Katniss), and asks herself “What had she hit him with?” (30), suggesting excessive force and the use of a weapon against one’s own child. Similarly, the abandoned or neglected children who find themselves in community homes often arrive to school with “the marks of angry hands on their faces” (27). These are not the pampered and beloved children of the Capitol, whose smiling parents look on as their darlings pretend to be brave tributes: they are the victims of repulsive cultural expectations that place them at the mercy of a caustic government and frequently, though not exclusively, monstrous mothers.

Already burdened by the care of her sister, Katniss is adamant in her refusal to have children of her own at the beginning of the trilogy. This is borne of an understanding of the risks children face, and an unwillingness to further expose *herself* to emotional vulnerability. She recognizes her own fear that she cannot manage the turmoil children unavoidably inspire without becoming an abusive monster herself. Yet when capable and confident Gale and Katniss contemplate either escape or a future in District 12, the discussion of children is not far behind. They cannot leave their home because of their responsibilities to “their kids,” (which, significantly, includes their mothers), nor is Katniss willing to produce further obligation. The mere suggestion is the inspiration for

the first real conflict of the narrative, as Katniss and Gale disagree:

“I never want to have kids,” [Katniss] say[s].

“I might. If I didn’t live here,” says Gale.

“But you do,” [Katniss says], irritated. ( *The Hunger Games* 9)

Gale suggests a different future – almost a daydream, where children can be born away from “here.” Katniss refuses to even consider the possibility, understanding that “not living here” may not be the ultimate solution as Gale proposes. Already, the prospect of motherhood haunts Katniss, who instead finds comfort in the potential of her trade.

Though parents are ultimately powerless in the Capitol-run districts, these societies establish roles that allow families the best chances of survival. The roles of protectors and providers are neither gender nor generation bound, though parents are still most frequently those who accept this responsibility for the good of their offspring. Katniss’ father fulfills both of these roles before his death, and leaves a gaping wound with his loss even greater than the crushing depression that settles on their household. Katniss takes over his role as protector and provider, shouldering both the physical and emotional responsibilities he leaves behind. “At eleven years old, with Prim just seven, I took over as head of the family. There was no choice,” (27) she says, in clear censure of her own mother’s poor choices. Significantly, Katniss does not become a mother to her sister, but rather a provider and guardian, as her father once was.

The district had given us a small amount of money as compensation for his death, enough

to cover one month of grieving at which time my mother would be expected to get a job. Only she didn’t. She didn’t do anything but sit propped up in a chair or, more often, huddled under the blankets on her bed, eyes fixed on some point in the distance. Once in a while, she’d stir, get up as if moved by some urgent purpose, only to then collapse back into stillness. No amount of pleading from Prim seemed to affect her. (*The Hunger Games* 26-7)

The example Katniss’ mother provides is one of weakness and instability, and she defines Katniss’ loathing of the maternal role.<sup>4</sup> Unable to move beyond her partner’s death, Katniss’ mother is crippled by the loss. She starves her children with her grief, demonstrating a preference for her chosen adult companion over her children. That their could be a preference – that there is a difference in loyalty within the familial unit – is something that Katniss recognizes as an act of aggression against she and Prim, which in turn guides her interactions with her mother up through her own reaping. For Katniss, this aggression is the trademark of a mother, as the children are emotionally neglected and abused, not unlike Peeta’s mother beating him for burning a few loaves of bread. This maternal hostility forms half of the parental dichotomy in District 12; the physical and emotional abuse of children, though not uncommon and driven by the anxiety of survival, is nonetheless illustrative of bad mothering, as District life teaches cruelty and selfishness: “Family devotion only goes so far for most people” says Katniss at the reaping (*HG* 26). The divide this causes between Katniss and her mother is irreparable; following

4. Hazel, who loses her husband in the same accident, immediately shifts her role from the exclusively maternal to the provider, finding work just after giving birth to her youngest child. In Hazel, Katniss identifies what she believes a mother *should* be – not limited to her biological role, Hazel exhibits the emotional strength to fight for her family’s survival. Though it is clear that she cannot achieve this without Gale’s aid, it is the effort and strength of will that is idealized in direct contrast to Katniss’ own mother. This example, though, is singularly limited, and proves to be an exception rather than a rule.

her emotional withdraw, she will never again be a mother to her oldest daughter.

I didn't trust her. And some small gnarled place inside me hated her. I had taken a step back from my mother, put up a wall to protect myself from needing her, and nothing was ever the same between us again. (HG 53)

Despite her mother's advances throughout the trilogy, Katniss holds on to this distrust – even though she says in *Catching Fire* that she is trying to repair their relationship. The small reconciliation that occurs is not truly related to her role as a mother, but as her role as a healer – her successful vocation. Katniss grows to respect her mother's healing abilities, especially when Gale is brought bleeding and broken to their kitchen. This growing trust is again exhibited in *Mockingjay* when Katniss insists no one other than her mother treat her prep team. Still, it is not maternal comfort or support that Katniss seeks, but the work of a trusted professional. Katniss appreciates her mother's knowledge and proficiency, but nothing more, and her dissatisfaction with the roles of mothers continues.

It is through *occupation* - in the role of provider - that Katniss finds her own strength and purpose. Her determination leads to her family's survival as she puts her father's lessons to work. It is a role defined not by biology, but by activity. In the woods Katniss is not a young woman, a daughter, or a sister, though these each give her motivation – she is a hunter and provider. She is a user of tools, of weapons, and the bringer of meat and security. In this space, Katniss rejects the biological extension of her role. Though obviously baited by Gale, Katniss vehemently denies the possibility of

motherhood, exhibiting all of the apprehension of District life, and defining herself as independent from these social labels. Her sense of self exists outside of a reproductive identity, just as she finds the means of survival only outside the District fence. She is at peace with her assumed role of provider, but even her present concern for Prim – that which imprisons her and keeps her from escaping into the wilderness – is stifling. The suggestion of motherhood will forever conjure images of the failure in her family, and this is a weakness Katniss won't abide.

This static identity cannot last, and as she is identified as a tribute she is forcibly defined by her reproductive system. She is the female from District 12 – “Ladies first!” (HG 20) – and the pageantry of the games define her almost exclusively as such. The significance of gender in the games is first established by those closest to Katniss – Gale's parting words are “Wear something pretty” (14), and when Katniss dons her mother's dress Prim whispers “You look beautiful,” to which Katniss responds, “And nothing like myself” (15). Even Madge, whose position as the Mayor's daughter arguably allows her greater luxuries than the Everdeen family, dons a dress “she would never be wearing ... ordinarily,” responding, “Well, if I end up going to the Capitol, I want to look nice, don't I?” (HG 12). The need to “look nice,” to “wear something pretty,” for a slaughter, is a manifestation of the Capitol, where gender expectations are artificially reinforced and exploited as necessary luxuries that denote one's elite status as Capitol citizen or esteemed Tribute. These fashionable ideas, grounded in both biology and the luxury of extreme aesthetics, are recognized as both a strong tool and a degradation of individual worth throughout the trilogy; to focus on gender over skill suggests idleness or thoughtlessness,

and therefore uselessness.

[Posy] scoots along to the bench to Octavia and touches her skin with a tentative finger. “You’re green. Are you sick?”

“It’s a fashion thing, Pos. Like wearing lipstick,” [Katniss says].

“It’s meant to be pretty,” whispers Octavia... (*Mockingjay* 63)

“Pretty” is an adjective that is fantastically specific and informative in its simplicity. It is a word that implies admiration, confirms cultural standards of beauty, alludes to current fashions and trends, and is consistently and determinably *feminine*. In the totalitarian and militaristic District 13 of *Mockingjay*, “pretty,” though recognized for its linguistic intention, is Capitolistic – definitively other and, with a few exceptions, negatively stigmatized for its reflection of Capitol excess and the luxury of gender identification that comes from a free commodity culture and the security of comfortable Capitol life.

Unlike the fashionable members of Capitol society, functionally-clothed District citizens rely on vocation for personal identity, defining themselves and others by skill or occupation: they are washers, merchants, Peacekeepers, miners, and hunters. These occupations are often gender-neutral, suggesting that these roles are based on skill and suitability rather than artificially constructed gender expectations: Peeta and his father are bakers, Katniss’ mother is an apothecary<sup>5</sup>, Katniss herself is a hunter, and both men and women toil in the mines that define the District (*HG* 4). Though heteronormativity dominates the personal relationships of significance to Katniss, gender itself is secondary

5. A skilled (and therefore traditionally masculine) trade, and not a medicine woman.

to personal strength and capability, until the caustic intrusion of the Reaping.

By emphasizing appearances and attributing success to presentation, Katniss is allowed to excel only as a young woman, and not as the genderless protector she is before. Gender is manufactured to suit political agendas, and when faced with certain death in the arena, Katniss is bombarded with dresses and ribbons. Tributes attempt to use this to their advantage, and even Katniss recognizes the role her acceptance of both her stylists and Peeta’s romantic narrative have in her survival. She hesitantly accepts her role as Juliet to fight for their survival, but the minute she believes the cameras are turned she drops her role as lover as quickly as she drops her feigned interest in fashion.

Katniss shows great adaptability, but she lacks the militaristic strategy of characters like Snow, Coin, Gale, and even Peeta, and so fails to grasp the consequences of her acquiescence of gender until it is nearly too late. “...you’ll never, ever be able to do anything but live happily ever after with that boy,” (44) says Haymitch in *Catching Fire*. After Snow’s visit, and Katniss’ subsequent discussion with her mentor, a terrifying truth comes to light: it is likely that Snow will force her into not only marriage, but motherhood, to force her offspring into his games. This “happily ever after,” is abhorrent to Katniss, and in no small way influences her decision to fight back, even before she learns of District 13. From Snow, the possibility of motherhood becomes a literal threat.

Coin proves to be no less manipulative. Though Katniss serves Coin better as war propaganda than a bride and mother, Coin too uses Katniss’ familial loyalty to manipulate her champion. Of course, this backfires, as Prim’s murder spurns Katniss to not just push the revolution as Coin desires, but also ultimately assassinate the politician.

Here, Katniss uses her bow to fulfill the role left by her father, satisfying the need of revenge for the challenged protector.

Unfortunately, it is too late for Katniss, just as it is too late for Prim. Following the assassination of Coin, Katniss emotionally collapses. It is her supposed recovery that occupies the conclusion of *Mockingjay*, and audiences watch as Katniss' mother again abandons her child<sup>6</sup>, while Peeta remains to support his war bride.

When the two are first paired, Katniss says

A kind Peeta Mellark is far more dangerous to me than an unkind one.  
Kind people have a way of working their way inside me and rooting there.  
And I can't let Peeta do this. (49)

This threat continues long after they make it out of the arena, as a kind Peeta Mellark becomes the catalyst through which Katniss' persistent torment is to be derived.

Katniss' emotional collapse resembles that of her mother's before her, with Katniss entirely unable to process or continue in the face of such catastrophic familial loss. Katniss mourns Prim much as their mother mourns her deceased husband, with both forgoing even basic hygiene in the face of their anguish. As quoted earlier, Katniss' mother

6. In chapter 27 of *Mockingjay*, Haymitch and Katniss find themselves together on the train back to District 12:

When we're back among the clouds, I look at Haymitch.  
"So why are you going back to Twelve?"  
"They can't seem to find a place for me in the Capitol, either," he says.  
"...My mother's not coming back."  
"No," he says ... "She's helping to start up a hospital in District Four." (379-80)

To choose occupation over the forced biological role of maternity is a choice that Katniss understands, even as she continues to mourn the loss of nearly everyone she cares for.

responds to the loss of her husband with stagnation, sitting in her chair and staring at nothing as she allows her sorrow to direct her every movement, or lack thereof. Similarly, Katniss describes long stretches sitting in front of the fire, a refusal to acknowledge the basic necessities of life, and a literal shutting down (*MJ 380-1*). It is not until Peeta plants a memorial of Prim that Katniss slowly resurfaces, describing her own toilet in a way that emphasizes her personal neglect: "I make a half-hearted effort to push my hair out of my eyes and realize its matted into clumps. [...] I strip, and flakes of skin the size of playing cards cling to the garments" (*MJ 382-3*). Like her mother, Katniss is again able to function, but like her mother, she is not one to be trusted emotionally. The parallel between the two is a permanent tattoo on Katniss' character, foreshadowing her own emotional failures still to come.

All of this is really an introduction to the epilogue, which serves as Katniss' final condemnation and the Capitol's own post-collapse revenge. The epilogue introduces readers to Katniss nearly 30 years in the future – a battered shell of the young hunter she is on the day of the reaping. The threat of Snow's happily ever after has come to pass, and Katniss' description of her present paints a grim image of these consequences. Yet on the surface, this life holds the promise of peace. Removed from the Games and revolution, Peeta and Katniss help each other heal, and build a life together: "Peeta bakes. [Katniss] hunt[s]" (*MJ 387*). Each seeks an identity other than their wartime selves, and work to accept their history. But Katniss' new role as a mother is one of strife and promises anxiety and unease. "...It took five, ten, fifteen years for me to agree [to have children]. But Peeta wanted them so badly" (*MJ 389*). Katniss describes Peeta's nearly two-decade

crusade for offspring, and the emotional horror of her gestation – horror Peeta convinces Katniss to endure not just once, but twice. Katniss acquiesces to Peeta’s request out of loyalty to the one person she believes can teach her to live a life without “rage and hatred,” (*MJ* 388), a kind of self-sacrificing loyalty that has been consistent in Katniss’ character throughout the story. Though she begins the trilogy firmly asserting that she will not have children, though she frequently describes the abuse of dystopian childhood and the monstrous quality of maternity, Katniss surrenders to biology for Peeta’s sake and fulfillment. Still, the role of mother is not one for which Katniss is emotionally prepared, and even as she agrees, and her body supports the building of life, Katniss is “nothing like [herself]” (*HG* 15), as unsuited for her role as a mother as she is uncomfortable in her mother’s fine dress. She describes gestation as “a terror that fe[els] as old as life itself” (389), and though she describes holding her new infant as joyous, her next pregnancy is “a little easier, but not much” (389). The snapshot that Katniss provides of her young children creates a dichotomy of their naivety and her experience, and her constant anxiety over not only their continued welfare, but also the necessity of ripping away their innocence when their children learn of the Games. As a mother, Katniss is not herself, and instead becomes her own mother – she that is emotionally scarred and unable to offer her children the comfort and support she before shows her sister as a provider, and instead internalizes her own terror as she continues to prepare for the worst. The existence of her children is a source of prolonged anxiety for Katniss, and one she will not be able to overcome.

Katniss says the horror of her first pregnancy subsides once she is able to hold

“the girl,” but this reprieve does not last. Katniss produces the perfect tributes – a fact which does not escape her notice. “The dancing girl ... the boy with blond curls ... the girl ... the boy ... terror” (389). Describing her children exclusively by gender – perhaps in an attempt to protect their identities from even the readers – Katniss marvels at the innocence of children and her own children’s present inability to comprehend the suffering of decades past. Though no longer identified as potential tributes, their suitability functions as a constant oppressive reminder of all Katniss has suffered and lost. The inevitability of their discovery of her involvement in the revolution leaves their mother agitated, as she knows a part of their innocence will be lost forever. These anxieties ultimately identify Katniss with her own mother, who abandons her daughters not once, but twice.

To be a mother from District 12 is to risk being emotionally broken and vulnerable, or an abusive monster, and unable to meet the expectations that define the role. Motherhood is defined by crippling fear, and thus Katniss is crippled. Katniss’ maternity is a forced reduction of self to a reproductive identity, which confines the protagonist as it aggressively aligns her with her own failed mother. This lack of peace is the antithesis of Katniss’ hopes for the future, and by forcing her into the emotionally vulnerable role of motherhood, the series proves a failure to its protagonist.

Ultimately, the reader can take solace in the knowledge that Katniss’ children will not suffer the fate of other dystopian offspring; although Katniss loses her mother to emotional instability and similarly becomes an ineffective mother herself, her own children will continue to find support in the true nurturer of their family: their father,

Peeta. Even as Katniss fails in the role forced on her by biology and Capitol definition, Peeta – the kind supporter, the bread maker, the lover – excels in his own maternity, giving readers hope where there is none for the protagonist.

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Drum

White Feather/Robert Nabess

## West's Simulacra: Identity and Meaning in *The Day of the Locust* (1975)

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Nathanael West's social and historical position makes him a prime candidate for a postmodern interrogation of his work, and his 1939 novel *The Day of the Locust* invites us to reevaluate the cultural, geographical, and temporal shift towards postmodern simulation in the United States. Born Nathan Weinstein in 1903, he changed his name during his tenure at Brown University in an effort to disassociate himself from his Jewish Lithuanian immigrant family and to blend more with his upper middle-class classmates, and this recreation of himself reflects the absence of authenticity he critiques in his works. During his life he traveled extensively and witnessed extreme social and cultural change, which he critiqued in his fiction. He was an avid reader but an indifferent student, and he left the United States in 1926 to join the American expatriate society in Paris, where he began writing. He returned after a year, and moved to Hollywood permanently in 1936, under contract to Republic Pictures as a screenwriter. His most well-known screenplay, *Five Come Back*, starring Lucille Ball, was released in 1939. While he only

wrote screenplays for “B” movies, he was able to observe some of the most startling technological advances in film production and their effect on American society. Shortly after his return to the United States, *The Jazz Singer*, the first film with synchronized dialogue, was released. In 1932 Shirley Temple made her first film and began her climb to superstardom. In 1939, *The Wizard of Oz*, the first film in color, and *Gone with the Wind*, one of the first blockbusters, were both released, along with *DotL*. Affected by these events, West chronicles the influence of film on fiction, and indirectly society, in *The Day of the Locust (DotL)*, which has overtones of simulation and performativity, both of which work to interrogate social reality within the novel. I take *DotL* as anticipating the full-blown shift towards postmodernism.

In the first section of this essay, I contextualize *DotL* and West criticism, defining the history of postmodern criticism on this work. While previous theorists have expounded upon the language, boundary crossing, and surrealism as they applied a postmodern reading to *DotL*, they have not addressed West’s reliance on images, models, and performance. West recognized that film had drastically changed the way in which we view the world, mainly because film presented models of behavior for mass consumption. Moreover, *DotL* exposes the disconnect between signs and meaning, in that the signifier does not always convey a stable and permanent interpretation. Additionally, through satire West warns against the proliferation of simulation and performativity. The setting and characters have no depth because depth is revealed as impossible; the signs should disclose identity or meaning, but they instead expose only emptiness when they do not actively prevent meaning from being presented.

The second section focuses on simulacrum as it is displayed in the novel. While many authors have theorized about simulacra and the postmodern use of images,<sup>1</sup> Jean Baudrillard, who presented the twin concepts of hyperreality and simulation in *Simulacra and Simulation*, first published in 1981, elucidates West’s cultural critique the best. This work addresses the idea that people can only access prepared realities due to the effects of mass media and communication. While he is addressing primarily mid-twentieth century popular culture, history, and media, the 1930s marked a period where it first became noticeable that “The real is produced from miniaturized cells, matrices, and memory banks, models of control-and it can be reproduced an indefinite number of times from these” (Baudrillard 2). These “miniaturized cells” refer just as easily to celluloid as they do to computer memory. West can be seen to anticipate Baudrillard’s views on simulation and reproduction through *DotL*.

This is followed by a section discussing performativity because the theory of simulacra, directed as it is to images, does not fully explain the phenomena in *DotL*. To do so, we must look further to the theory of performativity. Judith Butler, a feminist writer of the 1990s, presents a version of the performative in *Gender Trouble* (1990), arguing that behaviors do not refer to stable, enduring identities, but only refer back to the behavior itself, much like how Baudrillard’s images only reflect back to other images. In this manner the performative is the evolved form of simulacra, or simulacra in action; indeed, image without origin mirrors action without authenticity. The final section explains how these two elements work in collaboration to emphasize the disconnect between life and fiction. Both simulation and performativity show how meaning and

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1. For more information, see Guy Debord’s *Society of the Spectacle* (1967).

identity have become separated from image and behavior. *The Day of the Locust* exhibits both simulacra and performativity, clearly showing that West saw both meaning and identity as disconnected from the “real” and that human activity only cannibalized previous attempts at a stable identity. West’s critique of these postmodern aspects of society establish their cultural relevance prior to critical notice.

## Context and Criticism

*The Day of the Locust* primarily follows Tod Hackett as he maneuvers through Hollywood. Trained as a classical artist but employed as a set painter, Tod typifies the sell-out artist, yet something, perhaps his training, makes him curiously immune to some aspects of the falsity surrounding him in Los Angeles. The novel is essentially episodic, and Tod meets many curious, if stereotypical, characters, who are likely based on people with whom West was acquainted. They include Homer Simpson, a transplant from Iowa and bumbling “everyman,” Harry Greener, an aging vaudevillian, his daughter Faye, an aspiring starlet, and Claude Estee, a pretentious producer, among others. Each episode is based around character introductions or interactions, until the final scene, where the characters riot.

West’s novels were relatively unknown during his lifetime, although he did receive favorable reviews from a few critics and his friends, including F. Scott Fitzgerald, who wrote the review now printed on the back cover of the novel. West gained recognition as interest in Depression Era novels and the theme of the “corrupt America dream” grew. W.H. Auden wrote what was probably the most influential early criticism of *DotL* in 1950, when he coined the term “West’s Disease” to explain the psychological inertia the

characters suffer and their inability to change, until finally, the “disease reduces itself to a craving for violent, physical pain” (149-151). This term shaped the early analysis of the novel and still circulates in Westian criticism.<sup>2</sup>

In 1957, *Miss Lonelyhearts* and *The Day of the Locust* were reprinted in one volume, sparking a new interest in West’s novels. In 1967, Randall Reid advanced the argument that the novel should be read as a motion picture in *The Fiction of Nathanael West: No Redeemer, No Promised Land*.<sup>3</sup> The first wave of criticism depended on Auden’s “disease” to a greater or lesser degree, but the second revival of Westian criticism, in the 1990s, began as new theories on politics and postmodernism were advanced. The class distinctions as well as the climactic riot at the end of *DotL* lend themselves easily to political interpretations. Biographically, West’s association with the Communist Party, although he was not a member, supports the claim that he had a political agenda for the film.<sup>4</sup>

One example of a political reading is provided by Susan Edmunds in “Modern Taste and the Body Beautiful in Nathanael West’s *The Day of the Locust*” (1998). Edmunds sees revolution as possible, and claims that Faye is a serious artist who represents a

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2.. James Light first argued that dreams in *DotL* were either too trivial or too comprehensive, leading only to violence and slapstick in “Violence, Dreams and Dostoevsky: The Art of Nathanael West” (1958), only to revise his opinion in his 1960 article, “Nathanael West and the Ravaging Locust,” where he argued that fear, linked to West’s Jewish heritage and rising fascism in America drove the narrative. In 1967 George Pisk analyzed the locust metaphor suspended over the novel in his article, “The Graveyard of Dreams: A Study of Nathanael West’s Last Novel, *The Day of the Locust*,” comparing the supporting characters to locusts because of their dormant and destructive periods (65).

3. Reid’s argument that *DotL* should be read as a film is not discussed here because it differs significantly from my argument that film influenced the novel.

4. For political interpretations, see: Barnard, Rita. “‘When You Wish Upon a Star’: Fantasy, Experience, and Mass Culture in Nathanael West.” *American Literature* 66.2 June 1994: 325-351., Roberts, Mathew. “Bonfire of the Avant-Garde: Cultural Rage and Readerly Complicity in *The Day of the Locust*.” *Modern Fiction Studies*. 42.1 1996: 61-90., Hoeveler, Diane L. “This Cosmic Pawnshop We Call Life: Nathanael West, Bergson, Capitalism and Schizophrenia.” *Studies in Short Fiction*. 33 1996: 411-422., and Solomon, William. *Literature, Amusement and Technology in the Great Depression*. Cambridge; Cambridge UP, 2002.

major shift in gender and class politics, and she views Faye's body and the new aesthetic surrounding it as possibilizing cultural revolution because the body has historically been the site of class struggle and transformation. If Faye and those like her revise how the female body is viewed in film, the transformation will also occur outside of film. Faye as an aspiring actress and screenwriter, as well as a prostitute, redefines womanhood, while the Cinderella stories in Hollywood and the movies work to redefine class position. Ultimately, Edmunds admits that cultural revolution was only possible, not assured, and that history has shown that the body beautiful became the legitimate one, and that it is "effective at shoring up the class and gender hierarchies it once seemed capable of overturning" (324).

Not all interpretations are political; in the final phase of Westian criticism several authors have attempted to define the historical period of the novel through temporal and thematic location, generally arguing that *DotL* is either part of the modern or postmodern period<sup>5</sup>. For example, in *Modernism, Mass Culture, and Professionalism* (1993), Thomas Strychacz argues that *DotL* is not purely modernist but rather on the cusp between modernism and postmodernism. His chapter on *DotL*, "Making the Usual Kind of Sense," focuses on how "Homer's language reminds us more of a fragmented, multilayered modernist text" rather than realism and the "cinematic modes of narration" within the text connect it to professional modernism (Strychacz 185-6). He claims that while modernist writers appropriated ideas from mass culture, they adapted them by adding an element of inaccessibility to their novels. The indirect and jumbled discourse of the novel

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5. For a modernist reading, see: Jonathan Greenberg. For a postmodern reading, see Harper, Phillip B. *Framing the Margins*. New York; Oxford UP, 1994.

fulfills one aspect of modernist inaccessibility, as does the cinematic, episodic narration, which "reproduces rather than accommodates the narrative strategies of Hollywood film art," and this further marginalizes the text because it loses its focus among the fragments (188).

Alternately, Jonathan Veitch invokes postmodern theory when he investigates the status of reality within the work, as well as how representation is treated, in *American Superrealism* (1997). He notes that in West's fiction, "reality reveals itself to be thoroughly and inescapably coded," which takes West out of a surrealist category and places him in what Veitch names "superrealism" (22). West's fiction is overly real, meaning that it exposes underlying systems of signification and representation, and further contains a political component that surrealism lost (15). He titles his section on *DotL* "The Clichés are Having a Ball," a phrase he borrows from Umberto Eco, because all the clichés and aphorisms actually happen, making them over-real.

Overall, Westian criticism has mainly focused on apathetic rage, politics, and location within the canon. In *The Day of the Locust*, however, West employs image, simulation, and performance to critique society through satire. This critique, as well as the subject matter, indicates that postmodernism was part of the cultural landscape in 1939.

## The Search for Identity and Meaning

Simulation is immediately evident in *DotL*: the opening scene situates the novel in the imaginary setting of a soundstage so that from the very start it is not entirely clear

what is meant to be read as real or pretend. The main character, Tod Hackett, is a graduate of the Yale School of Fine Arts. Disillusioned with painting because he was turning to “illustration or mere handsomeness” in his work, Tod accepted an employment offer from National Films to become a set painter, which ironically involves even more illustration (West 61). Not in Hollywood for even three months, he sees that “An army of cavalry and foot was passing” (59). It is composed of a hodgepodge of German, English, French, and Scottish soldiers, marching off in the wrong direction. They are supposed to go to stage nine, and they pass behind “half a Mississippi steamboat” as they leave the scene (59). Tod accepts this event without question, but this is actually the first example of unreal people. They are not actually soldiers; in fact, they are not even accurate representations of soldiers. No battle had this conglomeration of nationalities and eras of uniforms. This scene serves to acclimate the reader to unreality and present the first simulacra in the novel. Tod does not wonder about them so imitation armies must not be an unsettling visual. Artificiality and simulation are thus introduced as unquestioned from the beginning of the novel.

The simulated soldiers bear no relation to previous armies except that they are based on an image of soldiers, or rather, on a false model of soldiers. Baudrillard explains that models “no longer constitute the imaginary in relation to the real” (122). He further explains that “it is the real that has become our true utopia-but a utopia that is no longer in the realm of the possible, that can only be dreamt of” (123). The real is therefore only an impossible dream, and with the real no longer accessible, nothing can guarantee the model, and the model itself is the only thing left with which we can interact. To

Baudrillard, the “real” no longer exists because the proliferation of images has destroyed it. Therefore, the soldiers are artificial, simulated, but they cannot be based on the real in order to be justified because there is no real; they can only be related to other images of soldiers. The following scene, when Tod walks home and studies the architecture of the area, serves a very similar purpose in *DotL*; houses are based on other images of buildings, not on any structural reality or unique quality.

The Hollywood houses are fanciful copies of images of the original structures. In his wanderings, Tod sees “Mexican ranch houses, Samoan huts, Mediterranean villas, Egyptian and Japanese temple, Swiss chalets, Tudor cottages,” and various combinations of these styles (61). He notices that they are made out of “plaster, lath, and paper,” but excuses these whimsical materials because “steel, stone, and brick curb a builder’s fancy,” while paper does not follow natural laws like gravity (61). If the houses were copies of actual buildings, the structural elements of steel, stone, and brick would also be replicated.

The houses stress the artificiality of all duplications. Baudrillard uses the example of the Lascaux caves, a French prehistoric site deteriorating from being unsealed, to explain: “with the pretext of saving the original, one forbade visitors to enter the Lascaux caves, but an exact replica was constructed five hundred meters from it, so everyone could see them” (9). He writes, “It is possible that the memory of the original grottoes is itself stamped in the minds of future generations, but from now on there is no longer any difference” because the copy and the original are interchangeable (9). Indeed, even the memory of the original would be a simulacrum, of a sort, because it is an artificial construct of the edifice. Instead of replacing the original, “the duplication suffices to render both artificial”

(9). The perfect copy of the caves, like the perfect copies of the homes, does not make them unique, only simulated; one cannot determine which version reveals the authentic image in popular consciousness. Both the original and the copy are untrustworthy because, by copying the original so effectively that the copy is interchangeable with the original, neither is authentic or reliable. Simulation effectively destabilizes the very idea of authenticity.

Additionally, the simulated houses characterize their owners' desires; the owners do not want a home everyone else might have, but something unique that can help them define themselves. Unfortunately these houses do not represent the owners; they are simulacra of existing homes. Tod is unable to scorn the people who built these homes, but he does pity them. While his pity indicates that Tod is a snob about art and architecture, West intends more than simple elitism. Tod thinks, "It is hard to laugh at the need for beauty and romance, no matter how tasteless, even horrible, the results of that are" (61). He recognizes that these people lack something, supposedly "beauty and romance," in their lives, and hope that a fanciful home will fill the hole. West implies that the owners are hoping that the beauty and romance of the house will transfer to them.

The houses represent the quest for identity because of West's suggestion that characters hope the houses' character and distinctiveness will transfer to them. Instead, they show the limits of reality because the houses could not structurally be made of authentic materials and defy gravity the way that they do while at the same time signify a real quality. "To simulate is to feign to have what one doesn't have," and all of the homes feign an identity based on images of other homes (Baudrillard 3). There are two problems

inherent in this belief: first, houses cannot represent someone's personality, and second, they are even less likely to represent a personality when they are based in deception. They are the remnants of the dream that the castle's inhabitants are really princesses, but this does not work; the inhabitants of a simulated castle are not princesses.

Homer's house functions in a similar manner, but as he was not the designer, it is an even emptier experience. His entire house is filled with replicas, from the "wall fixtures in the shape of galleons" to the "colored etching of a snowbound Connecticut farmhouse" (81). On top of this, the bedrooms are copies of one another, "exactly alike in every detail" (81). Homer did not make much of an effort in finding the house; "he took it because he was tired and the agent was a bully" (80). Clearly the house is meant to represent something; it is too detailed not to have a meaning. However, the styles are mixed, with one room "Mexican" and the others "New England," so that the meaning it should represent is both unclear and unsustainable.

With the buildings, the purpose and the result do not match; they should trigger a response but instead they erase all meaning. They are not so much homes as they are settings; "No environment is left neutral; environment is always converted into atmosphere, carefully dressed with props" so that the characters can take cues from the setting (Veitch 116). The "New England" designation in Homer's bedroom should tell him how to act or feel there, but the cues are too oversignified. The houses have no character underneath the façade and are empty of meaning (Long 115). According to Baudrillard, "information is directly destructive of meaning and signification" (79). Therefore, the excess of clues in Homer's house only serves to abolish what meaning there

might have been. If a house cannot present a unified set of symbols, Homer cannot react to them as clues and base his actions, or the presentation of his identity, upon them.

The homes are only one example of spectacles where the characters search for meaning. They also place strange objects in their swimming pools, as Claude Estee does while decorating for his soiree. This conversation piece “was a dead horse, or rather, a life-size, realistic reproduction of one. Its legs stuck up stiff and straight and it had an enormous, distended belly” (West 70). Is the horse meant to be believable as a formerly living, breathing horse, or is it just an objet d’art? The “dead horse” is taken very seriously by certain guests, an illusion that should be cherished. One guest, Mrs. Schwartzen, explains that it is meant “to amuse,” and tells Tod to “Think about how happy the Estees must feel, showing it to people and listening to their merriment and...unconfined delight” (71). She becomes very unhappy when another guest declares that it is not real, whining that “You just won’t let me cherish my illusions” (71). The horse is a “gigantic simulacrum-not unreal, but...never exchanged for the real, but exchanged for itself” (Baudrillard 6). The rubber horse only represents a rubber horse; it is not believable as a real horse. Mrs. Schwartzen wants to believe it is real, to believe that this absurd creation will create merriment, and tries to invest meaning into the object, but she cannot escape the fact that the horse is a simulacrum, made of rubber. Additionally, she does not seem to grasp that a real dead horse in the swimming pool would not be amusing; only the fake one carries some humor. The horse, like the fanciful houses, represents the desire to live in a more exciting, imaginary world and the belief that surrounding oneself with individuality will cause that trait to transfer to him; however, the imaginary is no more

accessible than the real, nor can an object make a person more unique and interesting.

The dead horse, like the other simulations in the novel, is not merely a representation of horse. Baudrillard differentiates between the two, explaining that “Representation stems from the principle of the equivalence of the sign and of the real,” which means that the representation is the exact correspondent to the actual thing (6). Simulation, however, is the opposite, and stems from the “*radical negation of the sign as value*” (6). Through representation, “tree” is the actual trunk and leaves, while through simulation, “tree” merely indicates the word. He further describes, “representation attempts to absorb simulation by interpreting it as false representation, simulation envelops the whole edifice of representation itself as a simulacrum” (6). Representation thus reflects or masks reality, while simulation has no relation to reality. In *DotL*, simulation and not representation occurs because the real and the image cannot be defined individually or separately. They are equivalent and, as such, impossible to distinguish between.

West’s language, along with his subject matter, further demonstrates his use of simulacra. In the scene where Tod watches the filming of Waterloo, West wrote as though the historical and recreated battles were one and the same. Some lines are confusing, such as, “The battle was going ahead briskly. Things looked tough for the British and their allies” (West 133). West does not indicate whether this is the historical army or the actors’ army. Additionally, there are disjointed moments when anachronism creeps in, such as when “The French killed General Picton with a ball through the head and he returned to his dressing room” (133). The first phrase could refer to the record of the battle, while the second phrase can only refer to the actor. Other lines further distort the difference

between the past and the present: “Neither Napoleon or Wellington was to be seen. In Wellington’s absence, one of the assistant directors, a Mr. Crane, was in command of the allies,” (West 134). West could be saying that the historical figure Napoleon was absent, or that the actor playing Napoleon was absent. The text does not provide enough clues; it collapses the difference between the two men.

This scene, with the conflation of the past and present into a single instance, displays another example of simulacra. Baudrillard wrote, “History is our lost referential, that is to say our myth,” which is resurrected by its transformation into simulation (43). The film version, or rather the simulacrum of the event, tries to recreate the past, but cannot represent it perfectly because, among other reasons, the re-creation takes place on a controlled sound stage and not a battlefield. Film as a whole, not just in *DotL*, transforms history into simulacra; through film:

all previous history is resurrected in bulk—a controlling idea no longer selects, only nostalgia endlessly accumulates: war, fascism, the pageantry of the belle époque, or the revolutionary struggles, everything is equivalent and is mixed indiscriminately in the same morose and funereal exaltation, in the same retro fashion. (44)

Baudrillard sees the problem here as being the lack of differentiation. Historical events, no matter the import of the battle or rightness of the participants, become equally important if they can sell tickets. By making events equal, or by investing events with nostalgia, the value, be it educational, moral, or otherwise, of the event is lost.

The Waterloo scene dramatizes the shift from history to simulation; it is a practical

example of the process. Additionally, the ambiguous language shows the instability between past and present events. West ascribes doubt to Tod, who cannot articulate who is who or when is now. The actors do not retain their own names even though the assistant director does. Tod confuses the simulation with the “real” thing, and West relies on language, on tense and pronoun use, to provide this example of simulacra.

The actors display signs of simulation through their behavior; they do not always passively wait for glamour to attach itself to them, to rub off on them because they have fancy houses or interesting pool art. Instead, they try to create it by pretending to be glamorous or exciting. Harry Greener, former vaudeville artist, is one such pretender. He had achieved a certain level of success previously, when he is mentioned in a newspaper review of a circus troupe, the ‘Flying Lings,’ but the review is not flattering. Harry is a “bedraggled harlequin,” and the “audience failed to laugh at his joke” (West 77-8). Now, after forty years of performing, “he clowned constantly. It was his sole method of defense. Most people, he had found, won’t go out of their way to punish a clown” (77). Veitch describes Harry as a stock character, and explains that this role does “offer a kind of protection, but they do so at the cost of derealizing relationships to the world” (117). The simulacrum can be hurt, but the “real” Harry may not get hurt as a clown. His simulacrum may protect him from real emotions and real experiences, but it prevents him from relationships with others. Harry also knows that “on the stage he was a complete failure,” but this does not stop his act (West 77). Veitch further compares him to Homer’s house: “the furniture of Harry’s mind is utterly lacking in its own integrity;” it has no basis on a “real” example, only on previous images (118). There is no personality

behind this façade, and there is no reason for a constant performance, but Harry does not know how to stop even at this point. West shows that Harry has created the image, the simulacrum, of a clown, based not on his own identity or personality, but on what he pictures a clown to be.

Harry has performed this clown role so long now that he cannot stop for any reason; this simulation is the only way he can interact with others. At Homer's house, where he has gone in hopes of selling Miracle Solvent, he put on an act, and "began doing Harry Greener, poor Harry, honest Harry, well-meaning, humble, deserving, a good husband" (West 91). There is no base Harry, only the performance, as West points out with this line. Harry then pretended to be sick in order to garner sympathy and sell his product, but actually "reeled to the couch and collapsed" (92). He is sick this time, and he is confused because he knows he was only acting sick. His lifestyle has confused him to the point that he cannot decide if he is actually sick or if he is giving an amazing performance. Jonathan Greenberg uses Harry as an example of the fictionality of pain in the novel, which "transforms the audience's potential pity and horror into laughter" because fictional, simulated pain is only a joke (604). Harry's pain is dismissed by the newspaper reviewer first: his suffering would be "unbearable if it were not obviously make-believe" (West 78) and later by Tod, who initially wonders if actors suffer less than others but finally decides that Harry is in true pain "despite the theatricality of his groans and grimaces" (119). Even the other characters doubt Harry's pain, and West ascribes this disbelief and doubt to them to confirm that readers should also question Harry's illness.

The possibility that Harry is now truly living his performance blurs the line between the two as well as indicating that a performance taken too far becomes real. His various roles do not give him satisfaction; they only give him an example of how to act and what to feel, not something to actually feel. It is not, however, a performance but a simulation, and Baudrillard writes, "whoever simulates an illness produces in himself some of the symptoms" (3). He further explains, "Since the simulator produces 'true' symptoms, is he or she ill or not? The simulator cannot be treated objectively either as ill, or as not ill" (3). Simulated illness obscures the line between fiction and reality because doctors cannot treat it; they cannot determine if the symptom, or sign, indicates the illness, or signified. The sign and signified are, in this example, no longer connected. Harry goes beyond performance into an interrogation of the difference between true and false illness because, while it is patently simulated, the symptoms do occur.

Harry's impending death is no less a source for entertainment. Tod visits him on his deathbed, but notices "how skillfully [Harry] got the maximum effect out of his agonized profile by using the pillow to set it off" (119). He also notices that Harry's face only allows the furthest degree of expression after so long a use as a prop, but ultimately decides that Harry does suffer, "despite the theatricality of his groans and grimaces" (119). West implies that Harry has seen deathbed scenes in the movies, and that this is what they look like; Harry cannot stop because after forty years there is nothing under the drama. Simulation, his method for achieving his identity as a clown, has replaced real emotion although he still feels pain. He can no more avoid overacting his death than he could avoid simulating his life.

## Evolving From Simulacra to Performative

The houses, horse, and death scene are the physical manifestation of the characters' reliance on image. They have created fake places and objects that they hope will remove them from an otherwise dull existence, but their actions within the novel show their desire for glamour even more forcefully; their actions move the characters from unadorned simulation to performativity. The shoppers are one example of performativity; they wear clothes that do not match their lifestyles. Tod sees people in yachting clothes, a mountain climbing jacket, and one girl in "slacks and sneakers with a bandana around her head [who] had just left a switchboard, not a tennis court" (60). Tod knows that they do not take part in the activities their clothing seems to signify. To paraphrase Butler, identity is not a fact, the various acts of identity create the idea of identity, and without those acts, there would be no identity at all (2500). West indicates that the characters believe that the clothes make the man, and in a way this is true, but more explicitly, wearing clothes that presuppose an identity provides that identity. The shoppers are performing, not displaying, an identity with their clothing choices.

Faye Greener, Harry's daughter, is a simulacrum for many of the same reasons her father is, but she also epitomizes the performative. Although she has had only minor parts, she acts as though the camera is constantly on her. At Homer's house, she "smiled intimately and tossed her pale, glittering hair" only when he is looking and makes elaborate gestures that show her small waist and ribs to their best advantage (West 94-5). These gestures are unconscious; "she is not posing for anyone in particular; her provocative movement is automatic" (Long 122). On top of that, she does not even find Homer a

suitable love-interest; like Tod, he has "neither money nor looks, and she could only love a handsome man and would only let a wealthy man love her" (67). None of her motions have any meaning because they are merely an expression of what Faye does; she does not want sex with Homer but her behavior has become habit. Likewise, she gains no satisfaction from her flirtations because they are meaningless to her as well; the sign does not indicate the intention to act on the sign.

Faye's actions do not substitute for her identity; they are the only identity she can access. According to Butler, "such acts, gestures and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body" (2497). Butler further explains that these acts and gestures "are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means" (2497). The idea of an internal core is imaginary, and this figment can only be sustained through a discourse of bodily signs, which implies that both a performer and an audience must exist.

Faye's performance provides clues to an identity based on what can be witnessed when observing her, not one based on a sustained interior essence. According to Butler, no such essence exists. The effect of her performance "must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding...self" (2501). Not only is her identity based on appearance, it is illusion. Moreover, this constructed identity is a performance "which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief" (2501). The model of behavior is more believed and believable

than any underlying identity, and therefore the model, and not the real, prevails. In this manner, the performative is the active version of simulacra; it represents that way in which an image-based identity translates into a full character, while remaining devoid of signification.

West further emphasizes Faye's empty personality when he has her describe screenplay ideas to Tod. Faye's stories are simulacra; they are all copies of existing stories but she does not even recognize them as based on a model. She laughs while she tells him that "she often spent the whole day making up stories," and her laugh indicates that she does not even believe that they are worthwhile (West 104). Tod eventually realizes that her dream of writing screenplays is itself a story, that she was "manufacturing another dream to add to her already very thick pad" (105). All of her animation is due to the collection of stories in her head, but her possible plotlines show definitively that her only ability is to plug different people into existing situations, not create any new story. She can only copy, simulate, a new plotline. West uses this example to show that she is just as simulated as any of her stories; she is trying to fit herself into one of her stories as a copy of Cinderella. She can only see herself in existing stories where she has a model, not in real life or real situations.

Faye's Cinderella stories work on several other layers as well. According to Edmunds, lifted to mass appeal, the Cinderellas are changing society because they possibilize class mobility but also because they are changing the definition of appropriate behavior (311). The simulations of stories make the simulation of life more accessible. For example, if Cinderella can become a princess, a non-fictional woman can enter the middle or upper

class. Strychacz also discusses Faye's film ideas; they are necessarily incomplete because, in a sense, they are already complete; everyone knows how a Cinderella story ends (189). Her storytelling skills reveal the "interchangeability of the elements," which also refers to simulation (189). The stories are only based on other stories, ones where the endings are known, so it is unnecessary to complete them. The imaginative basis of these stories alone classifies them as simulacra.

Faye also prompts those around her to be performative, exemplified in her relationship with Homer Simpson. Their "business arrangement" involves Faye living with him; "Homer had agreed to board and dress her until she became a star" (West 135). She takes advantage of him shamelessly; he brings her magazines, cooks for her, and cleans, along with buying her anything she desires (136). He is performing the role of the doting suitor, hoping that his performance will be effective enough that Faye will begin a role as his girlfriend. He had believed that servility and kindness might make her view him as a love-interest. Butler provides an explanation; ritual social dramas, such as the relationship between Faye and Homer, rely on repetition, which is "at once a reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established" (2500). The repetition of a performance strengthens and validates it by making it seem natural instead of an isolated incident. Unfortunately, his act does not convince her because Homer cannot pretend to be what she wants because he lacks money and looks, things that cannot be performed. He began this arrangement hoping to win her love by performing the correct role, but she scorns him, and Homer is left watching as she leaves.

Lesser characters in the novel also reveal their performativity. At the "Cinderella

Bar” Tod, Homer, and Faye witness a female impersonator, a young man performing a song and dance routine as a woman. As this young man sang, it “was in no sense a parody; it was too simple and too restrained” (146). His performance is so effective that he “was really a woman” (146). All too soon the song ends and he “became an actor again. He tripped on his train...His imitation of a man was awkward and obscene” (146). The man is comfortable and graceful while performing, but he cannot perform the role of a man offstage. His performance is more comfortable and accessible than his clumsy reality, and it is questionable which is more real to him.

This scene in the novel reveals definitively that the female impersonator performs constantly, no matter what situation he is in. Butler questions, “Is drag the imitation of gender, or does it dramatize the signifying gestures through which gender itself is established?” (2489). It is not an imitation of a gender except that both genders are shown as performative because West labels his role as a man “awkward.” Furthermore, “gender parody reveals that the original identity after which gender fashions itself is an imitation without an origin” (2498). Therefore, instead of natural and abiding elements, “we see sex and gender denaturalized by means of a performance which avows their distinctiveness and dramatizes the cultural mechanism of their fabricated unity” (2498). Since either sex can be performed or parodied, they are no longer definite, and the creation of sexual identities is exposed as false. There is no abiding self, or origin, that the female impersonator reveals, whether as a man or a woman, and taken as a microcosm for the novel, this indicates that there is no abiding self for any of the characters to disclose through any of their performances.

## The Collaboration of Simulation and Performance

West’s Indian further develops this idea, and shows the uncertain nature of identity more clearly. The Indian is an employee at Tuttle’s Trading Post, run by a man named Calvin. He is described as “a wrinkled Indian who had long hair held by a bead strap around his forehead,” and he wore a sandwich board advertising the store and “genuine relics of the old West” (West 172). Calvin names the Indian Chief Kiss-My-Towkus, but the Indian only laughs and says, “You gotta live” (172). West presents the Indian as authentic, but it unclear why the Indian is authentic. Is it due to his heritage or his appearance? The Indian is not offended when Calvin calls him a degrading name or by his role as a walking advertisement. The Indian is not offended because he is a simulacrum of himself in this role; it has nothing to do with his own opinion of his identity. In this scene, his identity is superficially based on his bloodline but is more directly linked to his appearance. For Calvin’s purposes, this man is sufficient as an image of an Indian. This follows Baudrillard’s belief that the simulacrum is “no longer anything but operational” (2). Towkus functions as an Indian, therefore he is one, and this coincides with Butler’s definition of the performative; he acts like an Indian, so while he may or may not be one, this is the only accessible definition of him.

In a way, Towkus is the exception that proves the rule. He is revealed to be a functional and performative simulacrum, yet he does not suffer from this designation in the same manner that the other characters do. Unlike Faye, Harry, or other characters, Towkus does not yearn for a more substantial existence; he does not search for fame or fortune, nor is he like Homer, with his inability to define himself written on his body.

West presents Towkus as a counter-example, as one who realizes that his appearance and his reality do not match, but who does not care about this incongruity.

Another example of dual simulacrum and performativity is Adore, the child actor conscientiously modeled on and compared to Shirley Temple. This comparison shows that West intended Adore to be seen as a fake, a simulacrum, because Adore's life and career are modeled on Shirley Temple's rather than on his own, unique personality or style. This likeness would have been immediately understood by West's contemporary audience. Additionally, Adore followed another model for behavior in that he was "dressed like a man, in long trousers, vest, and jacket," displaying a maturity that he does not actually possess (West 139). West does not limit this description to simulation; Adore also sings for Tod and Homer, displaying his performative nature. Adore's song is sexually explicit although he is eight years old, and "he seemed to know what the words meant, or at least his body and voice seemed to know. When he came to the final chorus, his buttocks writhed and his voice carried a top-heavy load of sexual pain" (141). He is entirely too young to understand the innuendo in his performance, much less for this performance to reflect an abiding self. Instead, as West acknowledges through the questionable nature of Adore's understanding, the performance is disconnected from his identity.

At the end of the novel, Tod's painting and his justification of it are pure simulation. First, his motivation is suspect; he is not driven by his own ideas drawn from the imaginary, he is driven to copy. He admits that he will imitate others, and "he turned to Goya and Daumier" for his masters (West 60). Second, Tod cannot actually paint the picture; West describes it as "'The Burning of Los Angeles,' a picture he was soon to paint" (60). The

painting is described in the conditional tense until the final scene, where it is unclear if Tod's painting is capturing the riot or if the riot is following the dictates of the painting.

The riot enacts the breakdown between the real and the imaginary. Baudrillard described this as, "It is no longer possible to fabricate the unreal from the real, the imaginary from the givens of the real. The process will, rather, be the opposite: it will be to put decentered situations, models of simulation in place and to contrive to give them the feeling of the real" (124). The painting and the riot are codependent; West wrote ambiguity into the scene to show that neither is the first cause. Tod cannot discern which is causing the other; while observing the riot he "could see all the rough charcoal strokes with which he had blocked it out on the big canvas" (West 184). West writes this scene as if Tod is painting the riot; Tod "had finished one flame and was starting on another" when the policeman approaches him (185). Which one is occurring—the riot or the painting? West does not provide an answer; he has instead collapsed the difference between the two. The painting is a model that "feels" real yet is not. The simulation is a success; the factual riot cannot be separated from the model.

\* \* \*

"Disneyland is presented as an imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, whereas all of Los Angeles and the America that surrounds it are no longer real, but belong to the hyperreal order and to the order of simulation."

(Baudrillard 12)

*The Day of the Locust* is not Disneyland, but it could easily substitute for Disneyland in the above quote. In *DotL*, art no longer imitates life, but neither is it true that life imitates art. Rather, art imitates art in that both are based on a fiction rather than on any original meaning. West's characters are simulated and performative, showing how fake the rest of the world is. Beginning with his teen years, West displayed a propensity for signs that were meant to indicate one thing but were instead either oversignified or devoid of meaning. These signs are difficult to interpret because they point to many meanings or point only to other signs. His transcripts presented the image of his graduation from a certain school, but did not refer to any real event. His name change was an attempt to resignify himself as part of the majority: as a WASP, but again this does not connect with his personal history and genealogy. His characters too display signs that do not connect to the real, in the sense that they do not refer to any meaning deeper than what is to be seen or refer to anything besides than other signs.

Baudrillard and Butler had not codified their theories when West was writing; however, West accurately foresaw the effect Hollywood would have on America. Simulation and performativity together describe the separation between sign and meaning evident in *DotL*, yet West critiques a growing rather than pervasive trend. The houses are not representative, the Hollywood workers do not play tennis, and the horse is recognized as rubber. Harry dies as a result of an imitation illness, Adore does not act his age, and so forth until it is unclear if the image of the riot or the riot itself actually occurred. Tod, however, is immune and can recognize, at times, the different treatment of image and performance. This is nothing more than an interesting thematic concept except that

“Disneyland” reminds us that our world is no more based on the real than it is. West created a novel that captures the problematic nature of meaning and identity and how it was evolving in society. *DotL* is an example and a warning; simulation and performativity, even in a character meant to be an observer like Tod, are possible and likely.

If the observer is indicted, so too is the audience. Just as we should not take Faye, Harry, Homer, or Tod as real, so too must we doubt the connection between signs and identity among our friends. West is not claiming that everything is fully “unreal,” but *DotL* clearly implies that this is a possibility. The novel warns of a future in which this form of Hollywood culture becomes prevalent in all walks of life. It is only because simulation and performativity are still evolving that West could write *DotL* as a satire, wherein the folly of both behaviors are ridiculed. The characters, their belongings, and their reactions to events appear bizarre and absurd; no one could mistake a rubber horse for a real one. As in many other instances, the reaction to the horse is the most important aspect of its inclusion in the novel: basing reactions on an image or a performance is both unlikely and impractical. West, however, saw the trend leading to such interpretations, and *The Day of the Locust* details the consequences of allowing simulacra and performativity to affect our lives.

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## Evoking Heaven by Looking at Earth: Rudyard Kipling's Metaphysical Materialism

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On November 28, 1902, Rudyard Kipling wrote to G.K. Chesterton's publisher thanking him for a copy of that young author's book of poems, *The Wild Knight*, before observing that "we all begin with arranging and elaborating all the Heavens and Hells and stars and tragedies we can lay our poetic hands on--later we see folk--just common people under the heavens" (*The Letters* 263). Though this observation may not describe the arc of Chesterton's work, it is generally true of Kipling's, much of which is situated between heaven and hell and squarely on humankind, its trades, and the tackle of those trades. Chesterton himself would write later in his life that Kipling "pierced through to the romantic, imaginative matter of . . . things themselves" (42-43). John Buchan, reflecting on conversations with Kipling at London dinner parties, recalls how he "had interest in every detail of the human comedy," and would "raven the heart out of a subject" (V). Both Kipling's contemporaries and, more recently, scholars have drawn at-

tention to his materialistic writing—his focus on the quotidian. For example, Stephen Gwynn points out “his passionate desire for concrete information” (213), and John Lee believes “Kipling made the common man at his common occupation, and sometimes the occupation itself, the subject of a large amount of his prose and verse” (265). E.M. Forster claims Kipling “pushes [the inner life] into the background and brings material strength and material organization to the front” (24). As Forster hints, this focus on the material seems to necessitate a suppression of the spiritual in Kipling’s work. Kipling himself claims that he willfully avoids writing about supernatural mysteries, stating “I have seen too much evil and sorrow and wreck of good minds on the road to Endor to take one step along that perilous track” (*Something* 215), and hints that another motive for not using his own experiences of the noumenal realm is his concern for “the ‘weaker brethren’—and sisters” (*Something* 217). Kipling’s wariness of spirituality is possibly heightened by his belief that his sister’s mental illness was due to her “meddling with the occult” as Andrew Lycett says (117), but, whatever his motives, Kipling admits to conscientiously avoiding the direct handling of the spiritual in his own writing,<sup>1</sup> and his critics, from his own time to this, have recognized the general success of his resolution.

Still, there is another almost contradictory phenomenon less recognized in Kipling scholarship. Both Kipling’s contemporaries, such as Chesterton and Forster, and later writers such as Gwynn and Lee, who trumpet Kipling’s clear focus on the material world, also balk at the idea that Kipling is a merely materialist writer. They seem to believe that, though Kipling’s writing appears earth-bound, its effects on the reader

1. With certain exceptions that will be noted below.

reach beyond the temporal realm. Chesterton writes that Kipling “has not been frightened by that brutal materialistic air which clings only to words,” but rather “perceive[s] the philosophy of steam and of slang” (38). Chesterton does not expand on what he means by “philosophy,” but seems to believe it allows Kipling to see beyond the material aspects of his subjects. Vernon Lee, in a study of Kipling’s prose, argues that his techniques—specifically the one in which he moves quickly from the abstract to the concrete—“may, no doubt, degenerate into a trick,” indicating her belief that Kipling’s style has a certain sham significance (204). On the other hand, Forster, though admitting that Kipling is full of “putty, brass, and paint,” does not see this as the whole picture: “Words that can move the reader so deeply, that have an almost physical effect upon him, cannot be words of a charlatan” (13). For Forster, then, Kipling is not a trickster or a “charlatan,” and must be a genuine practitioner of some art—an art which Forster clarifies a few sentences later by calling it a “magic.” Magic and staunch materialism are usually treated in separate spheres of thought, yet Forster juxtaposes the two as if they belong together.

Forster is not alone in describing Kipling’s use of language that resonates beyond materialism. J.M. Barrie chooses the word “magic” to describe Kipling’s style (*Critical Heritage* 79); R.G. Collingwood, James Morris, Yin Liu, Jacqueline Bratton all describe Kipling’s work as magical or mystical in some way.<sup>2</sup> Most telling is T.S. Eliot’s answer to those who would call Kipling’s focus on the material “shallow.” Using the metaphor of depth, in a characteristic sweeping generality Eliot says, “Kipling is not merely pos-

2. Collingwood claims Kipling is a prime example of a writer using “art as magic” (70); Morris calls him “a great and often mystifying artist” (256); Liu writes, “Kipling himself exercised an ingenious and powerful magic” (9). Bratton, unique among Kipling critics, focuses almost solely on what she calls “Kipling’s Magic Art” and argues, “The effect of words lay for him in their irrational potency” (48).

sessed of penetration, but almost ‘possessed’ of a kind of second sight . . . There are deeper and darker caverns which he penetrated . . . Kipling knew something of the things that are underneath, and of the things which are beyond the frontier” (20). To say an author like Kipling—who explicitly states that he chooses to avoid the supernatural realm and who is known for his fierce materialism—is “possessed of a kind of second sight” and privy to “the things which are beyond the frontier” might seem contradictory if not for the overwhelming agreement among Kipling scholars on the same two contrary claims: Kipling is staunchly material, and Kipling is mysteriously metaphysical.

There is, it is argued, an explanation for Eliot’s and others’ claims that Kipling has a metaphysical effect while championing the material. That explanation lies in what might be termed Kipling’s *metaphysical materialism*. This essay argues that what Eliot and Kipling’s other critics claim about his material and metaphysical writing is the result of a form of platonic idealism in which the physical realm is seen as a dim reflection of the spiritual realm. Because Kipling describes humans and material objects so concretely and with so much veneration, his writing tends to create *in the reader* a sense of defamiliarized mystery and extra-material inflection. Paradoxically, then, Kipling’s prose is so material-focused, it is often perceived as metaphysical by his critics and many readers. Therefore, when Barrie, Lee, Chesterton, Forster, Eliot, Collingwood, and others call their experience of reading Kipling “magical” or “mystical” they are recording a what Plato calls a response to “true beauty” (*Phaedrus* 34). It is beyond the purview of this paper to offer judgments upon the substance (psychological, spiritual, or otherwise) of that sensation. Rather it examines two of Kipling’s common prose

techniques that work to evoke a certain noumenal *response* in his readers, namely, writing of material things spiritually and the use of a prose style that suggest the primal and the a-temporal. While this effect cuts across all of Kipling’s oeuvre, it is tracked here in two texts from two different prose genres: *Stalky & Co.*, fiction, *Something of Myself*, non-fiction.

### **Treating the Material Spiritually**

At times Kipling adopts what might be called a metaphysical language when describing or explaining physical realities, which, in turn, gives those physical objects the illusion of spiritual significance to the reader. Some might call this inclination in Kipling pagan—like a pantheist worshipping a mountain—or superstitious—like a sailor taking a caul to sea. Indeed, A.L.F. Rivet points out Kipling’s sympathy for pagan philosophy over Christianity in *Puck of Pook’s Hill*. However, neither “pagan” nor “superstitious” catches the right meaning of Kipling’s practice of treating the physical spiritually. He is driven neither by religious inclination like a pagan nor by misguided belief in false correlations as is a superstitious individual. His treatment is, rather, a reverence for some object that, while it is expressed in spiritual language, only serves to uphold the materiality of that object. He reveres certain objects precisely because they *are* objects and serve some practical, earthly function, not because they point to heaven or prove some mystical link.

One such passage is found in *Stalky & Co.*. In the chapter, “Flag of Our Country” a conservative MP gives a speech to the schoolboys at the College (the Coll. as it is referred to in the book) in an attempt to boost the students’ patriotism and imperial

fervor “because the boys of to-day made the men of to-morrow, and upon the men of tomorrow the fair fame of their glorious native land depended” (*Stalky* 217). In the course of his speech, to add effect to his words, the MP unfurls “a large calico Union Jack” and calls it the “concrete symbol of their land—worthy of all honour and reverence!” (219). The boys’ response, however, reveals a side of Kipling that may be unexpected, for it comes into conflict with the imperialism of the MP:

[The boys] looked in silence. They had certainly seen the thing before—down at the coastguard station, or through a telescope, half-mast high when a brig went ashore on Braunton sands; above the roof of the Golf Club, and in Keyte’s window, where a certain kind of striped sweetmeat bore it in paper on each box. But the College never displayed it; it was no part of the scheme of their lives; the Head had never alluded to it; their fathers had not declared it unto them. It was a matter shut up, sacred and apart. What, in the name of everything caddish, was he driving at, who waved that horror before their eyes? (219)

Readers of *Stalky* know that silence is a rare attitude for these particular boys, and immediately this unfamiliar sudden shift casts a pall over the scene. This unfamiliarity may also be exacerbated by expectations that Kipling, a conservative himself, is in sympathy with the MP—that Kipling is, as George Orwell says, “a jingo imperialist . . . morally insensitive and aesthetically disgusting” and will make his sympathetic characters act accordingly (1). The surprise of the passage is that they do not act accordingly. Rather, they look on in “silence,” which seems to indicate either embarrassment

or shame at something sacred being desecrated. Kipling’s choice of the word “thing” to describe the Union Flag in the sentence following contributes to this unfamiliar, even embarrassed atmosphere, for it seems so uncharacteristic of Kipling’s usual attention to *le mot juste*. As Gwynn points out, Kipling ordinarily has “a desire to call everything by its right name” (214), but in this moment of the boys’ silence he calls the Union Flag “the thing,” like someone describing a distasteful work of art they refuse to dignify by naming. This attitude is solidified in the last line when the flag is called “that horror.” But in what sense is the flag a nameless “thing” or “horror”? The emotions of horror and distaste can come from very different sources. The horror of the child dreaming of a monster is far different than the “divine horror” Edmund Burke speaks of in his treatise *On the Sublime and Beautiful*—one, he claims, that is expressed by King David and Horace during their encounters with “a force which nothing can withstand” (1064). One type of horror comes from the vileness of the observed object and the other from the glory of it. Kipling’s characters seem to demonstrate the latter. The Union Flag is a “thing” and a “horror” not because it is vile but because it is, as Kipling says, “sacred and apart,” something not to be treated casually or waved by just anyone. This is veneration of spiritual proportions—the kind of sentiment expressed by those who encounter divine beings and react in horror, as pointed out by Burke. Still, the object of this veneration is not divine, but a material, “calico” flag.

The remainder of the passage, which would logically establish the reason for the boys’ hushed veneration, tells of the flag in material places: “at the coastguard station,” on British ships, at a leisure club, in a store window, and even on the wrapper of a “certain kind of striped sweetmeat” (219). Again, readers are left wondering what differs

between the MP's display of the flag and these varied displays—what makes one proper and the other “a horror.” Sweetmeat wrappers and golf club flagpoles do not seem, at first, to be any more appropriate than a dramatic unfurling with grand words. However, each proper place Kipling lists for displaying the flag, unlike the brash patriotic fervour of the MP, is connected with some material or vocational aspect of the imperial experience: war, trade, shipping, leisure, native food, and class. These are the activities and products worthy of such a symbol to Kipling. Andrew Rutherford and other critics have also noticed this impulse in Kipling to extol “the qualities men show in their work, and their achievements that result from it (bridges built, ships salvaged, pictures painted, famines relieved)” (xi). In this passage and elsewhere, Kipling tells his readers what he believes should be lauded—the true ‘spiritual’ spaces where the flag should be hoisted and printed.

Kipling follows this demonstration of the proper displays for the Union Flag with a near antithesis of ideas. The images go from the open air (golf courses, harbors, and shop fronts) to the hidden and the closed off: “[the Union Flag] was a matter shut up, sacred and apart.” This sudden shift is jarring. Kipling moves precipitously from open, salty, sweet, airy, material images to the mysterious if not spiritual concepts of hiding, sacredness, and holiness or being set apart. Here, in the same paragraph are two impulses—to glory in the trades and tackle the Union Flag represents and to keep that flag hidden and set apart from those who do not yet understand its full symbolism. Kipling is holding up a material object as something to be gloried in and, at the same time, is unwilling to profane it by waving it before an assembly of schoolboys. He does not deny that the flag is a symbol or even that it is “sacred and apart.” Rather, he

alters the reason for venerating it. The conservative MP claims in his speech that the flag stands for “the fair fame of their glorious native land” (217). Kipling sees it as connected to the materials and activities that have shaped that land and its empire: fighting, shipping, and trade. The “sin” of the MP is not that he calls the flag a “concrete symbol,” but rather that he divorces that symbol from the material objects it represents. What is concrete to Kipling is not the flag but its imperial settings. He does not deny the importance of the flag or that the country behind the flag could be great, but he insists on treating the symbol with *more* veneration because it represents the activities and materials—good, bad, pleasurable, painful, indifferent—of “men in a world of men” (*A Choice* 98). He calls his readers, perhaps unintentionally, to revere the Union Flag, not because it is a symbol of greatness, glory, or some other non-concrete concept, but for its material symbolism. His tone has spiritual elements, but his object is material.

The effect of the event does not end in the assembly, and the boys' reaction following it shows not only the inappropriate treatment of the flag, but also the unworthiness of the man holding it before them. Throughout the rest of the story, the boys show an undefined embarrassment, sullenness, even anger that spills over in vituperative lists of insults about the MP—a “Flopshus Cad, an Outrageous Stinker, a Jelly-bellied Flag-flapper” (220). They seem to dislike the kind of immaterial, politicised patriotism they have just seen displayed, and the insult the boys settle upon and use again in the chapter is “flag-flapper,” for that is the offense which has brought on all the other insults. They do not object to the flag but rather to the one who has waved it. Again, this anger, like the horror at the sight of the Union Flag, has at least two possible sources: a distaste for the MP's form of patriotism or a species of patriotism far deeper and more

mystical than that of the MP.

Readers are given an indication of which when Stalky, later in the day, after sulking and breaking up the volunteer cadet corps, puts his head on a desk and begins “to blub like anything” (221). The text does not explain the reason for Stalky’s emotional reaction, but from the context of the passage it seems likely that he is reacting like a witness to a violent tragedy. He has seen something holy and sacred desecrated by a person unfit (in Kipling’s eyes) to handle and display it—lost his innocence, in a sense. He has seen not only a flag divorced from its proper material setting, but also by a person who does not understand the work involved in making that flag great. As the narrator of the story writes, the MP “profaned the most secret places of [the boys’] souls with outcries and gesticulations” (218). The word ‘profane’ is telling, for it indicates that the boys’ patriotism is sacred and that the MP is unworthy to speak of it. Kipling’s imagery is that of the MP tearing down veils like some parliamentary Antiochus Epiphanes and smudging “shining goals” of “Glory” and “Honour” with dirty hands (218). Kipling further emphasizes the man’s unworthiness when he writes that even the boys’ “fathers had not declared [the flag’s glory] unto them,” and the MP is a person of far less authority to the boys (219). Kipling, then, by declaring the MP to be unworthy to wave the flag or speak to the boys of honor, glory, and empire, demonstrates a patriotism and love of country far more mystical than that of the tub-thumping MP but still firmly rooted in material considerations. This feint of spirituality, it is argued, contributes to the illusory effect upon Kipling’s readers—that hint of ‘something more’ in his words than a mere discussion of the material.

Another chapter of *Stalky & Co* demonstrates Kipling’s tendency to treat physi-

cal realities spiritually, but rather than an object, he shows veneration for a man, and not just a man but a man at some kind of labor—*homo faber*. “Slaves of the Lamp, II,” the final installment (in terms of the book’s inner chronology) of the *Stalky & Co.* stories, occurs after the boys of the Coll. have left school and spent time working for the empire, mostly in India. In the chapter, four of the boys return to England and gather in a school reunion to share stories of their imperial exploits. Their talk, inevitably it seems, drifts to the one character who is not with them at their reunion—A.L. Corkran, Stalky himself, whom they have all encountered and who has, in their eyes, begun to grow into a demigod of sorts.

The first circumstance which gives the scene a sense of spiritual veneration of this imperial laborer is his absence, for it gives the impression that Stalky is beyond, even above the physical scene happening in the chapter; his presence would put him on a level with the other characters, while his absence allows him a higher place. His legend grows in his absence like Nelson’s after Trafalgar. The setting—a gathering of Stalky’s disciples in an upper room—only contributes to this spiritual aura around the man. His absence, furthermore, allows characters to laud him freely and sing his praises, as they do, declaring him “the great man of his Century” (281) and going so far as to ascribe to him spiritual titles: Stalky is “a Sikh,” a “Guru of sorts,” and “like a serene Brahmini bull” (283, 285, 281). In reality, Stalky is merely a clever independent British officer in India whose skill with people and quick wits make him seem invulnerable in “tight” situations and make him a terror to those chiefs who oppose the British in India. He is, as Janet Adam Smith writes, an “ingenious and crafty hero working with others in a vividly realized situation—to do his job” (16). Readers further understand Stalky’s

real value when, late in the chapter, it is predicted that Stalky and those like him will show their true merit when there is “a really big row on” (296), possibly pointing to Kipling’s own fears of German rearmament and an impending European war (Lycett 296). To Kipling, Stalky is a product of the British system, a man among men, yet Kipling chooses to glorify this worldly type by using other-worldly diction. To restate, Stalky’s real value to Kipling lies in his contribution to the empire, but Kipling’s choice of the religious words “Sikh” and “Guru” elevates this worker and his work to a higher level, beyond Christian mythology and into other religions. It is as if his imperialism is not only interested in bringing land and peoples under his control but also beliefs and traditions, making him a pan-religious deity. Isabel Quigley has recognized this faux-divine status of Stalky and the reality of his work beneath it—both his material utility to his nation and his quasi-religious status in the book. She writes that for Kipling, Stalky is “not merely useful but indispensable to the Empire,” and that “such a man needs devoted followers . . . to whom he seems godlike, unquestionably right” (xxvi). As with the Union Flag, which is a symbol of material things worth venerating, Stalky is shown to be the symbol of a man worth venerating and not in ordinary language, but with spiritual epithets.

As the chapter progresses Stalky’s admirers grow more and more religious in their praise. They recount that after carrying out certain exploits unapproved by his superiors, he “loafed up to Simla at his leisure, to be offered up on the horns of the altar” (295). Kipling moves quickly from calling Stalky a type of Guru to connecting him with Hebraic sacrifice, “The horns of the altar” being a direct quotation from 1 Kings

1:50.<sup>3</sup> There is an almost blasphemous brashness in Kipling’s saying that Stalky “loafed” to Simla for his metaphorical sacrifice. Lambs, goats, and other animals used for Hebrew sacrifices are dragged to the altar, and Jesus, the “true” Hebrew sacrifice in Christian tradition, sweats drops of blood before his sacrifice; however, Stalky, the imperial sacrifice, has no such fears or any sense of urgency. He appears more self-assured, more worldly, more like a man, and, paradoxically, more like a god.

The penultimate image readers have of Stalky is in a “camp in Jullunder . . . sitting on one chair of state with half the population groveelin’ before him, a dozen Sikh babies on his knees, an old harridan clappin’ him on the shoulder, and a garland o’ flowers round his neck” (296). Stalky is now a benevolent sahib, loved by the natives of India as well as his fellow British. He has become what Kipling and many of the New Imperialists longed for the British empire to become, “a profitable estate” adding “to the happiness, prosperity, security and peace of the subject peoples” as James Morris writes (79-80). The “garland o’ flowers” with its pagan overtones, and the “dozen Sikh babies on his knee” only add to his semi-divine status. Stalky has become an idealized Anglo-Indian, much like Colonel Creighton of *Kim*. He is still British, and yet he can appear to be—perhaps is—one of the natives of India, when he chooses. He shifts seamlessly throughout the chapter from the sly infantryman, who uses the dead body of a man he has “abolished” as a way to incite native-on-native violence (*Stalky* 287), to the benign, pan-religious patriarch, wreathed with flowers and welcomed by both his friends and his subjects.

3. Quigley also sees the 1 Kings passage as Kipling’s source for his image, “horns of the altar.” However, Quigley also points out that Kipling believes the “popular misconception” that “victims could be offered up on the horns of the altar. In fact, they were to provide someone seeking sanctuary with a support to cling to” (325).

Kipling does not leave his readers with this elysian image of peace between the ruler and the ruled; he jolts them back to the actual value of a man like Stalky, reminding them that the spiritual images of Sikhs, Gurus, lambs, demi-gods, and saviors he has written serve material ends. The end of which he speaks is war—a “big row” (296). Stalky is meant not for a religious quest or acquiring merit by kindly acts to subject peoples—though those activities are not looked down upon by Kipling, as is demonstrated in *Kim*—but for the more significant great game as it would be played out “on the south side of Europe” (296). His images can create the feeling of some metaphysical reality, but, when examined they often point squarely at the material things of earth.

It is this practice that Jacqueline Bratton calls Kipling’s “Magic.” She believes the way to grasp Kipling’s art is “through an understanding of the uncritical, emotional responses which he *deliberately* sought to call up [*italics mine*]” (*Critical Essays* 45). She further argues that he uses his “magical powers, *hoping* to intensify and enlighten by directing the most primitive of our responses to words” (63). While it may be granted that Kipling does “intensify” certain audience responses, it is questionable and, indeed, unknowable whether this is deliberate. Readers have, indeed, called Kipling’s work “magical,” but it does not prove that he sought to conjure this magic, only that readers have experienced it while reading Kipling. Moreover, it is not merely the words themselves, as Bratton claims, which bring about the effect, but the material objects corresponding to those words. Throughout her study of Kipling’s “magic,” Bratton focuses on the power of his words, stating that the writer (including Kipling, of course) “is gifted with words; they are the Magic” (47); however, Bratton fails to make the connection between those words and Kipling’s true objects of veneration—things themselves.

In passages like those above, his words are a means to that material end. He spiritualizes flags and empire builders in order to solidify their materiality and humanity, and this hyper-awareness of the material and the human, as has been demonstrated, along with other style choices—which will be discussed below—brings about what Bratton calls an “irrational” and what has been called a “metaphysical” response to Kipling’s writing.<sup>4</sup>

#### Prose Style Choices and Metaphysical Materialism

I have been discussing the intersection of Kipling’s materialism and rhetoric that combine to create one element of his metaphysical materialism often referred to by his critics as “magic.” However, as certain scholars have indicated, this perception stems specifically from his compositional techniques and stylistic choices. Bratton, as we have seen, argues that the power of Kipling is in his words—“they are the magic” (47). Barrie claims that Kipling writes in a series of vivid “lightning flashes,” and “it is in these flashes that the magic lies; they are his style” (*The Critical Heritage* 79). Liu, writing on the *Just So Stories*, argues that in his use of the oral, the primal, and the visual, many of Kipling’s passages have “incantory power when read aloud” (2). While his rhetorical moves of treating material things spiritually and spiritual things in material terms are vital to understanding this “magic” or “power,” Kipling also makes certain style choices, particularly in his prose, that contribute to the “magic” or perceived metaphysicality repeatedly commented on in Kipling scholarship. While these techniques vary from genre to genre, from work to work, they all carry that absorption with the material that

is the hallmark of his craft. Coupled with these style techniques, this devouring inter-

4. In this section, I have drawn my examples from *Stalky & Co.* but this spiritualizing of the physical is present throughout the Kipling canon. Other representative examples can be found in *Kim*, “The Bridge Builders,” “The Deep Sea Cables,” “Wireless,” and the *Just So Stories*.

est in the material works to create what has been called here a platonic response *in the readers* or the shadow of the metaphysical projected by the description of the physical. While any connection of style to reader response will necessarily involve conjecture and will beg possible exceptions, scholars typically agree that Kipling's writing evokes a metaphysical response, and that there is a need to explore what has caused such reactions.

One work which demonstrates well Kipling's general stylistic choices is his autobiography *Something of Myself*, one of the very few works outside his voluminous letters in which Kipling seems to be writing prose in his 'own voice.' While readers should not be deceived into believing that the genre of autobiography breeds authenticity, they can be confident that Kipling is writing in a persona he wishes his readers to believe is himself and therefore in a prose style he considers his own. Readers will find these same prose techniques in other genres, but they are distilled in his *Autobiography* and therefore ripe for analysis. A passage in the opening chapter of *Something of Myself*, in which he chronicles his first steamer-passage from India to England, is a prime example of many of the stylistic tendencies readers find throughout his work that contribute to their sense of the metaphysical. The passage reads as follows:

Then those days of strong light and darkness passed, and there was a time in a ship with an immense semi-circle blocking all vision on each side of her. (She must have been the old paddle-wheel P. & O. *Ripon*.) There was a train across a desert (the Suez Canal was not yet opened) and a halt in it, and a small girl wrapped in a shawl on the seat opposite me, whose face stands out still. There was next a dark land, and a darker room full of cold, in one wall of which a white woman made a naked fire, and I

cried aloud with dread, for I had never before seen a grate (4).

This passage forms its own paragraph in the book—a miniature story of a child's first experience of transcontinental travel. The first word "then" may seem a perfunctory transition, but it is also appropriate, for it sums up in one word the gaps in a child's memory. The passage preceding recounts Kipling's encounter with a fearfully large hen and his father's consolation by writing a poem for his son, and the final sentence before the passage above reads "I have thought well of hens ever since" (4). Suddenly, readers are tossed into another memory that begins with a simple "then." But rather than showing Kipling's carelessness, this abrupt transition shows his craft. To the adult looking back on childhood, as Kipling is doing here, events years apart have no connection between them but a "then." It would be like a child to have no recollection of events between the hen and the steamer trip; therefore, the *then* serves to make this memory more accurate by its very introduction. It "flashes" upon the reader as J.M. Barrie points out in his discussion of Kipling's style, but that very flash is materially accurate to his subject.

This "flash" works in conjunction with Kipling's diction in the first clause to create a pseudo-primal feel to the first sentence and to set up the feeling of the passage. "Those days of strong light and darkness passed" contains four images: the terrestrial day, bright light, deep darkness, and the passage of time by some motion. If "primal" signifies images that are experienced both by contemporary humans and prehistoric humans, images almost universally understood by humankind, Kipling's first clause of the paragraph can, with confidence, be called "primal," for each of its four images have deep roots in human experience. Furthermore, the phrase "those days" is broad enough

to contain all time before Kipling wrote that phrase. “Days” is not merely a reference to the rotation of the earth but also to the concept of history—a shared idea for sentient beings with memories. The sentence continues with more time-specific images of human-built tools and geometry: “a ship,” “a semi-circle blocking all vision.” Of course, readers will understand that the “semi-circle” is the paddlewheel of a steam ship, which Kipling indicates in his aside, but before the parentheses, the imagery is hardly less primal than the first clause. This use of primal imagery is not limited to this passage in Kipling, though here it is exaggerated. Kipling has a tendency to use images and sentence structures that can be categorized as primal. As Chesterton says of the *Just So Stories*, they read like “fairy tales told to men in the morning of the world” (“Chesterton Reviews” 274). Although Chesterton is making a statement about Kipling’s style, he is primarily speaking of his own feeling toward Kipling’s words. He is saying not only that Kipling’s words are primal, but that when he reads Kipling’s words he feels like a man “in the morning of the world”—a mystical feeling, if not metaphysical. Readers may have the same feeling as Chesterton as they approach this passage beginning with such universal images as light, dark, ships, semicircles, and the passing of time by motion. This ‘primal’ writing technique is one aspect of Kipling’s metaphysical materialism in that it evokes feelings toward the text that have no corresponding objects in readers’ material experiences—only in their, perhaps romanticized, perception of antiquity or the purport of “first things.” Kipling’s text need not be truly metaphysical in order for it to evoke such responses in readers; indeed, the fact that Kipling’s text is so focused on the basic materials of the universe may allow it to affect its readers more deeply, for by describing real images he allows readers to project reality onto their perceptions of “first

things,” which, in reality, they cannot know.

Another important technique in the first sentence and indeed the entire passage adding to its primal, metaphysical feel is Kipling’s use of indefinite articles: “a time,” “a ship,” “a train,” “a small girl,” “a desert,” “a dark land,” “a darker room,” “a white woman,” “a grate.” Kipling’s two asides serve to add detail to these nouns without exact place or time, but the great weight of the description in the passage comes from general types of specific objects. Writing “a desert” rather than “the Arabian desert” may serve to make the image of a desert larger, more shadowy, more like the “ideal” desert in the mind of each reader who has a concept of “desert”—less like any real place on earth, and, somehow, more real—in a platonic sense—than any place on earth. The same is true of “a small girl wrapped in a shawl” whose face “stands out still” but is not described. By not existing specifically on the page, she becomes more vivid, for she is the readers’ ideal type of “a small girl.” Kipling’s technique, therefore, allows readers to project their own notional images into the passage.

The power of Kipling’s indefinite articles in this passage is not only in their tendency to invoke the universal or ideal, but also in their complementary relationship with the passage’s parataxis, polysyndeton, and diction. Readers can see Kipling’s parataxis in three abrupt “flashes” as the scene shifts, and each time it is lashed to an indefinite noun: “there was a time in a ship . . .” “There was a train . . .” “There was next a dark land.” While this is not pure parataxis, the vast distances traveled and events that transpire between shifts make the absence of transitions sufficiently jarring, and the absence of specific nouns make the trip even more mystifying and more childlike, as if the child-Kipling is waking at intervals, looking out the window at great stretches of

ocean or desert and sleeping again. This parataxis exists between sentences in the paragraph; however, within each sentence, events happen in succession, each connected by a coordinating conjunction, usually “and”—what is called polysyndeton: “There was a train across a desert . . . and a halt in it, and a small girl wrapped in a shawl . . .” Within each larger abrupt shift in place (the paragraph’s parataxis), there are smaller shifts in events (polysyndeton)—quick snapshots taken by his child-eyes within larger memories. This technique, often used by those writing ‘stream of consciousness’ narrative, combined with Kipling’s indefinite articles gives the whole scene the same sense we get from each individual image—something at the same time shaded and bright, opaque and clear, real and surreal. The images are just as a child would see them, which makes the passage feel crafted and clear, but they are also, in many places, divorced from any specific period of time, which makes them universal. “A white woman” making “naked fire” is not time-bound diction. Its objects need not exist in the nineteenth century, but could exist in the first or the tenth BC. All of these things, when combined, can serve to make Kipling’s writing seem as if it is nearer “first things” than it really is, which, as has been argued, tends to lead to a certain metaphysical sensation in readers like Chesterton, Bratton, Collingwood, Barrie, and others.

The final technique Kipling utilizes in this passage and in many others is to write without, or with limited use of the simile, which makes words seem nearer to their actual objects and therefore, more primal or substantial in themselves. As Plato argues, words are merely symbols or imitations of their objects, which are, as Plato believes, types and shadows of true forms (*The Republic* X, 389, E). When words are used in metaphors or similes, then, they are three times removed from their objects, having the

same relationship to what they signify as a scan of a photograph of a painting of a tree has to a real tree. Although Plato is skeptical of the practice of writing as a whole, not only in *The Republic* but the *Phaedrus*, one could argue that the most platonic form of writing is that which draws nearest its object, for it brings the reader as close as is possible to the true form of an object and consequently acquaints him or her with the object’s true spiritual beauty. Seen in a platonic context, Kipling’s passage above has more power to move because it refuses to compare beyond the necessary conventions of written language. The sentence, “A white woman made naked fire, and I cried aloud with dread, for I had never seen a grate” does indeed have buried metaphors, especially in the words “white” and “naked”; nonetheless, both words are used so appropriately—the foreignness of “white” in contrast to most humans he has experienced in India and “naked” modifying one of Earth’s most primal phenomena, fire—that readers may forget they merely symbolize human skin color and the presence of a flame *en plain air*. Most of this passage’s images, like negative statements, seem only to signify themselves; therefore, they appear to many readers more primal than they would had Kipling written, “I cried aloud with dread like a wounded rabbit” or some such simile. Collingwood calls attention to these techniques when he lists Kipling as a practitioner of “art as magic.” Collingwood believes “magic” to be illusory, which lines up nicely with what Kipling is accomplishing in this passage, for none of the techniques described here have any relation to spirituality; nonetheless, they create the illusion of primal, first things, and of ideal deserts, children, and oceans.

The “illusion” of the primal in this passage is enhanced by the presence of what Erich Auerbach terms “Biblical narrative” style in his close reading of Genesis 22—the

testing of Abraham. Auerbach writes that Abraham's journey with Isaac is portrayed in the passage "like a silent progress through the indeterminate and the contingent, a holding of the breath, a process which has no present, which is inserted, like a blank duration, between what has passed and what lies ahead" (10). While much of this observation could be applied to Kipling's passage above, Auerbach's use of the word "silent" is particularly helpful in understanding Kipling's own journey, for the passage consists only of images separated by "indeterminate" time periods until the final line in which the child-Kipling "cries aloud" for fear of "naked fire." This connection with "biblical narrative" style, "in which time and place are undefined and call for interpretation" as Auerbach writes, can be important in understanding Kipling's critics' view of his writing as primal. Its very connection to the Torah's prose style, in its English translation, lends itself to readings of his work as ancient or primal but also gives evidence to Collingwood's idea of his art as somehow illusory and unintentionally magical. The fact that both Kipling and the writer(s) of Genesis tell a story "in a few independent sentences whose syntactical connection is of the most rudimentary sort," (Auerbach 9), that they both avoid simile, and that they move the story with polysyndeton does not prove that Kipling's prose is primal, but it does increase the likelihood that a reader will interpret it as such; many have, as has been demonstrated.

It must be understood that Kipling's use of stylistic techniques which evoke the primal or universal are far from the only notable features in his writing. Kipling is a skilled artist with many "brushes," including metaphor, simile, personification, and most other conventions of prose stylists and poets; what has been pointed out here are his tendencies. He can be enchanting while using simile as when he writes lines like,

"You'll take the old Aurelian Road through shore-descending pines / Where, blue as any peacock's neck, the Tyrrhene Ocean shines" (*A Choice* 287). Still, it is argued that he seems more metaphysical when his images and techniques are most primal and when he lashes his words as near to their images as he can without allowing metaphor to come between.

Any study of Kipling's metaphysical or spiritual effects should take into account Kipling's intended materialism, for if Kipling were writing with the intention of being spiritual his effects would naturally be spiritual or magical, and he would become the purveyor of some system of belief beyond the material realm. However, if he is writing with the intention of presenting merely the phenomenal world, his metaphysical effects should be elusive, shadowy, and imprecise, for they are unintended spiritual effects and merely hints or shadows of the spiritual. This spiritual elusiveness is what we find in Kipling—or at least in critics who have reacted to his work. While critics such as Eliot, Forster, Chesterton, and Collingwood have all noted the feeling of 'magic' in Kipling's work, C.S. Lewis's account of his encounter with Kipling's materialism is of particular interest. He recounts, "After I have been reading Kipling for some days together there comes a sudden check. One moment I am filled with delight at the variety and solidity of his imagination; and then, at the very next moment, I am sick, sick to death, of the whole Kipling world" (232). He goes on to say he believes there are two causes for this sudden "sickness": "one arising from what may be called the formal, the other from what may be called the material character of his work" (232-233). Lewis admits delight at Kipling's "variety and solidity," but that delight is not lasting, and, rather than dying away peacefully like one's preference for an over-worn shirt, it turns into revulsion.

Further, that revulsion is due to the “formal” and “material character of his work”—the two things, which, as has been shown, form his metaphysical materialism. While certain of Kipling’s techniques evoke a “spiritual” or “magical” response in his readers, this spirituality is subject to his interest in the material—therefore it can only hint at the spiritual; it can only create desire in the reader for something non-material; it cannot provide that thing which he or she desires. In this framework of thinking, Lewis’ feeling of delight in Kipling’s work’s being followed suddenly by disgust is understandable. Desire without fulfillment is only pleasant as long as one believes the object of desire can fulfill; therefore, when Lewis realizes Kipling has no power to provide spiritual nourishment with his “solidity,” he, understandably, feels he has been misled and recoils. Perhaps he begins to see Kipling’s effect for what it is—the result of a technique, a style. To Lewis, then, reading Kipling’s beautiful representations of the material world for long stretches is like smelling a series of gourmet meals without ever being given the chance to eat them—always enchanting but never fulfilling.

## Conclusion

Lewis’s example alone is not conclusive evidence for Kipling’s metaphysical effect, for it is merely anecdotal and is as much about Lewis’s personal spirituality as it is about Kipling’s effect. It is not, however, merely about Lewis’s spirituality. Lewis sees some causal relationship between his reaction and, as he recounts, Kipling’s “formal and material” characteristics. This effect is more noteworthy when considered alongside other critics who have used words such as “incantatory,” “magic,” and “mystical,” to describe Kipling’s writing and Barrie’s claim that “though it is by coarseness that Mr. Kipling

gains his end, which is to make us suddenly sick, he does gain it, and so he is an artist” (*The Critical Heritage* 80). Lewis’s response is not isolated to his own spirituality but is recorded, in different ways, by Kipling’s critics both in his time and in this.

If we believe Kipling’s own claims about his writing, he has not set out to write spiritually, but in various works at various times there is little doubt in many of his critics’ minds of spiritual effect in his work. One could argue that the material world is simply more real to Kipling, easier to describe; therefore, he describes it and gives it his energy and power of mind. That very energy, that devouring material interest, that ability, as Buchan says, to “raven the heart out of a subject” (V), along with his technique of spiritualizing the material, has created what has been called here “platonic” and critics have called mysterious, deep, primal, magical, or spiritual effects in his work. Those effects seem to have far more to do with the reader’s perception of spirituality than with any spirituality present in the work. Indeed, if Kipling sees the material world as a dream, it is a dream from which he does not wish to wake; if he sees it as a shadow, he finds pleasure in sitting in its shade.

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Mukluks #1

White Feather/Robert Nabess

## Joan Didion's California: Literary Representations of History, Melancholy and Transgression

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Joan Didion is the unquestioned bard of California: she sings California in much the same way that Walt Whitman sang America. On the surface, her prose concerns itself with romance: marriages, sex, extramarital affairs and all the drama that accompanies them, be it among the hop growers in the Valleys (*Run River*), in the vacuous landscape of Hollywood (*Play It As It Lays*), or in a fictitious South American colony (*A Book Of Common Prayer*). If one searches deeper, though, it becomes apparent that Joan Didion writes about California's history and California's future, and that ultimately her main preoccupation is the exploration of Californian identity, which is suggested both by the dominant air of melancholia discernible about all of her writing and by the compulsive return to the idea of the frontier. Not only are her characters melancholic; the very language used to describe them betrays the melancholy mode of presentation. Melancholy

defines the land she writes about, and Didion's prose is of and about California: she is the bard of the land, singing its glory as she bares its shortcomings. In the present essay I examine Didion's oeuvre, unearthing the signs of melancholy losses which inform her prose: the loss of the idealized pioneering past, the loss of the frontier ethics, and the loss of belief in a stable, unified identity. All these losses are placed in the context of historical events that are elevated to the status of local myths and that ultimately shape Californian identity.

Didion published her first novel, *Run River*, in 1963, while she was living in New York. She describes the impulse behind the composition as nostalgia for the land of her childhood, saying that she wrote herself a California river (cf. *Where I Was From* 157). In 1964 a collection of essays *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* immediately followed, with California clearly in the focus of her journalism. Similar pairings may be observed throughout her long – and not yet finished – career, and it is a fairly obvious task to observe how her journalism interweaves with her prose. Her next novel, *Play It As It Lays*, appeared in 1970, followed by *A Book of Common Prayer* in 1977. Two years later she published another collection of essays, *The White Album* (1979). In these texts, novels as well as journalistic essays and vignettes, she discusses the place of her origin. In 1992 Didion published *After Henry*, a multi-faceted contemplation of the country's politics, media, entertainment and sports, and a volume that contains pieces preoccupied both with Los Angeles and New York. She returns to the issue of California identity in *Where I Was From* (2003), another collection of essays which is quite explicit about her interest in understanding California and its character. However, a careful reading of her writings

reveals that even those texts that are seemingly preoccupied with other themes, such as the later novels, *A Book of Common Prayer*, *Democracy* or *The Last Thing He Wanted*, revolve around the place that she claims in many senses of the word: California. The aim of this essay is to contrast the views Didion presents in *Where I Was From* with her sentiment represented in the earlier texts, ultimately attempting to understand how and why Didion arrives at the conclusions in the later texts.

*Where I Was From* is an important collection, because Didion tries to make sense of her heritage and undertakes the issues of California history and its character in an explicit, straightforward manner (unlike, for instance, in *A Book of Common Prayer*). She revisits the ideas she wrote about earlier, and a sense of disillusionment and nostalgia emerge; Thomas Mallon describes the volume as “an attempt to account for what Didion now sees as the ‘strikingly unearned’ pride she and her family took in California and their early arrival there” (“On Second Thoughts”). Among the stories of Didion's childhood, her schooling, comments on the importance of water preservation and the assessment of the state of politics there emerges the central narrative, the one of emigration, of which the most tragic is the story of the Donner-Reed party.

The drama of the Donner-Reed party happened against the backdrop of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in 1846, when California was still officially Mexican. The United States acquired California in 1848 on the strength of the treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, following the Mexican-American war, but before the official act that ceded California to the Americans, there was already a steady influx of American settlers into Mexican Alta California. Indeed, some Americans saw the annexation of California in terms of

historical necessity: in *Two Years Before the Mast*, published in 1840, Richard Henry Dana, Jr., who was to become California's first important chronicler, exclaims, "In the hands of an enterprising people, what a country this might be!" (Chapter XXI), expressing the sentiment not isolated at the time which deemed that such a fertile, rich land must be taken from the hands of the lazy, backward Mexicans (despite his humanist approach, Dana actually mentions the "California fever" which is laziness) and put under control of the innovative and energetic Americans who will fulfill its potential as an earthly paradise. Writing a hundred and fifty years later, Kevin Starr sums up the argument expressed by Dana with the words, "American in one way or another, California was destined to be," suggesting the inevitability of the turn of events as we know them.

Just as Dana puts the annexation of California in pragmatic terms – he mentions making use of the land, rather than invoking the divine providence to justify it – a similar kind of inevitability is found in Didion's first collection of essays, *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*. In fact, Didion warns her readers against thinking in categories other than utilitarian, saying, "when we start deceiving ourselves into thinking not that we want something or need something, not that it is a pragmatic necessity for us to have it, but that it is a *moral imperative* that we have it, then is when . . . we are in bad trouble" ("On Morality" 163). Didion finishes her ruminations ominously, "I suspect we are already there" ("On Morality" 163), confirming the pessimistic assessment of society and its mores. Her negativity is a suggestion that the world is not what it used to be: in the past, the pioneers used to observe the moral code, and even though it was the most basic one, the sort that she calls "the wagon-train morality" ("On Morality" 158), Didion's times

compare unfavorably with the past which emerges as more ethical.

It is not surprising that Didion sees American expansion and settlement of the frontier in terms of ethical demand placed on the settler; such a strand of thinking has been evident from the beginnings of European settlement in North America, gaining prominence in the nineteenth century. The dominant contemporary theory known as Manifest Destiny attempted to explain the nation's course and it presented expansionism as the fulfillment of the nation's own potential and a duty towards the nations of the world. Manifest Destiny was a term coined by journalist John O'Sullivan in November 1839; the huge success of the term was due to the fact that it was first used as justification of both the Mexican-American war and the acquisition of California, and later served the purpose of explaining American policy in a variety of contexts.<sup>1</sup> The main conception that O'Sullivan puts forward echoes the ideas of American exceptionalism of Alexis de Tocqueville and John Winthrop's "City upon a Hill", and it is also an expression of the optimistic belief in progress and human capability.

O'Sullivan states:

The expansive future is our arena, and for our history. We are entering on its untrodden space, with the truths of God in our minds, beneficent objects in our hearts, and with a clear conscience unsullied by the past. We are the nation of human progress, and who will, what can, set limits to our onward march? Providence is with us, and no earthly power can. ("The Great Nation of Futurity" 427)

1. Roberta L. Cole points to the use of the idea of Manifest Destiny as recent as the Gulf War and the conflict in Kosovo.

Even though O’Sullivan’s grand ideas of progress and expansion were not unquestioned at the time of their expression, they signify a certain tendency in American press and letters, Puritan in its provenience, to see history as a reflection or at least an indication of a higher order. Just as Henry Dana, Jr. proposes that the land and the people will benefit from American governance of the province, O’Sullivan also suggests that American dominion over the continent is a matter of progress and fate; he does not advocate violent overtake of the land, but sees the development as part of a historical process, justified by the larger forces of divine providence and natural law, working hand in hand. Presenting the American settlement of California, Didion points out that it “resembles Eden” (“Notes From a Native Daughter” 176) and that it is the place “where we ran out of continent” (NFaND 172), thus emphasizing the liminality of the experience and its mythical aspect. Didion’s early presentation of California history is not far from O’Sullivan’s; as she stresses, “it is characteristic of Californians to speak grandly of the past” (NFaND 172).

The grand concepts of the divine plan and historical necessity justified the influx of pioneers into California in the mid-nineteenth century – the Donner party was one of many of such groups of settlers; yet it is their story that provides an exceptionally dramatic illustration of the determination of settlers and their perseverance in the face of adversity. In April 1846 they traveled from Springfield, Illinois to Independence, Missouri, where the California Oregon Trail began. Their journey for California started in May. They were hoping to reach California before the winter snowstorms would close the passes through the last and the most perilous part of their journey: the passage through the Sierra Nevada. Yet a series of errors in judgment, inexperience and mishaps accumulated

and their results were tragic. The most catastrophic was the decision to take the cut off that in fact added over a hundred miles to their journey. Then, having travelled the length of the continent, the party had mere miles to go before reaching the pass that would take them down to California, yet instead of pushing on, they camped for the night. The following day the pass was covered with snow that made their journey with wagons and cattle all but impossible. They were stranded for five months with hardly any food or shelter.

Kevin Starr describes the importance of the Donner party story in the Californian repertory of myths:

Making winter camp near Truckee Lake (now called Donner Lake) in the High Sierra on November 4, 1846, the Donner party endured before its rescue the following April a phantasmagoria of horrors, including murder and cannibalism, that remains to this day a fixed and recurring statement of California as betrayed hope and dystopian tragedy. Yet the survivors of the Donner party managed to fit in, even to thrive, in California after their ordeal was over. (63)

The meaning of the Donner party’s story is highly ambivalent: Starr mentions frustrated hopefulness and utopian expectations that go awry, yet even in his account there is a note of ambivalence as he muses on the surviving members of the Donner party not only to find a place for themselves in California, but even to prosper, as if finding a prosperous life was an undeserved reward for those who were part of the murderous and cannibalistic

group.

Didion evokes similar uncertainty as to the moral aspect of the story when she asks a seemingly rhetorical question, “Did not the Donner-Reed Party, after all, eat its own dead to reach Sacramento?” (NFaND 176). Their deeds, however despicable, serve to validate the meaning of the land they set as their final destination; they are the highest sacrifice. The violation of the taboo of cannibalism is the price they pay for their dream; hence the value of the dream increases. Yet, simultaneously, such a validation of the crossing becomes problematic when one asks if perhaps the price for the taboo violation is too high, and the dream of the land becomes tainted by it, rather than made more precious. This is the type of question that Didion does not ask in her first collection, but that comes haunting her in the later volumes.

In *Where I Was From*, Didion refers to the stories of the overland pass, including her ancestors’, to call the Donner Lake: “the locale that most clearly embodied the moral ambiguity of the California settlement” (WIWF 75). The landscape itself comes to evoke the ethical questions related to the pioneering past of California; the locations that always figure large in her essays and novels. In “On Going Home,” for instance, she mentions her grandfather’s photo in which he is “a young man on skis, surveying around Donner Pass in the year 1910” (OGH 166), while in *Run River* her characters drive to their own wedding when “the year’s first snow settled over the Sierra Nevada” (66). These locations suggest the restraint of an overt optimism in the assessment of California. In *Where I Was From*, Didion is more explicit: she quotes the moral lesson that is to be drawn from the Donner party ordeal given by one of the survivors: “Remember, never take no

cutoffs and hurry along as fast as you can”; in “Girl of the Golden West” she reminds her readers of the advice found in the “emigrant diaries” and points out that the same spirit characterizes westerners today as well (102). The pioneering attitude is summed up by “cut[ting one’s] losses and head[ing] west” (103); not looking back, not examining is admonished as the best strategy when dealing with the unimaginably foreign and vast spaces. Yet Didion is highly critical of the lesson that one learns from the emigrant diaries: she describes it as “the artless horror” and perceives it as a sign of “constricted moral horizon” (WIWF 75). This harsh assessment signifies the final disillusionment she comes to, the opposite of the redemptive power of the story of the overland passage that she suggested in “Notes from a Native Daughter”.

In her criticism of the vision of the crossing as a story of triumph of moral and physical strength Didion talks of the “darkest . . . betrayals”, quoting an instance taken from a diary by an emigrant named Bernard J. Reid who crossed the Great Plains in 1849. Reid’s party came upon an abandoned wagon and a girl of about 17. Reid tells his readers that she “seemed like one dazed or in a dream.” He learns the story of the girl, Miss Gilmore, recently orphaned and entrusted with the care of her younger brother, probably sick with cholera: Miss Gilmore’s family lost their oxen, and after the parents died, they were promptly abandoned by the group they had been traveling with. Their party decides to leave Miss Gilmore and her sick brother behind because they are afraid of “being caught by winter in the Sierra Nevada Mountains” which would be potentially deadly. Reid reports: “The people of her train had told her that . . . some other train coming along with oxen to spare would take her and her brother and their wagon along”

(*WIWF* 36). By recounting the story Didion suggests that it is not exceptional, but rather, it possesses the elements of a typical crossing narrative, filled with fear and a basic will to survive. It does not portray the nobleness of spirit and empathy one would wish to see there.

The story of the crossing is the story of hardships and lethal danger that fills the journey, which suggests that whoever manages to complete it, passes a series of tests both of their physical resilience, but, more importantly, also their valor and their principles. Didion calls it the “redemptive power of the crossing”; which suggests not only moral tinge to the endeavor, but a religious framework in which it must be placed, and she reminds us that it was “the fixed idea of the California settlement.” She does not find this staple element of the crossing narrative unproblematic; rather, it provokes her to probe deeper which she puts in a series of questions: “for what exactly, and at what cost, had one been redeemed?” (*WIWF* 36-7). Returning to the story she recounted earlier, she puts her query in a different way, “When you survive at the cost of Miss Gilmore and her brother, do you survive at all?” (*WIWF* 37).

These questions, as pressing as they are, are left suspended, which suggests the difficulty, if not impossibility, of giving definite answers to the issue of survival. In order to understand what survival might mean in this context, it is useful to turn to Judith Butler, who explains the meaning of survival with reference to melancholia when she states, “Survival, not precisely the opposite of melancholia but what melancholia puts in suspension – requires redirecting the rage against the lost other, defiling the sanctity of the dead for the purpose of life, raging against the dead in order not to join them”

(1997: 193). Butler sketches here a continuum with the two poles, one of survival and the other of melancholia, emphasizing that the two are not necessarily opposing, yet one in a sense eclipses the other: between them the questions Didion poses are suspended. If we want to find answers to the questions about the meaning and value of survival, we necessarily must understand what the “lost other” in this context is, against which Didion’s Californian subjects are “raging.” In the story of Miss Gilmore, she and her family are lost to those who decide to push on, to abandon her lest they might die, too. In the story of the Donner party, it is those on whose flesh the surviving members feed in order to finally reach California.

For Didion, the Donner party story is a recurring theme. It provides a subtext for her narrative in *Run River*, the novel which, in her own words, was written to deal with the homesickness for California she suffered when she moved to the East coast and whose aim was to “put . . . a protective distance between me and the place I came from” (*WIWF* 169); in other words, it is a novel written to battle the melancholia connected with her homeland; the novel written to survive.

No wonder, then, that the issue of survival is often referenced in *Run River*. On the walls of the childhood bedroom of Martha, one of the central characters of the novel, one does not find the pastel posters expected in a girl’s room, but “a large lithograph of Donner Pass” – a suggestion corroborated later throughout the novel that Martha is a belated pioneer herself. The lithograph on Martha’s wall has “two neat columns” with “the names of the casualties and the survivors of the Donner-Reed crossing” (100).

Such neat distinctions between those who survived and the ones who perished prove

unsustainable, and Didion questions their value as much in the novel as she does in her essays. In the novel, Martha commits suicide by drowning in the river that provides the central symbol of history in the novel. Martha dies, and the dual reasons suggested in the text are that she is scorned by the man she loves, and she is deeply disappointed by the fact that the pioneers' ideals she wants to live by are impossible to attain and nobody else respects them anymore.

Martha's belated adoption of the pioneering values is questioned in the text. The narrator reveals this ambiguity when saying, "Martha's favorite game as a child had in fact been 'Donner Party'" (100). Martha always chooses to play the role of Tamsen Donner – an unorthodox choice of a role model, since Tamsen Donner is the woman who died in the mountains and never made it to California. She decided to stay with her husband, sending her children away to California with a rescue expedition. Had she decided to go, she would have remained alive, as she was described by the witnesses as relatively strong and healthy, despite the overall appalling conditions of the group. Her act – in the words of her daughter who wrote a memoir decades after the events – is an act of sacrifice, and perhaps also of mistaken loyalty, since she left her children to care for her dying husband.<sup>2</sup> Martha, like Tamsen Donner, chooses death in a melancholic gesture: both of them decide to join the dead. Melancholia, to use Judith Butler's formulation again, puts survival in suspension, and ultimately wins over it.

The melancholic air that characterizes California in Didion's writings is suggested on multiple levels. Martha, incidentally, reads Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*,

2. Cf. Eliza P. Donner Houghton's memoir, *The Expedition of the Donner Party and Its Tragic Fate* for the firsthand (however biased) report. For a recent critical assessment of the Donner Party's ordeal, see Rarick (2008) or McNeese (2009).

which provokes her father to comment, "Melancholia's one study you don't need any lessons in" (59). Martha, the spiritual daughter of pioneers, embodies the melancholy element that Didion sees in California. Such a melancholic assessment not only of California's past, but also its future, leads Didion to state ultimately what she suggests in all her writings: "The settlement of the west, however inevitable, had not uniformly tended to the greater good, nor had it on every level benefitted even those who reaped its most obvious rewards" (*WIWF* 151). She confesses, "this thought came to me as a kind of revelation" (*WIWF* 151) – thus admitting that the power of optimistic narratives such as O'Sullivan's Manifest Destiny underscored also her thinking.

The confessions undermining the beneficial effects of the pioneering endeavor in the West come in Didion's late writing, in *Where I Was From*; in *Run River*, her presentation suggests an ambiguity of the enterprise, but it is conveyed in the hints at the melancholic nature of the pioneering past rather than in the explicit statement that she presents forty years later. A significant part of *Where I Was from* is devoted to *Run River*, which makes the memoir a melancholic venture in itself. Yet for all the probing and analysis, in her presentation of California history Didion still reaches back to the white American settlement of the province and not any further, as if her white American ancestors crossed the Great Plains to find themselves in a void, waiting for their cultivation. The blind spot of her vision remains the non-white, non-European inhabitation of California.

Didion's limitations of historical vision can be explained with the use of Anne Anlin Cheng's understanding of American identity. Cheng applies Freudian theory of

melancholia to her analysis of American character, which allows her to state: “Dominant white identity in America operates melancholically” (11). Cheng refers here to the Freudian idea of melancholia as founded upon loss which is incorporated into the melancholic ego. Cheng points to the exclusion of such subjects as women or black Americans in the crucial moments of American nationhood, such as the drafting of the Declaration of Independence, which supposedly gave equal rights to every American subject, yet clearly defined this subject as white, male and propertied.

Cheng further explains: “white American identity and its authority is secured through the melancholic introjection of racial others that it can neither fully relinquish nor accommodate and whose ghostly presence nonetheless guarantees its centrality” (Cheng, Preface xi). If we think of Joan Didion’s vision of Californian identity, then the crucial omission of any other agent of history than white and Protestant – such as Californios, non-white settlers or Native Americans – so strikingly at odds with historical reality, guarantees the centrality of white American identity precisely in the sense proposed by Cheng. Thus Didion’s presentation of California history through the lens of her family history, and her representation of ethics in terms of what she dubs wagon-train ethics means not only that California history is dramatically shortened to include only the last hundred years, but that it also pivots on an exclusion that becomes the kernel of melancholia, documented in her writings. Melancholia defines the land she writes about.

In her texts, both journalistic and novels, Didion presents a multi-faceted description of the essence of California and the West. For Didion, the definition of the West rests on scarcity: she evokes Bernard DeVoto’s formulation, which she deems the

best: the West is the land “where the average annual rainfall drops below twenty inches” (“Holy Water” *The White Album* 65). In *After Henry* she talks about the propensity to cut one’s losses and head west (103) and the “abrupt sloughing of the past” (102) as characteristic traits of the westerner and especially Californian; in *The Last Thing He Wanted*, a protagonist is defined by “whatever it had meant to him to come out of the West and confront the established world” – a suggestion that one is a westerner if one understands the crucial difference between the West and the rest of the United States. The West is where resourcefulness is not optional, but necessary to secure one’s survival; the West is where one turns when one wants to start anew; the West, finally, is not like other places. To a large degree, it remains a frontier and it keeps reminding its inhabitants that existence there is always perilous. The melancholic atmosphere discernible about Didion’s California serves to remind one, too, that one’s demise always looms near.

Didion’s silence concerning non-white settlers in California can be further explained with the use of Judith Butler’s thoughts on melancholia. Butler comments on the impossibility of expressing melancholic grief, one of the prerequisites of melancholia, and states, “What cannot be declared by the melancholic is nevertheless what governs melancholic speech – an unspeakability that organizes the field of the speakable” (1997: 186). Butler adds, “Melancholic speech . . . remains unable to speak its loss” (1997: 186). In Didion’s melancholic presentation of California, she looks back at the pioneer past and she locates the core values there: the loyalty to family, the very basic code of behavior that she calls “wagon-train morality”. In *Where I Was From*

Didion reconstructs her own vision of the past that she presented in her earlier texts and reassesses her confusion about the value she attached to the myth of California. Yet for all the elegiac, melancholy tone of her collection, she remains unable to go beyond the repertory of images she has always used to weave the California dream. She remains unable to speak about those she sentences to silence and oblivion.

In melancholia, Butler reminds us, “loss itself is lost” (1997: 183). She further explains, “In other words, according to the melancholic, ‘I have lost nothing’” (Butler 1997: 183). Even though Didion claims some losses, she disavows others: non-American subjects shaping California history for centuries before it becomes one of the States are forgotten. On the other hand, Miss Gilmore, Tamsen Donner, Martha Knight, Didion’s own “great-great-great-great-great-grandmother Elizabeth Scott”, whose remembrance opens *Where I Was From*: these are the losses Didion documents in her writing, and all of Didion’s texts, including her journalistic pieces and her novels, are about loss.

It is true as well of *Where I Was From*, which locates loss at the core of Didion’s musings on California. She states, “It took me a while before I realized that ‘me’ is what we think when our parents die, even at my age, *who will look out for me now, who will remember me as I was, who will know what happens to me now, where will I be from*” (204). These frantic questions remain unanswered directly, yet the suggestion of the text is that our sense of belonging is connected to our blood relatives – the idea which takes us back to the band-wagon morality and loyalty towards family members as the simplest and the most basic rule guaranteeing not only physical, but also spiritual

survival. These questions also imply a shortening of historical perspective even more drastic than before: California history, for Didion, does not extend back to the mid-nineteenth century now, it stretches back to her parents. The immediacy of history, as Didion wishes to present it, hints at its unrepresentability in the melancholic terms. When Didion writes about the Donner party and other pioneers, and when she questions survival at the expense of others, she is struggling against the dominant mood of melancholia, and battling the impulse of oblivion, of giving in to death. Her writing ultimately represents the indomitable Californian spirit, in all its embattled, conflicted complexity. After all, Didion is the “Golden Girl” and the “Native Daughter”, and California is where she was and is from.

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**PROVERBES COMME INTERLANGUE DANS  
*LA CATASTROPHE AU RENDEZ-VOUS (RERE  
RUN)* D'OLADEJO OKEDIJI TRADUITE EN  
FRANÇAIS PAR TUNDE AJIBOYE**

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**ABSTRAIT**

Ce travail présente une analyse pragmatique des proverbes Yorùbá dans *La Catastrophe au Rendez-Vous (Réré Rún)* d'Oladejo Okediran traduite en français par Ajiboye pour étayer l'argument de grands érudits comme Achebe, Adesanmi, Ayeleru, Chantal Zabus et d'autres, que les écrivains africains peuvent déployer différentes stratégies pour manipuler les langues européennes afin d'exprimer leur vision du monde africain et écrire leur littérature pour montrer leur culture. Le travail repose sur la théorie de l'interlangue de Selinker selon laquelle l'apprenant ou l'utilisateur d'une seconde langue peut établir

un sens, soit par fossilisation, soit par généralisation excessive, pour exprimer ses idées.

La raison en est que, différence, ou départ partiel de la langue cible standard n'écarte pas la communication de message. De plus, les proverbes africains sont uniques; ils doivent être appréciés dans leur intégralité.

Mots-clés: Français, Interlangue, Proverbes Yorùbá, la Traduction, l'Usage Pragmatique.

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## ABSTRACT

This work presents a pragmatic analysis of Yoruba proverbs in *La Catastrophe au Rendez-Vous (Réré Rún)* by Oladejo Okediran translated into French by Ajiboye to buttress the point made by great scholars like Achebe, Adesanmi, Ayeleru, Chantal Zabus and others, that African writers can deploy different strategies to manipulate European languages to express their African world view and write their literature to show their culture. The work is premised on Selinker's (1972) Interlanguage theory that the second language learner/user can establish meaning either by fossilization or overgeneralization to express his ideas. The reason being that, difference, or partial departure, from the standard target language does not debar the message communication. In addition, African proverbs are unique; they need to be appreciated in their entirety.

Keywords: French, Interlanguage, Yorùbá proverbs, Translation, Pragmatic use.

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## INTRODUCTION

La langue française est maintenant devenue une langue véhiculaire utilisée par beaucoup de Nigériens, soit dans les milieux académiques, soit dans les entreprises publiques ou privées, et même dans les marchés ou dans les foyers, partout, on rencontre plusieurs nigériens qui s'expriment couramment en français. Mais, la grande question c'est, est-ce que ces Nigériens parlent le vrai français de Molière ou une version fabriquée à leur gré? Le français n'est plus limité à l'usage des personnes de langue maternelle française, ni aux francophones dans le monde. Elle est maintenant utilisée dans des contextes interculturels partout dans le monde, y compris au Nigéria, un pays anglophone, mais francophile. L'usage pragmatique de la langue française par beaucoup des Nigériens qui ne sont pas des personnes colonisées par la France, peut donc se voir au niveau de l'interlangue à travers les proverbes africains que nous allons discuter dans cette communication.

## L'INTERLANGUE

Qu'est-ce qu'on entend par l'interlangue? C'est un phénomène qui définit le rapport entre deux ou trois langues différentes. C'est l'usage d'une langue (L2) par une personne d'origine étrangère qui se sert de cette nouvelle langue pour exprimer sa culture de (L1). C'est un terme introduit par Larry Selinker, (1972) le linguiste américain qui renvoie au système linguistique quand un apprenant adulte d'une langue seconde veut essayer de s'exprimer dans la langue nouvelle. L'interlangue est un système linguistique séparé, tout différent de la langue maternelle et de la langue cible que l'adulte apprend, mais les deux sont liées par des identifications interlinguales dans la perception de l'apprenant. C'est donc la forme de langage intermédiaire produit par les apprenants d'une langue seconde

ou étrangère (Encarta). Au cours de cette association il peut y résulter des fossilisations (Tarone, 1994). L'interlangue peut se définir comme la forme de langage intermédiaire, c'est l'association de deux ou plusieurs langues. Quand un écrivain d'une œuvre littéraire fait un intermariage de deux langues différentes pour exprimer ses points de vue sur les situations socio-économiques, politiques et culturelles de sa société, c'est l'interlangue qui est en jeu. Le langage de l'écrivain africain est librement utilisé dans une autre langue étrangère comme stratégie d'écriture des faits divers de sa culture. Mais, cette communication s'intéresse à l'usage des proverbes africains de la pièce satirique d'Oladejo Okediji (*RÉRÉ RÚN*- traduite en français par Tunde Ajiboye comme *La Catastrophe au rendez-vous*) dans le but de les énumérer tels qu'ils sont utilisés pour décrire les réalités de la société africaine présentée.

Au dire d'Ayleru (2014), les écrivains africains ont déployé des stratégies différentes pour manipuler les langues européennes dans la création de leurs textes, surtout, ceux de la troisième génération. Ces écrivains adoptent des stratégies radicales d'innovation de leur langage à travers l'oratoire africain, les proverbes, la traduction/translittération, la pidginisation, l'intra/intertextualité, l'euphémisme, la métaphore et la métonymie. Ils ont des choses à dire, des points de vue importants à soulever, et sans restrictions, ils jouent la politique du langage en se permettant de manipuler les langues européennes dans leurs écritures. D'après Pius Adesanmi (2002:126), la nouvelle génération des écrivains africains ont droit d'utiliser les langues européennes telles qu'ils veulent pour exprimer leurs pensées africaines. Ils vont subvertir, approprier et décoloniser ces langues pour démontrer leurs expériences africaines et leurs points de vue mondial. Selon lui:

*My generation writes predominantly in English, Nigerian English, and shall continue to do so in the foreseeable future. That does not in any way make us Europhilacs or agents of imperialism. The Igbo genius is unmistakable in Oguibe's poetry, as the Yoruba genius is in the poetry of Adewale and Raji.*

Ma génération écrit essentiellement en Anglais, l'anglais Nigérian, et on va continuer à le faire dans un avenir prévisible. Cela n'implique pas qu'on est Europhilacs ou agents de l'impérialisme. Le génie Igbo est évident dans la poésie d'Oguibe, autant que le génie Yorùbá se voit dans la poésie d'Adewale et de Raji. (Notre traduction).

Donc, nous aussi, en tant que francophiles, nous pouvons utiliser la langue française en faisant sa modification, domestication et indigénisation pour mieux exprimer nos pensées africaines, et particulièrement d'exprimer les proverbes Yorùbá de notre auteur choisie. Le renommé écrivain Nigérian, Achebe (1964:348), soutient aussi l'usage de l'interlangue et l'indigénisation des langues européennes dans ces mots,

*"I have been given the language (English) and I intend to stretch it to accommodate my African thoughts".*

«On m'a donné la langue (anglaise) et j'ai l'intention l'étirer pour accommoder mes pensées africaines». (Notre traduction)

Ayleru (2014) quand à lui, donne son approbation au point de vue d'Adesanmi

que ce n'est pas étrange qu'un écrivain littéraire africain reproduit ou façonne les langues européennes pour montrer ses compétences linguistiques, afin de montrer ses valeurs et cultures africaines. Abiola Irele (1981:55) a déjà mis son appui sur la capacité des auteurs africains d'écrire avec succès soit en anglais ou en français assurant une prolongation des langues coloniales en les africanisant de sens et de structure. Et en parlant de l'usage des langues européennes dans la littérature africaine, pendant l'interviewe faite avec Ayeleru, (Zabus, C. 2010) nous dit que son œuvre, *le Palimpsest Africain* s'intéresse beaucoup plus à la manière distinctivement africaine dont les auteurs écrivent leurs textes littéraires pour satisfaire à leur besoins car le langage est un point d'origine par lequel les écrivains africains présentent leurs œuvres littéraires dans la langue anglaise ou française déjà africanisée. Selon Ayeleru, depuis le *Makerere outburst* d'Obi Wali (1963), jusqu'à la position de Marxiste idéaliste d'Ngugi (1981) et à la posture modérée d'Achebe (1965), les écrivains Africains ont déployé des stratégies différents pour manipuler les langues Européennes pour la création de leurs œuvres littéraires. La question de l'usage du langage dans la littérature africaine a attirée les discours critiques de plusieurs écrivains y compris Niyi Osundare (1983, 1984, 1995), Ahmadou Kourouma (1970, 1978), Gassama, Makhily (1995), Chantal Zabus (1991, 2007), Blachere, Jean-Claude (1993), Adewole Adejare (1992, 1998), Kayode Omole (1998), Bill Ashcroft (1998, 2001), Anatole Mbanga (1999), Herbert Igboanusi (2002), Femi Osofisan (2006), Ayo Kehinde (2009), et Jane Bryce (2010).

Donc, cette communication prend son intérêt dans l'usage libre du proverbe Yorùbá traduit en français dans *"La catastrophe au rendez-vous"* comme une interlangue

qui doit être encouragé; car selon (Adélékè Adéèkò, 1998) la véritable libération africaine demande que l'écrivain africain écrive sa littérature pour montrer son nativisme. Jean-Pierre Dozon (non daté) de sa part avoue que la littérature est important, pour apprendre plus, sur le pouvoir d'Etat africain, la situation actuelle en Afrique, et les développements politiques. Dans cette analyse, nous allons apprendre quelques proverbes Yorùbá et leurs significations en contextes.

## PRESENTATION DE L'AUTEUR

L'érudit Monsieur Oladejo Okediji figure parmi les tous premiers experts de la créativité littéraire Yorùbá dans la région Ouest du Nigeria. Il a été professeur qualifié à Wesley College, Ibadan où il exerçait son métier depuis 1948. Il s'est mis à la retraite en 1984, ayant passé 36 ans dans le service. Il a commencé l'écriture littéraire depuis 1954, une réponse à l'appel de Western Region Literature Committee pour des ouvrages de fiction. D'après Tunde Ajiboye, on peut s'inspirer par la sagesse théâtrale d'Okediji et par son style à la fois sobre et brillant. Il s'est servi de la richesse de sa langue première en puisant de réserves de proverbes, le langage caché, pour dévoiler les excès du conseil exécutif d'une ville/un pays imaginé représentant d'autres pays où les leaders embauchent les subalternes, la classe ouvrière.

## PRESENTATION DU TRADUCTEUR

Monsieur le professeur, Tunde Ajiboye est le traducteur de la pièce *"RERE RUN"* d'Oladejo Okediji de la langue Yorùbá en français. Il a fait ses études au Nigéria, à l'université d'Ibadan en 1974, et quatre ans après, en France à l'université de Nancy,

où il a obtenu le doctorat ès lettres. On a fait figurer le nom de ce professeur titulaire de langue française et de linguistique dans *Newswatch Who's Who* en 1990. En 1996, le Gouvernement français lui a donné une récompense au nom de Chevalier des Palmes Académiques. Il fut élu le premier Président de l'Intercaft (Inter-College Association of French Teachers), une association professionnelle fondée par lui-même. Il a été professeur de français à Osun State College of Education et chef du département avant d'y quitter en 1986.

L'un des pères de l'expansion et de l'apprentissage de la langue française au Nigeria, il est actuellement professeur de français à l'université d'Ilorin, au Nigeria, où il finit par devenir chef du Département de Langues Moderne Européennes (Onyemelukwe, 2004: 261). Un auteur renommé de nombreux articles dans le domaine de la linguistique appliquée et de la langue française, ainsi que des manuels de français dont *le Témoin*, *Nouvel Horizon*, et *Olurombi ou le prix d'un pari*. Il s'intéresse vivement au devenir de la langue française non seulement au Nigeria ou en Afrique, mais nous pensons qu'avec la traduction de cette pièce riche et en abondance des proverbes africains, il témoigne la richesse de la langue Yorùbá et sa culture orale. Avec l'étayage de ces proverbes qu'Achebe nous dit "est l'huile avec laquelle se mangent les mots" en français, Ajiboye "fait un appel pour la renaissance de la culture africaine qui est en voie de se flétrir" (Ayeleru, 2011).

### RESUME DE LA PIECE

La pièce que nous travaillons est un œuvre littéraire qui nous dévoile les malheurs accumulés d'un leader syndical au nom de Lawuwo, qui a carrément refusé de se plier aux contraintes et manipulations imposées par une élite malhonnête et ridiculement

corrompue. L'union des travailleurs de construction de Mogun se met en grève pour soutenir leurs demandes pour une augmentation de salaire, un barème fiscal progressif, des soins médicaux adéquats, et une représentation politique. Dans la première partie, ils décident de ne pas retourner au travail jusqu'à ce qu'il y ait une augmentation de leur salaire, et que Lawuwo leur leader retenu soit libéré. Dans la deuxième partie, les chefs, qui comprennent du conseil exécutif de la classe dirigeante, sponsorisent un autre syndical pour rivaliser le premier, diviser les travailleurs et leur créer un manque d'harmonie. Ils ont vaincu la classe ouvrière, car dans la troisième partie, le conseil des chefs ont discrédité Lawuwo par la distribution des photos truquées qu'ils ont pris avec lui en train de bouffer avec eux. Mais c'est le mensonge de la classe bourgeoise représentée par les chefs. Lawuwo perd la confiance des travailleurs à cause des photos compromis. Les travailleurs qui ont maintenant éprouvé une profonde méfiance à l'égard de Lawuwo changent leurs opinions et reprennent leurs instruments de travail. Ils s'avouent vaincu. A la fin de la pièce, Morenike sa femme, dans la croyance qu'elle avait trahit son mari, elle s'est suicidée ayant été dupée de l'argent du syndical par des escroques.

### LES PROVERBES

Un proverbe est une formule qui présente des caractères formels stables, souvent métaphorique ou figurée exprimant une vérité d'expérience ou un conseil de sagesse pratique et populaire commun à tout un groupe social. (Robert, 2009). Les proverbes peuvent être définis aussi comme un aspect de la littérature africaine qui met en garde contre les maux dont un individu peut s'ériger ou s'évertuer. C'est du langage codé, sauf les initiés peuvent le déchiffrer. Selon Adam Parry, (1971) les proverbes sont des formules

d'expressions courantes dans toutes les traditions et comment ils sont utilisées varient selon les valeurs de validation.

En même temps, les proverbes proviennent de la littérature orale traditionnelle et peuvent être présentés en vers ou en prose, car ils ont la fonction dans la culture orale plus cruciale et omniprésente que dans la culture d'écriture ou électronique. En Afrique noire, le proverbe occupe une place de choix dans toutes les discussions. C'est à travers les proverbes que certains aspects de la littérature orale furent préservés, puisqu'ils sont des aide-mémoires pour la préservation des pensées traditionnelles "exprimées en une formule elliptique généralement imaginée." Au temps jadis, l'utilisation et la manipulation au moment opportune pendant les réunions sous l'arbre de baobab ou de cachou constituent une force et une plateforme de respect pour celui qui arrive à les contrôler.

## IMPORTANCE DES PROVERBES

Le renommé D.O. Fagunwa, l'un des premiers écrivains littéraires en langue Yorùbá recommande fortement l'usage du style natif dans son écriture pour accentuer les thèmes d'une œuvre. Ajayi Samson (2012) en parlant de l'importance profonde des proverbes et adages en Afrique avoue que la richesse du style d'un auteur africain est déterminé le plus souvent par l'emploi des proverbes et d'adages, deux éléments parmi d'autres qui font le noyau de la littérature africaine. L'un des buts de cette présentation est de montrer la prouesse de la culture africaine que l'on peut trouver dans les proverbes énumérés dans l'œuvre que nous avons choisie. Quelle sagesse faudrait-il en tirer de ces proverbes? Il faut regarder l'aspect positif dont l'homme a besoin pour mener la vie descente dans une

société humaine. Que ce soit la vie sociale dans un pays développé ou sous-développé, les proverbes enseignent toujours une morale et il faut en profiter.

Les proverbes rappellent en quelque sorte le célèbre argument du pari pascalien, un pari par lequel on essaye de convaincre les incroyants qu'en pariant pour l'existence de Dieu, on n'a rien à perdre, mais tout a gagné. Les proverbes donnent des informations. De fait, « toute information mettant en garde contre un danger à éviter devrait être prise au sérieux même si la menace est plus probable que certaine » (Kasende, 1992: 47). Les proverbes selon Quitard, (1860: 420) ont par eux-mêmes un prix assez grand pour pouvoir se passer de celui que leur prêterait un habile agencement. Ils ressemblent aux perles qui, pour être mal enfilées, n'en sont pas moins précieuses. D'autres proverbes déconseillent le vol et tous les méfaits nuisibles à l'humanité. L'usage des proverbes africains dans une œuvre littéraire écrite en langue étrangère peut se considérer comme la régénération de la tradition africaine pour que la culture et les valeurs africaines soient protégées de la domination totale des influences étrangères. Car, selon (Ayeleru, 2011), la littérature sert à promouvoir la culture en général, et plus particulièrement la culture africaine qui doit être exposée au monde entier. En utilisant des proverbes africains dans sa pièce, Okediji fait une valorisation de la culture africaine qui doit être protégée car au dire d'Ayeleru nous avons préservé les langues européennes au détriment de nos langues nationales. Mais d'après Ajiboye (2003) le traducteur de la version française de *Rere Run- La Catastrophe au Rendez-Vous*, "il entend permettre aux lecteurs francophones de déguster de la saveur littéraire de la pièce et de mieux connaître les enjeux de la culture Yorùbá, surtout du point de vue de l'interprétation de cette culture avec les impératifs de

la culture syndicales modernes” (Ajiboye, 2003)

Les proverbes africains d’Oladejo Okediji présentés en français par Ajiboye montrent l’usage spécial que l’on peut faire de la langue de Molière pour exprimer la culture Yorùbá. Ci-dessous sont quelques uns des proverbes tels qu’ils apparaissent dans la pièce: *La catastrophe au rendez-vous*, quelques-uns sont suivis de leurs traductions ou équivalents Yoruba et le message auquel chacun se rapporte.

### **ANALYSE DES PROVERBES DANS LA CATASTROPHE AU RENDEZ-VOUS**

1. *Le tigre marche à pas dérobés, tu ne sais pas que ce n’est pas par lâcheté qu’il se comporte ainsi, mais que c’est par prudence* (p. 2) : (En Yorùbá: Yí yó ẹ̀kùn t’ojo kó....) le tigre ne veut pas manquer sa proie. La leçon à tirer ici c’est que, l’apparence du tigre, cette démarche, ne veut pas dire qu’il a peur. Il s’agit de la sagesse du tigre. C’est-à-dire qu’on ne juge pas par l’apparence. En français, on dit que *l’habit ne fait pas le moine*.

2. *Il n’y a pas deux oiseaux qui se nomment aigrette* (p. 6). (En Yorùbá: Ẹ̀yẹ̀ méjì kìí jẹ̀ àṣá) on peut aussi dire (Ìgbéràgà ní n síwájú ìparun). Le message ici c’est de l’orgueil. Nous devons développer et démontrer l’esprit d’humilité. La leçon c’est que quand un homme est sage, il n’aimerait jamais être orgueilleux, car il sait que la fin de cet esprit orgueilleuse est toujours négative.

3. *C’est seulement un ignorant qui prend une potion médicale pour une soupe* (p. 6).

(En Yoruba: on dit souvent “omḡdé ò m’ òògùn ó ní pè é l’éfó”) La leçon c’est qu’on doit être sage, il ne faut pas avaler des médicaments sans aucune prescription.

4. *Celui qui nous envoie une mission mérite plus d’obéissance plus que celui qui est l’objet de la mission* (p. 7). (En Yoruba on dit: “Ẹ̀ní rán ni n’íṣẹ̀ l’àà ní b’èrù a kù í b’èrù ẹ̀ni à ní jẹ́ fun. L’objet c’est le nœud de ce message, celui qui envoie le message est plus important. Il faut être déterminé dans la vie pour atteindre le succès. “No matter the gravity of a threat, we must determine to achieve our goal, which is success.

5. *Si le sauvage t’envoie en mission, tu n’es pas obligé de te composer comme un sauvage* (p. 7). (En Yoruba, on dit souvent: T’á a bá rán ni n’íṣẹ̀ ẹ̀rú, àá fi t’omḡ jẹ́) La leçon à tirer ici c’est de faire le bon choix et d’être prudent. En Français, on dit quand on est à Rome, on vit comme les Romains. Cela veut dire que si les romains sont bandits, tu dois être bandits aussi. Mais dans cette situation, si on est dans un pays où tous sont des bandits, on n’a pas besoin de devenir bandit si on vit dans ce pays.

6. *A quoi bon l’épervier qui ne peut pas s’abattre sur les poussins?* (p. 10). (En Yoruba on dit : Kí ni àwòdì rẹ̀ n ṣe tí kò lè gbé adìẹ̀). La leçon: il faut être un leader exemplaire. C’est un leader que les autres suivent dans un système donné.

7. *Celui qui, selon nous ne vaut pas une chandelle, le voici devenu indispensable à notre vie collective* (p. 10). (En Yoruba: Ẹ̀ni t’á a rò pé kò ní le pàgò, t’ó wá di ẹ̀ni t’ó ní kó ilé alárinrin. La leçon à tirer c’est d’avoir le courage, la persévérance, il ne faut jamais se décourager pour réussir dans la vie. Et il ne faut pas mépriser personne, car on ne sait jamais ce qu’il sera capable d’accomplir.

8. *Lorsque le moustique se perche sur la tête de notre enfant, il serait peu prudent de le tuer à coup de bâton* (p. 11). (En Yoruba: Adìẹ̀ dà mí l’òògun nù, màá fọ́ l’ẹ̀yin).

La leçon ici, c'est qu'il faut être prudent pour ne pas tout perdre; il faut de la prudence.

9. *Tu vois, tout vient à point à qui sait attendre* (p. 12). (En Yoruba: Onísùúrùrù, l'ó ní j'ogún ayé./ Onísùúrùrù ní ní fún wàrà kinniún.) Le conseil ici, c'est d'avoir la patience.

C'est-à-dire quand vous espérez quelque chose, il vous faut de la patience. Attendre c'est la patience, on dit souvent en français que 'la patience est un chemin d'or'.

10. *L'enfant qui décide de ne pas laisser dormir sa mère, comment arrivera-t-il à dormir, lui aussi* (p. 12). (En Yoruba: ọmọ t'ó ní kí iyá òun má sù'n, òun náà kò ní fi ojú ba oorun.)

La leçon: ce proverbe prêche la bonté, il faut être bon. En Français: Qui sème du vent, récolte la tempête. La charité bien ordonnée commence par soi. Si vous voulez que la charité vous entoure de tous côtés, il faut que vous commenciez à l'appliquer.

11. *Dites-moi à qui appartient la ferme: au piège ou bien à l'écureuil?* (p. 13). (En Yoruba: b'íkun l'ó ni oko, bí tàkúté ni, ipàdé di ojú àlá. Le message: c'est pour montrer la supériorité. En Français, la raison du plus fort est toujours la meilleure (p. 13).

12. *Une fois la poule est en otage, les poussins errent partout* (p. 13). (En Yoruba: Baálé ilé kú, ilé d'ahoro. On peut aussi dire, Àì sí nílé ológìní, ilé d' ilé èkúté. La leçon à tirer: Se confier à l'être humaine, n'est que vanité, c'est le vide.

13. *Voici une affaire qui demande du tact, mais que le roi Onimogun cherche à rendre tendue* (p. 13). (En Yoruba, on dit: Òrò tí ò tó bùr t'á ní y'òbẹ̀ tì.) Le message de ce proverbe est qu'il faut être diplomatique pour aborder certaines choses dans la vie, surtout quand on est leader.

14. *Qui ne dit mot consent.* En français, qui ne dit rien consent, il est d'accord. (p. 14).

La leçon: il faut être courageux pour exprimer son opinion devant les gens, au lieu d'avoir peur. Quand vous ne parlez pas, même quand vous n'êtes pas d'accord, on sous-entend que vous êtes d'accord.

15. *Quand un esclave se trouve chez un maître bienveillant, il se moque de ses semblables.* (p. 14). (En Yoruba: Ènià l'aşòò mi.) C'est-à-dire, un esclave qui se moque de ses semblables, c'est parce qu'il a des supporteurs, il est couvert. Quand un enfant a des parents riches, il jouit de la richesse, il est vénéré à cause de ses parents.

16. *Le monde tourne sans cesse et sans signal; c'est effrayant. Celui qui ne sait pas nager risque de noyer* (p. 16). (En Yoruba: Bíríbirí l'aye n yí, aye kò dúró de ẹnikan. Eni tí kò mò wè á bá odò lọ.) La première leçon à tirer du proverbe c'est que la vie est comme un caméléon, qui change de temps en temps de couleur, rien n'est permanent; deuxièmement - A qui mieux mieux. Si tu n'es pas sage ou tu manques de sagesse, tu périras. Si tu joues bien, tu auras de bons résultats.

17. *Le jour où on abat un éléphant, toutes sortes de couteaux sont au rendez-vous* (p. 18). En Yoruba: Oríşirísi òbẹ̀ l'à n rí l'ójó ikú erin.) La leçon: Quand vous êtes chasseur, et vous vous lancez dans la chasse aux éléphants, personne ne vous suit. C'est quand vous arrivez à obtenir le butin que vous aurez beaucoup d'amis qui viendront célébrer avec vous. Quand vous êtes entrain de souffrir pour obtenir un résultat souhaitable, quand vous faites des sacrifices, vous le faites presque tout seul, ce n'est qu'à la fin quand il est temps de faire une bonne récolte, de jouir de l'appart, que vous aurez beaucoup d'amis.

18. *L'avare se justifie toujours en disant: c'est parce que ce n'est pas assez* (p. 18). (Du fait qu'il

n'en a pas assez). En Yoruba: Àwáwí ò k'a jọ. Le message est de toujours chercher des alibis pour se défendre. C'est du camouflage.

19. *Ceux qui travaillent se trouvent sous le soleil, ceux qui en profitent se trouvent à l'abri* (p. 19). En Yoruba: Òṣìṣé wà l'òòrun, a bá ni ná 'wó wà ní ibòji. La leçon: C'est un conseil de travailler bien, et avertissement contre la paresse. Ce proverbe s'emploie pour exposer l'exploitation des travailleurs.

20. *Le menteur a toujours quelqu'un comme confident* (p. 21). C'est-à-dire le menteur a toujours quelqu'un qui mentira comme lui, quelqu'un en qui il a confiance c'est pourquoi on dit 'montre moi qui tu hantes, et je te dirai qui tu es.

21. *Il passe beaucoup d'eau sous le point mais vous ne pouvez pas le savoir. La poule est capable de sueur, mais les plumes le rendent peu évidents* (p. 21). (En Yoruba, on dit: Adìe ní l'àágùr̀n, iyé apá r̀è ni kò jẹ́ kí á mọ́.) La leçon: il y a le destin. Le destin de l'homme, rien ne peut changer.

22. *Si à la vue des mouches qui s'abattent sur la blessure, personne ne se montre étonné, que personne ne rouspète si le blessé descend sur les mouches pour les manger* (p. 22). (En Yoruba: Nígba tí eṣinṣin n jẹ́ elégbò ẹ̀nikan ò ríi, t'élégbò bá níjẹ́ eṣinṣin....) La leçon: il y a un aspect d'égoïsme, la réciprocité dans les relations humaine, le riche aimerait toujours continuer à être riche, il n'entend pas que l'opposée ait lieu.

23. *Qu'a-t-on faire de la fourmi alors que l'éléphant se trouve à notre portée...* (p. 23). (Qu'allons nous faire de la pénurie et l'opulence? a cote de l'opulence, la pénurie n'existe pas, on fait la comparaison entre l'abondance et la pénurie.

24. *Est-ce que le balai n'est pas le roi des mouches?* (p. 23). (En Yoruba: Òṣùṣù ọ̀wò l'ọ̀kọ́ eṣinṣin.) La leçon: On parle de deux individus. Il y a le premier qui a une connaissance qui n'influence personne. Mais la connaissance qui profite dont on se sert pour aboutir a une fin souhaitable est la meilleure.

25. *Les lianes qui cherchent à entraver le mouvement de l'éléphant finiront par partir avec l'éléphant* (p. 23). (En yoruba: tàkùr̀n tó ní k'érin má w'ọ̀dò, t'òun t'erin l'ó ñlọ́.) Leçon : la raison du plus fort est toujours la meilleure, aucun obstacle ne pourra deranger.

26. *Fait un peu le diplomate: ton cœur croit au noir, mais que ta bouche préfère le blanc* (p. 24). (En yoruba, on dit, ènià f'èjè s'ínú, tu itó funfun jáde.) Ça c'est l'hypocrisie. La leçon: il faut se méfier de l'hypocrite. Il s'agit d'un fumiste, une personne qui vous le voyez avec vous, et vous le prenez comme un ami de confiance, mais après il va raconter votre confort. Il va vendre la mèche à l'ennemie.

27. *Une affaire qui, chez certains, provoque les larmes, la voici qui est la source de joie chez d'autres* (p. 26). C'est-à-dire ce qui fait pleurer certains peut servir de source de joie aux autres. Par exemple, quand il y a des gens qui s'accaparent des biens de l'état ou font usage des biens de l'état pour leur propre fin, définitivement, il doit ya avoir des dépourvus qui en souffrirons.

28. *Celui qui se chauffe au bois non séchée est, de toute évidence, condamné aux supplices du froid* (p. 29). C'est-a-dire, ce n'est pas que l'homme ne fourni pas d'effort, mais des efforts que l'on fourni mais qui ne rapporte rien, ces efforts finiront par ruiner. Il faut que l'on ait des objectifs atteignables.

29. *Vous qu'on cherche à détruire par le feu, n'est-ce pas vous-même, qui vous vous enduisez d'huile* (p. 29). (Qui vous mettez près du feu?). Leçon: Il ne faut pas être agent de sa propre ruine par ses actes.

30. *La mouche sera toujours dans la compagnie de la plaie* (p. 30). (En yoruba: Ta l'eşinşin ì bá gbè, bí kò şe elégbò). La leçon: La plaie peut être facteur qui entrave la présence des mouches si l'on manque du savoir, ou des moyens pour se protéger contre les effets de ces mouches qui sont d'ailleurs dangereuses pour la santé parce que les mouches sont porteuses de bactéries. La négligence est dangereuse pour la santé humaine.

31. *A quoi rêve la poule si non à la possibilité de manger du maïs* (p. 30). La leçon: le ventre affamé n'a point d'oreille. L'homme qui a faim ne cherche rien que de trouver à manger.

32. *Le petit qui sait garder ses mains propres mangera volontiers avec les grands* (pp. 35-36). (En yoruba: B'ómòdé ba m'òwó wè, á b'ágbà jẹun,) La leçon: Un enfant qui n'est pas têtue, qui a du respect, qui n'est pas désobéissant aura toujours des faveurs de ses aînés.

33. *La charité bien ordonnée commence par soi-même* (p. 41). La leçon: Fait aux autres ce que tu aimerais que l'on te fasse.

34. *Láwúwo est un véritable idiot et il va souffrir énormément, pis que la vache qui se montre difficile au berger au cours du pâturage* (p. 42). Leçon: La bête qui se montre désobéissante au berger toujours va souffrir. Donc, il faut être toujours obéissant, pour mériter de bénéfices ou des gloires.

35. *A quelqu'un qui ne mérite que de dormir par terre, lui proposer la natte, c'est perdre son temps* (p. 43). La leçon à tirer ici, c'est que l'habitude est une seconde nature.

36. *Une divinité ... Indifférente à toutes les sollicitudes finit par tomber dans la disgrâce* (p. 43).

37. *Tu es comme la blatte qui voudrait bien danser, mais la poule est bien à côté* (p. 45). La leçon: Il faut se méfier des ennemies, un poussin qui s'expose au danger de l'aigle finira par être détruit.

38. *Le bien conduit vaut mieux que mille parures* (p. 46). (En yoruba: Ìwà rere l'ẹ̀şo ènià.) La leçon: On veut établir la relation entre la bonne conduite et le matérialisme. En d'autre terme, ce qu'il y a de précieux, de qualité, innée en soi vaille mieux que des milliers de dollars. Il faut être un homme de morale dans la société. Ça c'est dans l'ancien temps. Ceux qui ont de l'argent, sont ceux qui dictent dans notre société d'aujourd'hui, ce n'est plus question de qualité.

39. *Le chat parti, la souris peut donc se permettre de danser* (p. 49). La leçon: Quand le maître n'est pas là, les serviteurs se font roi. Dans un pays où il manque des vrais leaders sur qui l'on peut compter pour faire régner l'ordre, la paix et la justice, les subordonnés créent l'anarchie.

40. *C'est la pluie qui force le pigeon dans la compagnie de la poule* (p. 75). (En yoruba: Òjò t'ó p'àlàpà, l'ó k'ẹ̀yẹ̀lé pò m'ádiẹ.) Leçon: Il n'y a pas d'ordre, chacun fait à sa tête quand il y manque de direction.

## LA CONCLUSION

Ayant lu soigneusement la version traduite de *RÉRÉ RÚN- Le catastrophe au rendez-vous*, nous remarquons l'étayage des éléments de l'oralité à savoir des proverbes,

une beauté artistique distincte, faite par Ajiboye (2003) en respectant aussi que possible les règles de la grammaire française. La langue européenne (Française) est manœuvrée pour refléter la tradition africaine, un effort digne de louanges. Alors, nous proposons que l'on puisse se servir des proverbes africains de doubles fonctions. En les apprenant, on peut les utiliser en même temps à enseigner la langue française dans nos écoles à tous les niveaux, au Nigéria. Il nous faut aussi faire l'usage libre de la langue européenne pour encourager un mariage de la culture africaine et celle des pays occidentaux pour qu'il y ait du progrès sur le plan social. En faisant "le maniement de la langue" (Lanson, 1912), on peut trouver les aspects positifs de la culture africaine et les marier aux aspects positifs de la culture occidentale. Un mariage de ces deux cultures engendra la promotion des valeurs de deux cotés. L'une ne devrait point être prévaluée sur l'autre.

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Mukluks #2

White Feather/Robert Nabess

## The Religion of the First Israelites

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The Iron I period is the first era in which an entity known as Israel can be spoken of with any level of certainty. Among the many issues relative to early Israel discussed by scholars, the question of what kind of religious beliefs and practices the early Israelites adhered to ranks high in importance. This paper seeks to provide a reconstruction of early Israelite religion in the Iron I period. In order to understand the religion of early Israel it is first essential to establish the religious matrix from which early Israelite religion emerges. From there an analysis of the relevant archaeological data from the Iron I period must be undertaken to assess how early Israelite religion fits within, or moves away from the beliefs and practices from which it emerges. Finally an analysis of some of the earliest Israelite writings relevant to the period will be weighed in to a reconstruction of early Israelite religion. All of these lines of evidence seem to suggest that early Israelite religion was highly similar to its Canaanite context with only one noteworthy variation - the presence Yahwism at this time amongst a smaller minority of Israelites.

In order to reconstruct early Israelite religion, it is essential to understand the religious context from which it emerges. Although separated geographically from ancient Canaan, Ugaritic literature is currently the best literary evidence concerning Near Eastern religious beliefs in the Iron I Period. These texts come from Ugarit, an ancient Late Bronze city (Parker 1). While some of the stories in Ugaritic literature may date as early as 1400 B.C.E. (Smith 82), their inclusion among the literature of Ugarit indicates that even the earlier stories were still considered worthy of being used and recopied at this time. Therefore, although some Ugaritic literature may be earlier, its usage in the Late Bronze Age makes it an integral part of Late Bronze religious life, and therefore foundational to understanding the religious practices of the Iron I that follow directly after it.

While its geographical position north of Canaan may call into question the validity of using Ugaritic literature as a source for Canaanite religious beliefs, Frank Moore Cross argues that Israel and Ugarit share a common oral tradition (“Canaanite Myth” 113). This assertion is further reinforced by an analysis, to be undertaken presently, of the relevant early Israelite material culture from this period. Therefore, an analysis of the religious beliefs embedded in Ugaritic literature provides the matrix from which early Israelite religion emerges.

While there is a high god in Ugaritic literature, the tradition as a whole is polytheistic. The god El is at the head of the Ugaritic pantheon and is also the deity involved in creation (Greenstein 11). In the *Kirta* epic, when inquiring as to why Kirta, whose family has just died (“Kirta” 1.1.7-9),<sup>1</sup> is upset, El asks, “is it kingship like his father he wants? / Or dominion like the father of Man” (“Kirta” 1.1.41-43). This section provides, in a rather

1. All references to the Ugaritic text are given in the form: Tablet.Column.Line.

dense form, a number of beliefs about the god El. The words kingship and dominion indicate that El holds a very high position among the gods. The fact that this phrase is put in the mouth of El himself shows that El, assuming he is not lying or exaggerating, is the king of the gods. The epithet “Father of Man” (“Kirta” 1.1.43) and the fact that El calls himself Kirta’s father not only describes El’s role as creator, but also shows El’s higher status and authority.

This use of family language is important in Ugaritic literature as it is used to describe the chains of authority amongst the gods. In the *Aqhat* epic the deity Baal calls on El to bless Daniel for his piety, saying, “Bless him, Bull, El my father, Prosper him, Creator of Creatures” (“Aqhat” 1.1.22-23). The fact that Baal, the mighty storm God (Smith 82), refers to El as father indicates that El holds a position of authority over Baal, so much so that Baal cannot bless Daniel without beseeching El. Also important in Baal’s supplication is the association of El with bulls. The title “Bull El” (“Kirta” 1.1.23) is extremely common throughout Ugaritic literature. This association could be a reference to El’s great power and strength as the chief god of the Ugaritic pantheon, or his creative ability and sexual prowess represented by the fertility commonly associated with bulls. Indeed, all of these aspects of El’s nature are present in Ugaritic literature, as in one instance, before copulating with his wives, El’s “hand,” a word which could just as easily here be translated “penis,” is said to be “long as the sea” (“Birth of Gods” 34-35).

While the god El holds an extremely high position among the Ugaritic deities, this Late Bronze religion is far from being monotheistic, or even henotheistic. The *Aqhat* epic provides a key insight into power relations amongst the Ugaritic gods. In response

to the goddess Anat's desire to kill Aqhat, El says "I know you, daughter, as desperate, / [Among goddesses no]thing resists you" ("Aqhat" 2.1.16-17). By referring to Anat as "daughter" the text suggests that Anat has a lower status than El. However, by stating that nothing can resist Anat, El ascribes to her a great deal of authority and power. If the reconstruction is accurate, the text could even indicate that Anat holds a high position even in relation to other goddesses.

The idea that gods and goddesses who have less power and status than El are still considered objects of veneration and worship is further supported in the *Kirta* epic when Kirta rhetorically asks "Who's as fair as the goddess Anath?"<sup>2</sup> ("Kirta" 1.3.41). This statement suggests that Anat is worthy of veneration, even if only for her great beauty. Ugaritic literature speaks of many gods and goddesses, both named and unnamed that have different levels of status and power, yet are still legitimate objects of worship. The *Kirta* epic depicts a gathering of deities: "Once the party of God's has arrived, / Up speaks Almighty Baal" ("Kirta" 2.2.11-12). This description not only indicates that Ugaritic religion acknowledged many deities, but also shows the relative power of the god Baal through the epithet "Almighty." While the supremacy of the head god El is clear in Ugaritic literature, it is equally clear that this tradition also endorses the worship of many other deities.

Although there are many deities considered worthy of veneration in the Ugaritic literature, no deity is seen as all-powerful or morally perfect. The gods are often depicted as being in conflict with one another. A large portion of *The Baal Cycle* is concerned with

the battle between Baal and the deity representing the sea, Yamm (Smith 82). As a result of his confrontation with Mot, death, Baal is commanded to "descend to Hell" ("Baal" 3.5.14). Baal then goes down into death, but not before copulating repeatedly with a cow ("Baal" 3.5.18-19). Baal's conflict with other gods and death reveals that even a god referred to with the epithet "Almighty," is imperfect and limited in power. This lack of omnipotence extends also to the vast majority of Ugaritic deities as most rank lower in power and prestige than Baal.

Although El may be the one deity in the Ugaritic pantheon that comes close to displaying omnipotence and perfection, he is not without weakness. In *El's Divine Feast*, the high god throws a party in which he "drinks wine till sated, / Vintage till inebriated" ("El's Feast" 1.16). In his stupor, El displays weakness by being unable to walk properly without the assistance of lesser deities ("El's Feast" 1.17-19). The fact that El's behavior is seen as less than becoming for the chief god is made clear by the fact that El is rebuked for his poor behavior by Habayu, a figure of which little is known (Lewis 194). El's humiliation is made complete in the text when "He slips in his dung and urine, / El collapses like one dead" ("El's Feast" 1.20-21). El's behavior at his banquet shows that, in Ugaritic literature, no god or goddess is all-powerful or all-knowing all of the time.

Throughout Ugaritic literature, several hints are given as to how these deities were worshiped, providing a limited amount of information regarding what one could expect to find archaeologically in places where such religious practices were occurring. In the *Kirta* epic, in order to appease El, Kirta is commanded to "Take a lamb [in [his] hands] /... Take a pig[eon], bird of sacrifice /... [And] Sacrifice to Bull El, [his] Father"

2, Here "Anath" is the same deity as "Anat" discussed above. The difference in spelling is a difference in how the Ugaritic (*nt*) is transliterated into English.

("Kirta" 1.2.13,17-18,23-24). This text indicates that sacrificing animals of various kinds, including sheep and pigeons, was considered to be a legitimate way to seek divine favor. In the same passage, Kirta is also told to "Pour wine into a silver basin; / Into a gold basin, honey" ("Kirta" 1.2.18-19). This selection demonstrates that in addition to animal sacrifices, different kinds of libations could also be given to the gods in order to obtain their favor. Unfortunately, while these texts do give an indication of some of the cultic practices associated with the Ugaritic deities, they do not give much information regarding what one could expect to find archaeologically in places where these deities were worshiped. While it would be possible to crosscheck the animal bones found at a given site with those listed in the Ugaritic texts as sacrificial animals in order to find evidence for these types of practices, these texts do not give any indication of whether or not any special cultic places or objects that could be discovered archaeologically were used in the worship of the gods. The only references to cultic objects are the gold and silver vessels into which Kirta is commanded to pour libations ("Kirta" 1.2.18-19).

With the context from which early Israelite religion emerges established, it is now necessary to turn to the early Israelite material culture relating to religious activity in order to reconstruct the religious practices of these early Israelites. This data must then be weighed against the literary data from Ugarit in order to determine to what extent Israelite religion is continuous or discontinuous with earlier religious beliefs and practices. Unfortunately, there is relatively little extant archaeological information relating to early Israelite religion ("Archeology" 348). However, the few, key pieces of evidence that do exist generally suggest continuities with the religious beliefs and practices outlined in

the Ugaritic texts. As a result of this connection, the validity of using Ugaritic literature as a source for the religious beliefs and practices of Late Bronze and Iron I Canaan is reinforced.

One structure that has created a great deal of debate is the alleged altar on Mount Ebal. This structure is from a site dating to the late thirteenth and twelfth century B.C.E. (Killebrew 159). The controversy comes from the fact that several scholars have attempted to associate this structure with the altar constructed by Joshua in the biblical account. Ann Killebrew describes the site as a "large, rectangular structure of unhewn stones" (160). There is also a large amount of ashes and burnt animal bones found at the site (Killebrew 160). Much of this ash and bone has been found in the center of the structure along with earth and stone as construction fill ("Archaeology" 358). The biblical account describes the altar as "an altar of whole stones on which no one used an iron tool" (Joshua 8:31).<sup>3</sup>

The fact that the altar is constructed out of undressed stone, as commanded in the biblical account, coupled with the presence of burnt animal bones at the site, can, and has been, used to support an association between this structure and the altar described in the biblical account. However, there are several other facts that complicate this reading. Even if the structure is an altar, the connection with the biblical narrative is not as sound as it may appear. The biblical text states that Joshua "wrote there on the stones a copy of the law of Moses" (Joshua 8:32). The structure on Mount Ebal has no such writing. However, this fact is not strong enough evidence in to wholly discredit a connection between the biblical account and the Mount Ebal structure, as the fact that the stones would not have been carved with an iron tool indicates that any writing on them would

3. All biblical citations in this paper are my own translation of the Hebrew.

not be written in such a way that it would be preserved for long periods of time. In addition to these lines of evidence, the fact that “there are no archaeological parallels for such a large monumental altar” (“Archaeology” 350), has led many scholars to conclude that the structure on Mount Ebal is not an altar at all. These scholars tend to interpret the structure as a more secular structure, perhaps as the foundation for a watchtower and, while still others interpret the site as a cultic site; a high place unrelated to the biblical account (“Archaeology” 350).

Although Killebrew claims that current scholarship is leaning more towards interpreting the structure on Mount Ebal as a cultic site (Killebrew 160), the evidence is highly inconclusive. The fact that animals can be slaughtered and burned in a variety of contexts and for a number of reasons and the fact that such architecture can be interpreted in multiple, equally plausible, ways makes interpreting this structure highly subjective. There is simply too little evidence to determine with certainty whether structure on Mount Ebal is the biblical altar, another cultic site, or simply part of a larger structure such as a watchtower. Instead of attempting to make a strong argument from little data, it is better at this stage to suspend judgment as to the nature of this structure. Later, when the more certain data has been analyzed, each of these possibilities can be factored into the reconstruction of early Israelite religion suggested by the stronger evidence.

One site of particular interest is the “high place” from the northern Samarian hills that dates to the Iron I Period (“Archaeology” 350). This site, which is best described as an “open cult place” (“Bull Site” 32), consists of a circle of stones measuring twenty meters across (“Archaeology” 351). A “standing stone” was also found with offerings on the paved

section in front of it (“Bull Site” 35). While this evidence clearly indicates ritual worship, it is difficult to tell whether the worship practices that would have occurred at the site can be viewed as representative for Israelite worship in the Iron I. However, the lack of other high places dating to the same time cannot be used as evidence that whatever kind of worship occurred at this site was not more widespread. Such high places are difficult to find archaeologically, as they are easily destroyed by the action of humans and erosion (“Bull Site” 27). Therefore, even if the religious practices occurring in the Samarian hills at this time were common throughout Israel, one would still not expect to find a large number of such high places. What can be said with certainty regarding the practices at this cultic site is that whatever kind of religious practices occurred here had a presence in early Israel and was possibly more widespread than this one site.

As to the nature of the kind of worship practiced at this site, one find stands out as being the most useful in reconstructing the religious tradition associated with this high place. Close to the western wall of the high place, a 17.5cm long bull figurine made of bronze was found at impressive level of preservation (“Bull Site” 27). This figurine is an example of skillful craftsmanship, and is one of the largest bronze figurines unearthed in the land of Israel (“Bull Site” 27). Although it could be suggested that this figurine is an offering to a deity rather than an image meant to be associated with a god or goddess, several features indicate that this particular figurine is intended to represent a deity. Mazar argues that the size, and skillful craftsmanship of this figurine indicates that it is meant to represent a deity, as a simple offering would not be of such a high level of craftsmanship (“Bull Site” 32).

While the assertion that this Samarian bull figurine is meant to represent a deity is uncontroversial, the identification of the deity it is intended to represent is somewhat less clear. Mazar suggests that Baal and Yahweh are both possibilities (“Bull Site” 40), while Dever sees a clear connection between this figurine and the god El (Dever 128). The connection to Yahweh is based on the golden calf of Exodus 32, and the golden calves constructed by Jeroboam in First Kings 12. In both of these texts, the golden calves are introduced in much the same way. The Exodus account reads, “these are your gods (Elohim), Israel, who caused you to go up from the land of Egypt” (Genesis 32:4), and likewise Jeroboam states upon unveiling his golden calves, “*Here are* your gods (Elohim), Israel, who caused you to go up from the land of Egypt” (1 Kings 12:28).<sup>4</sup>

These accounts make identifying the bull figurine from the Samarian hills with Yahweh problematic. Although those on the side of calf worship in the biblical accounts may be attempting to associate the Elohim mentioned in the text with Yahweh, the text itself is strongly arguing against this association. There is a semantic association between the deity El and the word Elohim, which is the plural of El. Although Elohim, in the biblical text, comes to refer to Israel’s god, Frank Moore Cross argues that some early references to El are references to the Ugaritic and Canaanite god (“Canaanite Myth” 49,60). By depicting calf worship – worship very much tied to the deity El who is constantly equated with bulls – negatively (see Exodus 32:35), the writers of the biblical accounts make the argument that Yahweh, Israel’s Elohim, should not be thought of in the same

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4, In both of these cases, some translations suggest the plural “Elohim” be translated here as the singular “god.” Elohim often refers to god in the singular, and certainly the context here, especially in the Exodus account that only refers to a single calf, favors the singular. However, the plurality of the word “these” and the verb for “caused to go up” makes the plural a truer reading of the Hebrew. Regardless, there is still some ambiguity as to how this word is best translated in this instance.

way as El. For the biblical writers, although Yahweh is Elohim, a deity of supreme power, he is absolutely not to be thought of in the same way as the Ugaritic or Canaanite El. Therefore, it is unlikely that a bull figurine would be used as a representation of Yahweh. This reading is supported by Mazar, who, although he suggests the connection to Yahweh is possible, argues for an association with the god Baal (“Bull Site” 40).

It could also be argued that because the biblical text argues against the association of Yahweh with El and calf worship, there must have been those who made that connection and therefore would have been likely to use a bronze calf as a representation of Yahweh. If this were the case, such people would still be thinking of Yahweh in largely Canaanite terms, which would still indicate – as a connection with El or Baal would – that at this stage the religious beliefs and practices of the Israelites associated with this, and similar high places have not moved far from their Canaanite roots. However, a connection with El or Baal is still far more probable, as it fits more directly with the evidence.

The bull figurine from the Samarian high place shows a strong connection to both El and Baal. However, it is unclear exactly which of these deities the figurine is meant to be associated with. Both El and Baal are linked to bovine imagery. El is frequently referred to as Bull El (“Aqhat” 1.1.23). While this connection is clear, there is also strong evidence to associate this bull figurine with Baal. In addition to the incident described above, where Baal copulates repeatedly with a cow, there is another Ugaritic account that further links Baal with bovine imagery. In *Baal Fathers a Bull*, Baal requests that he and his sister Anat “lengthen life” (“Baal Fathers a Bull” 2.20). Apparently, in a section of the text that is now lost, the two decide that Baal should father offspring through a cow, as

later in the story it is declared that “a bull is born to Baal, / A wild ox to the rider of the clouds!” (“Baal Fathers a Bull” 3.35-36). Both of these instances connect Baal with bulls, and therefore make the connection with the bull figurine from the Samarian hills quite probable. The details of the figurine itself are also unhelpful for connecting the bronze bull to one deity or the other. The bull has pronounced male genitalia, and its tail is lifted to reveal its anus (“Bull Site” 29). This emphasis on the sexual characteristics of the bull likely represent strength and sexual vitality. These characteristics are unhelpful in differentiating between whether Baal or El it is meant to be represented by the bull in question, as the sexual potency of both deities it is a major theme in Ugaritic literature.

Although both Baal and El are strong candidates for the deity worshipped at the site in question, it is not necessary to differentiate between which of these two were being venerated in order to make several important inferences about the nature of early Israelite religion. Regardless of whether Baal or El was being worshipped in the Samarian hills, the site is clearly continuous with earlier Canaanite religion, which shares a common mythology with the Ugaritic tradition (“Canaanite Myth” 113). This connection with Canaanite practices has lead Mazar to argue that this figurine was originally made in a Canaanite workshop, which produced many such figurines, before being used in Israelite worship (“Archaeology” 352). This Canaanite connection indicates that Canaanite religious practices had a foothold in Early Israel. These Canaanite practices were certainly present in the Samarian hills and could possibly have been more widespread.

Another source related to the religious practices of the early Israelites, are the tenth to eleventh century arrowheads, which contain inscriptions. Such arrowheads tend to

begin with the word for arrow, followed by the name of the owner in the following format: (Owner’s Name) bn (son of) (The Owner’s Father) (Heltzer 525). Several arrows from El-Khadr, a village just west of Bethlehem (Milik and “Canaanite Myth” 5), are inscribed with “hs ‘bdlb’t bn ‘nt” (Heltzer 526). This phrase translates as “the arrow of Abdlabi’at son of Anat” (Heltzer 526, translation mine). It is unlikely that Anat is simply a reference to the mother of the arrow’s owner, because if the inscription were simply a designator lineage, it would include the name of the father. Therefore, it is better to see these “Ben-Anat” arrowheads as a reference to the goddess that appears in Ugaritic and Canaanite mythology. Michael Heltzer argues, however, that the owners of these arrows were not considered the biological children of Anat, but rather that Anat is being used in this case to designate a person as a great warrior (Heltzer 526). Although the use of Ben-Anat as a term of honor does not necessarily mean that the goddess was being worshiped by these people at this time, it does suggest that the religious language and mythology of Canaan still exerted a strong influence within the Israelite community in this area.

Also of interest are the theophoric names inscribed on many of the arrowheads. Many of the names inscribed on the arrowheads contain references to Canaanite deities. For example, the names ‘Oziba’al and Zakarba’al both include the name of Baal. Such names suggest that these early Israelites participated in largely Canaanite religious practices, because it is unlikely that a person would be named after a deity that their family did not revere. Taken together, the use of Ben-Anat as a title of honour and the references to Canaanite deities contained within the names inscribed on these arrowheads provides evidence that the religious practices of the early Israelites in this area were continuous

with earlier Canaanite practices.

Another find that has a bearing on early Israelite religion is an inscription found on an offering bowl from Qubur el-Walaydah (Byrne 18). The bowl itself dates to either the end of the Late Bronze Age or the early Iron I, based on an analysis of the script (“New Inscriptions” 1,3). Inscribed on this bowl are the names of two people, presumably those providing the offering (Byrne 18). One of these names is a theophoric name with a reference to El. While it is tempting to associate this reference to El with the Ugaritic/Canaanite god, this connection is not certain. El can be a reference to the specific god of the Ugaritic pantheon, a representation of all divinity (Smith 83), a generic name for god as is common throughout the biblical text, or simply an adjective meaning “mighty.” This vast semantic range for the term El makes its appearance in a theophoric name weak evidence, at best, for the worship of the Canaanite god at this site.

In addition to the two names found on the bowl there is also a reference to what is being offered. There are two possible readings for the word describing the offering. One possible reading is to translate the word in question as “sheep,” the other is to translate it as “shekel” – a unit of weight (Byrne 18). If the text is best understood as a reference to an offering of sheep, this reading would accord well with the Ugaritic literature, in which offering sheep is common (Byrne 18) – as in the *Kirta* epic discussed above.

The level of ambiguity involved in translating this particular inscription makes it difficult to use in a reconstruction of early Israelite religion. At best, this inscription provides weak evidence for continuities between early Israelite and Canaanite religious practices. However, it is almost equally likely that this inscription reveals nothing

about early Israelite religion, except that at some point in the Iron I period, some people offered something to a deity or deities.

At this stage an analysis of the relevant archaeological data indicates that early Israelite religion was largely continuous with older Canaanite religion. The Samarian high place and the bronze bull associated with this site provide strong evidence that Canaanite worship practices had a foothold in the area. Although it is unclear to what extent this worship was normative, the arrowheads from El-Khadr, that refer to the goddess Anat and contain theophoric names referencing Baal, suggest that Canaanite religious practices were also adopted by Israelites in the South. The “altar” on Mount Ebal and the inscription from Qubur el-Walaydah are largely ambiguous. No reading of the Qubur el-Walaydah inscription strongly discredits the assertion that early Israelite religion was largely continuous with Canaanite practice, and the structure on Mount Ebal is too ambiguous to weigh into a reconstruction at this point. This reading of the data agrees with the analysis of William Dever, who argues that all the archaeological data from this time period associates the religion of the early Israelites with Canaanite religious practice (Dever 128). The fact that these findings point to early Israelite religion closely paralleling what is preserved in the Ugaritic literature also reinforces the validity of using the Ugaritic texts as a source for early Canaanite beliefs, because the Israelites would not have received these traditions directly from Ugarit, but would have instead received them from the Canaanites out of whose land they emerge.

At this point it is necessary to turn to the earliest Israelite writings to determine how they affect an understanding of Israelite religion in the Iron I period. For this purpose,

both the Song the Deborah and the Song of the Sea will be analyzed. Although there is a great deal of scholarly debate as to the dating of these two texts – as was the case with the Ugaritic literature – an analysis of what these texts suggest Israelite religion consisted of in the Iron Age I both supports and extends the archaeological data.

The Song of Deborah will be analyzed first, not because it is the oldest, but because it actually is set in, and likely dates to the early Iron Age. The dating of the Song of Deborah has been the subject of a great deal of scholarly debate. Earlier assessments, such as Cross's assessment in *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, tended to date the Song of Deborah early due to its consistently archaic literary features ("Canaanite Myth" 121). However, some more recent scholars, such as Serge Frolov, date the text as late as the exilic period based on an analysis of the song's grammatical and ideological qualities (Frolov n.pag.). Other current scholars, such as Alexander Globe, argue that, while it is impossible to be certain, there is nothing in the Song of Deborah that precludes it from being an eleventh or twelfth century production (Globe 497, 499). In "The Accounts of Deborah (Judges 4-5) in Recent Research," Tyler Mayfield aptly summarizes the current research on the dating of the Song of Deborah. After reviewing the variety of positions, Mayfield concludes that the majority of recent scholarship still understands the song as being very old, however there is much division as to the exact date of the text even amongst scholars who argue that it is early (Mayfield 328). Based on the scholarly majority and on the archaic features of the Hebrew, it seems plausible to suggest that the Song of Deborah dates somewhere around the Iron I period and is therefore useful for understanding early Israelite religion. Even if the song were considerably later, an analysis of the evidence it

presents regarding early Israelite religion would suggest that it at least preserves some historical memory of Israelite religion in the Iron Age I.

The Song of Deborah is first of all a song of praise to Yahweh. This is made clear from the very first verse of the song, which contains the imperative "praise Yahweh!" (Judges 5:2). Therefore, the song presumes that Yahweh is Israel's "natural" deity, as evidenced by the repeated references to Yahweh as "Elohe Yisrael" (Judges 5:3, 5), the God of Israel.

Despite the fact that the Song of Deborah is a victory song dedicated to Yahweh, verse eight suggests that at the time to which the song refers, Yahweh was not being worshiped by the Israelites. It reads, "he (Israel) chose new gods, then war was (at the) gates. / Could a shield or spear be seen among forty thousand in Israel?" (Judges 5:8) The use of the Hebrew for "then" creates a cause-and-effect relationship between the choosing of new gods, and the resulting war. This text is arguing that the conflict described in the song, and Israel's lack of preparedness for it, is the direct result of Israel choosing to follow deities other than Yahweh. This kind of statement is clearly an argument against worshiping gods other than Yahweh. It flows logically, therefore, that the worship of other gods was occurring at the time of the Song of Deborah, otherwise there would be no reason to attack such practices. The fact that the song accuses Israel, not a subgroup within Israel, of choosing other gods suggests that in the Iron Age I there was a time when a large percentage of these early Israelites adhered to a religion other than the one that the song prescribes as normative.

This conclusion accords well with the archaeological evidence, which points to

Israel worshiping gods other than Yahweh in the Iron I. The Song of Deborah can also be used to extend the archaeological data, by providing evidence that Canaanite religion was more widespread than could be inferred with certainty from the archaeological evidence. The fact that the Song of Deborah accuses Israel as a whole of choosing other gods suggests that Canaanite religious practices were not only contained to the few sites that there is extant evidence for archaeologically.

Although the Song of Deborah agrees with the archaeological data regarding the presence of Canaanite style religion in early Israel, it is impossible to ignore the fact that the song suggests an innovation to Israelite religion at this time beyond what exists archaeologically, namely, the worship of Yahweh. The very existence of this early victory song to Yahweh, indicates that Yahweh is worshiped to some extent in the Iron Age I. The worship of Yahweh as described in the song also differs greatly from Canaanite religion in that it is exclusive. While the Ugaritic texts suggest that many deities were worthy of veneration, the Song of Deborah argues against the worship of “new gods” (Judges 5:8), that is, gods other than Yahweh. The song discourages the worship of other deities by arguing that it was the worship of other gods that resulted in Israel being oppressed and attacked. This kind of argument suggests that early Yahwism was, at the very least, henotheistic.

The worship of Yahweh is also associated with political unity in the song. By repeatedly calling Yahweh “the God of Israel” (Judges 5:3, 5), the song uses the worship of Yahweh to encourage Israel to be united against its enemies, which are “the kings of Canaan” (Judges 5:19). In addition to supporting the assertion that Israelite religion was

largely continuous with earlier Canaanite religion in the Iron Age I, the Song of Deborah also suggests that a more exclusive Yahwism also emerges at this time and is used as a means of uniting Israelite groups against Canaanite influences.

The last early Israelite text to turn to for a reconstruction of early Israelite religion is the Song of the Sea. The dating of the Song of the Sea is somewhat less controversial than the dating of the Song of Deborah. Cross, who dates the text to be eleventh or twelfth century B.C.E, argues that the Hebrew of the Song of the Sea is consistently archaic, and therefore suggests an early date (“Canaanite Myth” 121, 124). He also argues that the Song of the Sea agrees with a literary form from the Late Bronze Age, and therefore must be considerably ancient (“Canaanite Myth” 121). Freedman and Miano also argue for an early, twelfth century B.C.E., date for the Song of the Sea, based on the fact that this is the only time in which all four of the nations mentioned in the song, Edom, Moab, Canaan, and Philistia, existed at the same time (297). All of these factors point to a date in and around the Iron I period for the Song of the Sea, making this poem a worthwhile source in the reconstruction of early Israelite religious beliefs.

Like the Song of Deborah, the Song of the Sea further defines the Yahwism that it claims exists at this time, and also implicitly suggests that early Israelites were practicing a highly Canaanite kind of religion. The song rhetorically asks “who is like you among the gods (Elim), Yahweh? Who is like you, glorious in holiness, / awe-inspiring in deeds worthy of praise, doing wonders? (Exodus 15:11). The intended answer to these questions is that there is no god like Yahweh, and therefore none worthy of praise as he is. Although this passage does not suggest that no other gods exist, its strict exclusivity that represents

a major break from Canaanite religion.

The worship of Yahweh as described in the Song of the Sea is clearly designed to oppose the religious practices of early Israel's contemporaries. After recounting the mighty works of Yahweh, the song states, "(the) peoples heard, they are trembling, writhing has seized the inhabitants of Philistia. / Now the chiefs of Edom are horrified, trembling seized Moab's leaders. / All the inhabitants of Canaan melt away" (Exodus 15:14-15). This verse describes these nations as trembling in weakness before Yahweh's great power. Embedded in this kind of statement is the argument that Yahweh is far greater than these nations and their gods. In this way, the song portrays the exclusivity of Yahwism as a movement against these nations and their religious practices.

Despite its strong arguments for the exclusive worship of Yahweh, the Song of the Sea implies that the early Israelites also worshiped other gods. The poet would not have to argue that there is no god like Yahweh if everyone in the early Israel agreed on that point. The very strength of the arguments against other nations and their religious practices can be taken as evidence that there were those within the poet's community who have believed and practiced the very things the song condemns.

The biblical data largely supports the trend established by the archaeological evidence regarding the religion of the early Israelites; that early Israelite religion was largely continuous with Canaanite practice. The biblical data does, however, provide evidence that these Canaanite type religious practices were more widespread than could be safely inferred from the archaeological data. The few archaeological finds concerning early Israelite religion suggest that Canaanite type religious practices may have been

normative for the early Israelites, and the biblical data, primarily the Song of Deborah, provides evidence that this indeed was so.

All lines of evidence point to Iron Age I Israelite religion being a polytheistic belief system centered on the worship of gods and goddesses of various levels of power, many of whose names and mythologies are preserved in Ugaritic literature. Worship of these deities likely involved sacrifice, as indicated by the offering bowl from Qubur el-Walaydah, and occurred at high places, such as the high place in the Samarian hills, and possibly in other contexts as well. The religion adhered to by the majority of these early Israelites does not appear to be in any way distinct from the earlier traditions out of which it emerges. It is much more of a continuation than an innovation.

This reconstruction is complicated by the biblical data, which provides evidence for the existence of Yahwism at this time. Both the archaeological data, in which any worship of Yahweh is completely unattested, and the evidence from the Song of Deborah, which criticizes Israel for choosing gods other than Yahweh, do not allow Yahwism to be considered in any way a majority religion at this time. Instead, it is likely that throughout the Iron Age I the majority of Israelites practiced a religion that was essentially continuous with Canaanite religion, while also at this time Yahwism, a more exclusive tradition begins to be adopted by a smaller subgroup of early Israelites.

Another issue created by this evidence for the emergence of Yahwism is how to understand this new religious innovation within the framework established by the archaeological data. It is clear that the emergence of Israel in the Iron I period occurred in tandem with "dramatic changes in settlement patterns" (Killebrew 171). Although

there is no consensus as to how or why these changes occur, it is during this time of major sociopolitical change that a distinct “Israelite” culture emerges. It is likely that Yahwism emerges in this time of change and is used as a way to define Israelite identity as distinct from the surrounding nations. The fact that the early Israelite texts see Yahweh as “the God of Israel” (Judges 5:3, 5) supports the idea that the worship of Yahweh was used as a rallying point for Israelite identity. It is certainly plausible that Yahwism, which defines itself in opposition to Canaanite culture and religious practices, would emerge at a time when Israel is beginning to construct its own political identity. Although the emergence of Yahwism is a distinct and important religious change occurring in the Iron I period, it is important to emphasize that at this stage in the development of Israelite religion Yahwism was certainly not the norm for the early Israelites of the Iron I, whose religion was generally similar to the Canaanite religion which preceded them.

The various readings of the structure on Mount Ebal make almost no difference to this reconstruction of early Israelite religion. If Joshua’s altar has indeed been found, then it would provide the first archaeological evidence for the Yahwism that begins to emerge in the Iron I. However, if this structure is simply another cultic place then it fits into the body of evidence that suggests that early Israelite religion was continuous with Canaanite worship practices. Of course, there is also the possibility that this “altar” on Mount Ebal that has been the source of such great controversy was simply a guard tower, and therefore completely unhelpful in the reconstruction of early Israelite religion.

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Bone Handle #2

White Feather/Robert Nabess

## **“I am driven mad with the printed word”: The Poetry of Allen Polite**

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In the early 1960s, poet Langston Hughes edited an anthology of poetry by young African American poets, *New Negro Poets U.S.A.* (1964), which featured such now-recognizable names as Mari Evans, Dudley Randall, Audre Lord, and LeRoi Jones (Imamu Amiri Baraka). In the Foreword to Hughes’ anthology, Gwendolyn Brooks—obliquely summoning W.E.B. DuBois’ influential 1903 theory of “double consciousness”—wrote:

At the present time, poets who happen also to be Negroes are twice-tried. They have to write poetry, and they have to remember that they are Negroes. Often they wish that they could solve the Negro question once and for all, and go on from such success to the composition of textured sonnets or buoyant villanelles about the transience of a raindrop, or the gold-stuff of the sun.... In the work of most of today’s Negro poets the reader will discover evidences of double dedication, hints that the artists have accepted a two-

headed responsibility. Few have favored a trek without flags or emblems of any racial kind; and even those few, in their deliberate ‘renunciation,’ have in effect spoken racially, have offered race-fed testimony of several sorts (13).

One of the up-and-coming young poets included in *New Negro Poets U.S.A.* was then-thirty-two-year-old Allen Polite, who would soon eschew the literary success of his high school friend Amiri Baraka and the other African American writers of the 1960s. Indeed, two years before the appearance of Hughes’ anthology, Polite had presaged his lifelong dismissal of publication by declaring that he did not seek to publish his work; and he implicitly abjured Gwendolyn Brooks’ “two-headed responsibility” by noting about the theme of race, in *Sixes and Sevens*, that “whatever it is that prompts or assigns significance has not prompted me to exploit this particular aspect of man’s ignorance” (Breman 89). Poems in Paul Breman’s *Sixes and Sevens: An Anthology of New Poetry* (1962) and LeRoi Jones’ magazine *Yugen* (1958) were Polite’s only publications prior to Hughes’ 1964 anthology. Though Polite was keenly aware of his blackness, as seen throughout his poetry and prose, he was one poet who “favored a trek without flags”; in his poem “Why They Are in Europe?” he writes:

Each is an artist first and has no  
Flags in his pocket (Poems 20)

Allen Polite’s writing—poems, letters, and journals—and his life choices present a man considerably more conflicted about the dueling demands of art and politics than his rejection of “flags” suggests. While he apparently did not craft a coherent position on his allegiance to pure art complicated by his acknowledgement of art’s propagandistic

elements, his life and work present a complex (if inchoate) understanding of his own position as a black man writing in the mid-twentieth century.

By the time that Hughes’ anthology was published, Allen Polite had left the United States permanently and apparently never again sought publication for his writing; his ostensible rejection of a racist America and of conventional literary success is, however, belied by his lifelong engagement with the vicissitudes of race, public approbation, and larger philosophical and metaphysical musings. Arguably, Allen Polite’s unknown work—poems, journals, paintings, an unfinished epic poem—offers a challenging “case” for the negotiation of the themes and problems of the so-called New Negro Poetry of the 1960s and the Black Arts Movement, of which Polite was a practitioner and self-sidelined hanger-on, respectively.

The editors of a 2012 *Critical Survey of African American Poets* assert that African American poets have always “adjusted to and rebelled against the fact of double consciousness,” consciously deciding whether “the emphasis in ‘African American’ belongs on ‘African’ or on ‘American’” (1). They quote from Larry Neal’s essay, “The Black Arts Movement,” in Neal’s and Amiri Baraka’s 1968 anthology *Black Fire*, which called for black writers to acknowledge their role in a global struggle:

National and international affairs demand that we appraise the world in terms of our own interests. It is clear that the question of human survival is at the core of contemporary experience. The black artist must address himself to this reality. . . . Consequently, the Black Arts Movement is an

ethical movement. Ethical, that is, from the viewpoint of the oppressed. And much of the oppression confronting the Third World and black America is directly traceable to the Euro-American cultural sensibility. This sensibility . . . has, until recently, dominated the psyches of most black artists and intellectuals. It must be destroyed before the black creative artist can have a meaningful role in the transformation of society (6-7).

As Baraka and Neal—and many others—sought to define a new poetic significance for African American poets, Allen Polite was expatriating to Europe, immersing himself (as his reading program suggests) in the very tradition that Neal so vociferously rejected. In removing himself physically and professionally from the United States, Polite not only declined to answer for himself whether to emphasize “African” or “American,” he debatably complicated the dyad by adding “European expatriate” to his identity. In short, Allen Polite—American, black, and permanent emigrant—demonstrates in his work a triple consciousness (black, American, expatriate) that makes his largely unknown writing an engaging and important contribution to African American literature of the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup>

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1. I learned of Allen Polite during a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute: “Don’t Deny My Voice: Reading and Teaching African American Poetry” at the University of Kansas in July 2013. Tony Grooms, Professor of English at Kennesaw State University, had spent a Fulbright year in Sweden and met Polite’s widow, Helene, and son, Oivvio; he gave a talk to the summer institute participants, and we had a Skype interview with Helene in Sweden. I became fascinated with Allen Polite’s story and his work; his widow, Helene, had underwritten publication of two volumes of his poetry: *Poems* in 1996 and *Looka Here Now* in 1997, both of which were available at KU last summer. In July 2014, with support from Mississippi Valley State University, I undertook a research project at the Thomas J. Dodd Center at the University of Connecticut whose archives and special collections contain all of Polite’s papers, thanks in large part to the efforts of Ann and Sam Charters. I returned to the Dodd Center in January 2015 to continue my research with support from a Strochlitz travel grant awarded by the Dodd Center Archives and Special Collections.

## Early Influences

Born in 1932 in Newark, New Jersey to middle-class parents, Allen Polite attended Catholic schools and public high school. After high school, he served in the U.S. army in Japan in 1952 and 1953 during the Korean War, but saw no combat action. After his Army service, Polite moved to New York City; married Carlene Hatcher (author of *The Flagellants*, a 1966 novel loosely based on her relationship with Polite); studied philosophy at Columbia University from 1954 to 1956; worked as a cryptographer at the United Nations in 1958; managed a bookstore, *Orientalia*, specializing in Eastern thought; and settled into the early 60s bohemian life of Greenwich Village. Among his friends were actors in the Living Theater workshop, dancers with Merce Cunningham’s company, jazz musicians like Bill Dixon and Red Mitchell, and other poets and writers, such as LeRoi Jones (Imamu Amiri Baraka), Joseph Campbell, and Allen Ginsberg.

Polite’s interest in Zen Buddhism, his preoccupation with racial injustice, and his acquaintance with Harvey Cropper, an African American painter whom he met in Japan, led him to leave New York and the United States in 1963 in hopes of a better life in Sweden where Cropper was living. He joined an international group of artists and writers and, in 1964, organized an exhibition at Den Frie, a gallery in Copenhagen: “Ten American Negro Artists Living and Working in Europe.” An unpublished notebook includes a July 29, 1964 letter from Allen addressed to his “Dearest Mother,” in which Polite refers to this Den Frie exhibit: “The show was an artistic success and a financial failure—So goes the good ship of art in this world. However it opened horizons to us all. I cannot say why I have chosen the art world to deal in—for ones [sic] love of art is certainly undermined

when one has to live on it.” To support himself in his adopted home, Polite found work as a clerk in a book-binding firm, but soon after, he began painting and making visual art himself.

These known biographical details of Polite’s life are included in his third wife and widow Helene Polite’s 2013 memoir, *...light and shadow are not all*. Polite met Helene Etzelsdorfer in 1963. After his untimely death in 1993 from cancer, Helene prepared Allen’s work for publication and privately published his poetry in *Poems* (1996) and *Looka Here Now* (1997).<sup>2</sup>

Helene notes that on his trip home from Japan in 1953, wearing his Army uniform, Polite was forbidden access to certain hotels, restaurants, and sections of a train. Even among his contemporaries in the New York artistic community, his second marriage to a Turkish woman was viewed as disloyal to his race. His decision to leave New York and move to Sweden in order “to consider his future” was a “way out from the various constrictions,” Helene notes, as well as “a means of developing a more cosmopolitan view of the world” (*...light and shadow are not all* 12). When Allen Polite left the United States, he stepped away from a climate of social change: the movement for civil rights; protests against the Vietnam War; the women’s movement; the rise of the Nation of Islam and the Black Panthers; and the beginnings of a community-based arts movement known as the Black Arts, with Polite’s childhood friend Amiri Baraka as its lead voice.

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2. His widow, Helene Polite collected, organized, and transcribed many of Allen Polite’s papers and, with the help of Ann and Sam Charters, donated his papers to the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center at the University of Connecticut. Ann Charters included the following Polite poems in her book, *The Portable Sixties Reader*: “Song,” “Why They Are in Europe?” and [We Knew Our Loneliness and Told It]—all reprinted from the two volumes of poetry that Helene underwrote. Helene Polite holds all copyrights to Allen Polite’s work and has given me permission to quote extensively from his archival and published materials.

## The Expatriate Artist

Polite apparently intended a temporary exile, like Ralph Ellison’s, but like other male African American writers (Richard Wright, James Baldwin), he created a new life in a country arguably less race-ridden than America, and he did not return to the U.S. except for a brief time in 1978. Scholar Maryemma Graham acknowledges Polite’s literary expatriate forebears and suggests his motivation for leaving the U.S.: “We all know about colonies of black artists, musicians and writers in Paris and Moscow, but we don’t know as much about those who moved to Sweden or other parts of Europe” during the post-World War II years. Polite “was among African American writers, artists and musicians seeking refuge from racism and a haven for aesthetics” (“History”). Allen Polite never directly discussed his expatriation or his apparent lack of interest in publication and a conventional literary career, but testimony by Graham and others—and his own writing—present a complex, even contradictory, author who seemingly rejected the community of African American authors to which he was welcomed, yet (like Wright and Baldwin) remained deeply engaged by themes of race and racism in his home country. In the decades following the New Negro Renaissance of the 1930s and ‘40s, complex artistic and historical impulses came together and gave rise to the literature produced in the 1960s. As James Edward Smethurst notes in his comprehensive work on the Black Arts movement, “in many respects, from the very beginning of the movement to its decline in the mid-1970s, Black Arts poetics could be more accurately described as a series of debates linked to ideological and institutional conflict and conversation rather than a consistent practice” (57). Though well-educated and widely read, Polite did not engage

in these debates.

Indeed, there is considerable evidence in Polite's poems and prose (primarily undated notebooks) that he perceived his expatriation and his refusal (or failure) to publish to be agents for a transcendent, aesthetic, apolitical intellectual engagement. The 1964 poems that Hughes selected for his anthology implicitly announce a writer uninterested in racial themes:

"Stopped"

Everything is stopped

as the table is stopped

Sand without wind

the still rhythm of water

A definitive silence is sirens

Alternating (underneath and between)

The composition of sustenance sustained

is stopped

soft breath of mirrors in empty places

Caw of birds at steep dawn

open flower

Memory inadequate reproductions

of stopped

Photographer stopping

Ants buried in their homes  
stopped (72)

Also:

"Am Driven Mad"

I am driven mad with the printed word

The family griefs and talking to salted birds

The encoupled hours together

The assaulting reasons

The crosseyed split tongue weather

Life's old song

The peoples' heart lost

Power and treason

Joys I did not write

Sun singing in open air

A possible calm and prayerful encloaked night

A high rushing tide of dark hair (103)

These unpunctuated, free verse poems, with their loose syntactical formations, announce Polite's aesthetic sensibility and foreground his immersion in the linguistic "magic" of poetry. Poetry sobers us, Polite suggests, to a world "stopped" and full of "power and treason." The poems also evidence the list-making and repetition used in other modern poetry (for example, in the work of Bob Kaufman and Haki R. Madhubuti) and in this Polite poem, titled "The First Awake":

The first awake...

The first AWAKEening is rude to

the ignorantly

conceived scene huddled with its own scene  
 in  
 The home-grown head  
  
 We are rich in a poor place  
 how inconvenient for our cherished souls  
 Yes I will say to everything Yes  
   if i am hungry  
   yes  
   if i will eat  
   yes  
   if i am tired            yes  
   if i will sleep  
   yes  
 If death is imminent or/  
   if IAM already-dead, yes  
   It is better that way    much  
 better

*(Looka Here Now! 67)*

In an interview in the Swedish newspaper “Roskilde tidene,” dated 22 July 1964, Polite emphasizes the power of words: “words have immense magic. Magic for both good and for evil. . . . I work a great deal with this issue. . . . Words are not only sounds. They are also movement, rhythm, and much more.” The still-young Allen Polite seemed at this point more engaged by the forms and linguistic possibilities of verse than by

any political themes or sensibility. In recent scholarly reconsiderations of the poetry of the Black Arts Movement, Tony Bolden and Evie Schockley, among others, challenge the narrow apprehension of the aesthetics of the Black Arts Movement that reified a political position that “would have African American poets address themselves only to black audiences, eschew traditional European forms, and draw solely upon African and African American speech, music, folklore, and history for subject matter” (Shockley 5). “The Black Aesthetic [of the Black Arts Movement of the mid-twentieth century] suggests, among other things,” Shockley asserts, “a set of characteristics of black . . . poetry . . . that are said to be derived organically from African and African diasporic cultures and yet, paradoxically, must often be imposed upon African American poets, who would appear to be dangerously close to assimilation into European American culture” (2). Allen Polite, while clearly cognizant of black culture and the poetry of the Black Arts Movement, does not in his writing ascribe to this narrow prescription for black poetry.

In an unpublished poem titled “Prophecies,” Polite elaborates further:

Here it is truly quiet  
 Once in a while a bird goes by  
 A million fingers of rain  
   are saying something—  
 I cannot put it into words  
   \*  
 From the window of our room  
 one sees only the sky  
 When a bird moves through it

It is no less empty

\*

In the city of my birth my mother

is waiting

and the dusty girls are crowding the night

When we touch our hands are empty

the words we mutter are invisible and hot

Here at the border the sky is one color—

bird is nothing to get mushy about

Polite exhibits a lyric straightforwardness in this short poem. We are drawn with the poet into a reverie of personal history using our imagination: “A million fingers of rain/ are saying something.” Polite’s intellectual amplitude and musical sensibility emerge, revealing concerns beyond those of race and freedom.

Novelist and scholar Tony Grooms suggests that in his work Polite distances himself from social critique, that his themes of love and death portray an emotional essentialism that is not framed by the social context of the 50s and 60s (nor, arguably, by race) ( O. Polite interview). In another poem (unpublished), perhaps his “Ars Poetica,” Polite says:

I have not held any kind of

Rules to these lines, save my breath

Which is a subdued gasping, nor

Have I shaken these words through

Any fine sieve than my own gutted frame; where

All things pass easily

Polite here acknowledges his predilection for free verse and a near-stream of consciousness methodology. His papers reveal no re-workings or revisions of his poems.

However, in the poem “The New Poet,” Polite reveals his familiarity with the work of his black contemporaries, when he makes use of the definitive “I am,” employed by poets of the 1950s and 60s such as Nikki Giovanni and Larry Neal:

“The New Poet” exhibits a poetic surety in Polite’s style—the use of caesuras, modernist

phrasings, and capitalizations for emphasis. Polite aims for a distinct style of representation; he

“keeps it real” as Howard Rambsy II asserts, by “rejecting ostensible white or Eurocentric

rules of decorum...” (“Beyond Keeping It Real” 205).

Like Amiri Baraka and other African American poets of the era—as well as the Black Arts Movement overall—Polite experiments with traditional forms, pushing beyond the earlier “rules of decorum.” Yet Polite continues to study poetic conventions, as seen in a notebook from May 1965, in which he spells out his understanding of such poetic terms as elegiac, dactyl, pentameter, and spondee. His lifelong work-in-progress, *The Dead Seeds*, showcases Polite’s continuing study of poetry as his style evolves and matures.

While he rejected “rules” and “any fine sieve” and acknowledged no particular poetic influences, Polite’s reading program (two sheets in the Dodd archives) was ambitious and canonical. It includes:

*The Tragic Sense of Life* by Miguel de Unamuno

*The Book of the Dead*, trans. By Wallis Budge

*Memoirs of Egotism* by Stendahl

*The Greek Anthology*, Loeb Classics

*Phases of English Poetry* by Herbert Read

*Guide to the Perplexed* by Maimonides

*The City of God* by St. Augustine

*Ethics* by Aristotle

*Utopia* by Sir Thomas More

*Lives of the Greek Philosophers* by Diogenes Laertius

As this partial list indicates, Polite is interested in ancient classical texts, works of philosophy and religion, and English poetry. An eclectic reading list for an inquiring mind. On this list, however, there is not one book by a 20th century writer or an African American writer, despite the educated and well-read Polite's familiarity with writers such as James Baldwin and Ralph Ellison. Like the poems, his reading demonstrates a preoccupation with spirituality and philosophy.

Indeed, Polite's apparent indifference to the work of his contemporaries is, at times, a vituperative rejection of the vicissitudes of America and of contemporary letters—and both an expression of his frustration at expectations for black writers and an explanation for his self-removal from the literary world. In his notebook from October 1963, he states: “Do not go to America. Broadway is something that even the blind should not see.” In his journal dated May 1966, with America behind him, Polite writes: “To spend one's life being called pompous by one's teachers... arrogant by one's oppressors... silly

and ridiculous by one's woman, and snobbish by one's friends would prove unbearable if one were not fortunate in having very little of ‘the fear of freedom’ about oneself.” Polite was his own man, personally, aesthetically, and politically.

During Polite's years in Sweden, many black artists, activists, and musicians traveled to Europe and stopped in Stockholm: Paul Robeson, Art Blakey, Dexter Gordon, Don Cherry, Bobby Seale, Stokely Carmichael, Angela Davis, and James Baldwin. Polite and a group of artists and writers known as the Sodergruppen would often meet with these diverse artists, but for at least one visitor to Europe, Polite held no regard:

Baldwin's people are not tragic,  
rather they are pathetic-  
they have neither the dilemma  
of Hamlet nor the futility of  
Sisyphus. No promethean fire  
shall ever be kindled among  
them. They are the slaves of Caesar  
who shall forever more be nameless

\*

Like his predecessors he has given  
himself over to applause and riches:  
He is American in all the characteristics  
of his success. For no country is  
so quick to acclaim and reward  
its artist- which greatly curtails  
their ambitions, if any beyond fame

and stem the flow of their bitterness  
thereby. He has sung a monument  
to a base people.

Polite's disdain for the acclaimed James Baldwin's "monument to a base people" is his announcement of his belief that "the path to success is crowded" and of his call to "let us take another way" (*The Dead Seeds* 64). In an email exchange with Tony Grooms, Polite's son Oivvio suggests a more mundane explanation for his father's failure to publish: "My father would sometimes say that his lack of success was due to the fact that he would not write about specifically black issues. That he simply wasn't 'black enough' for white publishers looking for 'negro poetry'."

Certainly Oivvio Polite's statement indicates that his father had a more complicated attitude about race than Polite's high-minded aesthetic claims and his rejection of the "applause and riches" of literary success imply. Indeed, Polite's aphoristic notebook injunction to "turn white or disappear" announces his ambiguous, complex response to the issue of race in America. He writes as:

I who am of slaves laugh loudly  
When I see the free men pinned  
Under their possessions or tottering  
Under their load of rights

Allen Polite reminds us of our deep failings as human beings and of the anthems of hope still left to be sung.

In fact, Polite's immersion in the American expatriate community in Scandinavia

was radical and political as well as aesthetic. In 1969, he joined a Black Panther Party Solidarity Committee in Stockholm, consisting mostly of African American deserters and draft dodgers, whose aim was to counter misinformation in Europe about the Black Panthers and their struggles in the U.S. Between 1969 and 1972, the group published a bi-weekly newspaper that spread information about the Black Panthers, African American resistance to the war in Vietnam, and experiences of discrimination in Sweden; it was sold in both Sweden and to G.I.s in Germany. In a notebook entry dated 26/7 69 (July 26, 1969), Polite writes the following: "1. All power to the people. 2. United front against fascism. 3. Free Huey. 4. Support the Third World's Peoples Revolutionary Struggle. 5. Support the Black Panther Party. 6. Racism plus capitalism equal fascism." Polite is political to his core; in the same notebook, he states that "nothing has disturbed the thorny roses of the ghetto." In the unpublished poem "Free Huey," Polite continues to display his political and racial sensibility:

Malcolm is the ash  
Huey is the phoenix  
Eldridge is the word  
Huey is the flesh  
Bobby is the heart  
Huey is blood  
And the first shot  
the tactic and the strategy  
Mao is the Prophet of the gun  
Massai is the course to be sung

Huey the bullet, free Huey and  
let's get it on—  
Huey is the bullet  
  
Free huey

Despite his failure to discuss the work of other writers (beyond the dismissal of Baldwin), Polite reveals in his poetry the influence of the African American literary tradition. In *The Dead Seeds*, for instance, the narrator advises Alemu (the poetic avatar of Polite) to “be aware and determined . . . open, Alemu, and anoint them with yeses, absolve them with excess” (12). Compare the subtly radical deathbed advice of the grandfather of Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*: “I want you to overcome ‘em with yeses, undermine em with grins, agree ‘em to death and destruction” (16). Polite’s unacknowledged debt to Ellison here includes not only the narrator’s message to Alemu, but Ellison’s syntax as well. Polite was always sensitive to language and technique. Eugene B. Redmond asserts in *Drumvoices* that how a poem is read is always important, along with the range of American experience within the poem itself—its folk origins, language, religiosity (5). Polite’s contemporaries back in the States regularly “performed” their poems, emphasizing their orality; perhaps Polite, too, would have pounded a fist while reading or reciting this undated and unpublished poem:

The greatness of the state exists  
In its ability to bend millions  
Of individual wills toward a  
Single essential law: know

What you are doing—  
I indulge and I abstain  
I indulge and I abstain  
I indulge and I abstain

The scientist is seeking the  
Rational correlative of what  
He feels—  
This is the plane of the partial eclipse  
This is the plane of the partial eclipse  
    This is the plane of the partial eclipse

The church has reversed the image  
    Of God  
So that those who are but reflections  
    May experience it  
Just like breathing  
Just like breathing  
Just like breathing

Like Walt Whitman, Polite allows a contradictory sentiment of “I indulge” and “I abstain,” demonstrating again his double consciousness and his refusal to adhere to doctrine or convention. He employs some of the techniques of Black Arts poets, such as Alan Lomax, Jayne Cortez, and Larry Neal—the listing, the use of epistrophe, the jazzy rhythms. His concerns are metaphysical and philosophical; there is no evidence

in his work that he embraced the use of dialect or signifying. Polite's poems do not live independent of the written page; he did not perform them, gave no public readings that anyone is aware of, yet one can see some of his themes played out in his paintings, still held in his estate and elsewhere in Sweden, some reproduced in the volumes of his poetry published by Helene Polite. If one accepts "performance" as complementary to the written word, then one can assert that Polite complemented his work with the visual (his paintings and drawings) rather than the spoken.

This complex acceptance and renunciation of racial themes and influences is evident throughout his reading and writing. According to his friend George Alan Gibson, in 1993, the last year of Polite's life, he and Gibson discussed Swedish scholar Sven Lindqvist's 1992 book, *Exterminate All the Brutes*, a unique study of Europe's history in Africa, written in the form of a travel diary, which traces the legacy of European explorers, missionaries, politicians, and historians in Africa from the late eighteenth century onward. Lindqvist also examines the roots of European genocide, setting Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in context and helping us to understand the most terrifying of Conrad's lines: "Exterminate all the brutes." Polite's spirited response to Lindqvist (as recorded in the interview) demonstrates his intellectual interests and his immersion in issues of race.

### ***The Dead Seeds***

Arguably, the dualistic impulses in Allen Polite's work—the contradictory rejection and embrace of race and nationality—operate most compellingly (if ambiguously) in his most ambitious but incomplete work. Polite worked long years on a manuscript

titled *The Dead Seeds*, a composite novel of prose and poetry. This handwritten manuscript was transcribed (typed) by Helene Polite; George Alan Gibson, Polite's British expat friend, also contributed to the transcription of this work. In a personal interview that Tony Grooms conducted with Gibson in 2009, Gibson called *The Dead Seeds* a signature work, the key to understanding all of Polite's literary production. Obviating Polite's failure to acknowledge literary influences, Gibson asserted that *The Dead Seeds* arose from Polite's love of William Butler Yeats' series of poems featuring the character Crazy Jane (13 May 2009).

At 147 pages, this allegorical work (begun as early as 1964) focuses on the world of Alemu and his counterparts Behemoth and Grasshopper, who, according to the author's notes, represent the poetical Allen, the political Allen, and the cynical Allen, respectively; this is arguably a collection of persona poems and other literary forms, such as a collage conversation, musings on life, and aphorisms. Howard Rambsy II discusses the use of "personae or masks" that black poets adopt which allow them to mask, pass, catch holy ghosts, speak in tongues, and sample ("Catching Holy Ghosts," 549). *The Dead Seeds*—unfinished and unpublished—includes the following section titles: Poems, Excerpts from Seeds, Songs, Play for Voices, Politics, Alamu, and Anecdotes. In a condensed overview of some of the themes in the work, Polite addresses the beginnings of Man in *Genesis*, the concept of war in *The Iliad*, the human condition, and Alemu (alternately spelled Alamu)—the black saint in the street. In one of his unpublished notebooks, Polite writes "Alemu is an objective man really.... Time and again he blows the dust away. I am getting smooth he says and dances on.... Alemu poseses [sic] a deep and abiding spiritual

humility. It is all one can say for him.”

The first section contains allusions to Polite’s own biography as an urban African American:

Alemu, where are things whose names were funk, jive, in joints, dives, holes in the wall? Are they dancing the slow drag, the fish, the hucklebuck on corners; do they camelwalk, and sand- do pigeon-toe and slufot, shoulder their asses up and down the block? – Where Alemu, where are Buckadoo and Chink, little bud and Slim? Alemu, are they scarfing on eating skins? Greasing and fishing at Fat May’s house? Dry fucking under dim blue lights? Making it down to pay the ‘lectric bill? Copping five dollar bags? Boosting at Bamberger’s? Turning on at Ralph’s? (11)

At the very least, Polite’s colloquialisms and jive street talk illustrate his familiarity with a contemporary, urban discourse. Alemu is warned to “be cool.” The voice of this section is the voice of a friend, a counselor giving Alemu advice. “Alemu, this town, ‘she is not so bad’ if her yes is as long as her legs and her thighs yawn and smile. Her sighs, Alemu, her sighs slide and slices off pieces of sweet potato pie. . . ” (18). Later, the voice tells us that “Alemu wants only to become an integral part of himself” (28).

In Part II of *The Dead Seeds*, there is a series of poems featuring Behemoth, the political Allen, who states:

The path to success is crowded.  
Let us take another way  
Here leads to the breath  
And through here one

comes to rest

A remote and quiet place

Where the gardens are well kept

But not by slaves.

All is done with the ease

of carelessness (64)

Polite took another way: self-exiled from publishing, from an oppressive racial environment in the United States.

In Part III (The Present), which is a series of unconnected paragraphs, Polite writes short anecdotes of his then-current life. These prose pieces are philosophical ruminations on life, freedom, knowledge, beauty, and other abstractions. Early in this section the narrator states:

It is not so nice to have absolute beauty- But dignity is what we want- Have always wanted- let us level with ourselves in brute terms...And how shall we live? – by our wits old man by our goddam genius, of course. (102)

But in this next passage, Polite’s narrator reveals the essence of his enterprise:

The artist is hybrid through his sustained consciousness of culture. His position is strained by conflicting ethics as the argot of the cosmopolitan, pain, resistance to hysteria, or further relief from the idols of the responsible, and the faint touch of beauty that drives him mad. He’s all agog at the strange spectacle of truth. Life impresses itself on him only in the moment

of his craft. He makes, and in the process of making, he lives. (120)

In the experimental and inchoate *The Dead Seeds*, Polite at once acknowledges his urban, African American heritage (“things whose names were funk, jive, in joints, dives, holes in the wall”) and confirms his fundamental belief about the writer that “he makes, and in the process of making, he lives.” This mélange of poetry, philosophical reflections, and adumbrated prose pieces reflects—like Polite’s work as a whole—his dual impulses. Howard Rambsy II takes Steven Johnson’s concept of “multithreading” and applies it to the work of writers: “Multithreading serves as a useful concept for describing how poets connect a wide assortment of interrelated figures and narrative strands in a single volume” (“Catching Holy Ghosts” 561). In *The Dead Seeds*, Polite “multithreads” a complex narrative replete with distinct voices and time frames.

### "Let us take another way"

The young Allen Polite was fully immersed in the cultural milieu of his time—life in the artistic excitement of early 1960s Greenwich Village, publication in venues that featured the next generation of African American writers. His early career was an apparent harbinger of Larry Neal’s 1968 call for a “black arts” and artists whose “primary duty was to speak to the spiritual and cultural needs of black people... and confront the contradictions arising out of the Black man’s experience in the racist West” (29). And then Allen Polite absented himself: from the New York urban environment, from the published page, from the artistic scene. Perhaps to escape a bad marriage, perhaps to flee the daily indignities of racism, perhaps to cultivate—as he wrote in *The Dead Seeds*—“A

remote and quiet place/Where the gardens are well kept/But not by slaves.” Although he chose not to publish, Polite continued to write throughout his thirty-year diaspora in Sweden. His aesthetic is different from those poets of the Black Arts movement whose language, subject matter, and ideology emerge directly from the black community and the streets. Polite’s perspective was that of the expatriate writer—unique, walking a different path from his peers in America. But he, like they, probed the concerns of his era: identity, the duality in black lives, social alienation, endurance. Polite’s life and work recall Gwendolyn Brooks’ prescient assertion that even those black poets who have “favored a trek without flags or emblems of any racial kind” have “in their deliberate ‘renunciation’ . . . spoken racially, have offered race-fed testimony of several sorts” (*New Negro Poets U.S.A.* 13).

Still, this introduction raises biographical and scholarly questions that suggest a need for further attention to Allen Polite. Howard Rambsy II examines the mid-century “flourishing” of black poetry—“one of the most decisive moments in American literary history,” what he calls “Harlem Renaissance 2.0.” (*The Black Arts Enterprise* vii). The publication of Polite’s early poems in *Sixes and Sevens* and *New Negro Poets U.S.A.* at least hinted at his talent and potential, and Rambsy’s claim of a “dynamic cultural movement” would seem to underscore the possibilities for Polite. Why, then, did he, quite early on, absent himself physically and intellectually from the “decisive moment”? Why did he not seek publication after the early poems? What was the relationship between his expatriation and activities with the Black Panthers in Sweden? In short, is Allen Polite an undiscovered, nascent poet of some significance or a footnote? Arguably, further research

in his papers (see endnote one) will reveal him to be a complex, unconventional poetic presence in the Black Arts Movement.

In 1988, Robert Stepto, anticipating the late twentieth century scholarly reassessment of African American literature by scholars and critics such as Houston Baker, James Smethurst, Barbara Smith, and others, called for a new critical approach to African American literature that would move beyond the traditional focus on the “tiresome strategies of protest-writing” (785). Stepto envisioned an “intrinsic history” of black literature that “assumes we should focus on those black writers who followed paths of their own, and in effect challenged, by resisting them, the impulses and models of modernism” (786). Allen Polite’s work, still largely unavailable and clearly unfinished as a life’s work, nonetheless presents a writer who followed his own path.

Unlike the earlier Harlem Renaissance, the Black Arts Movement was a community-based effort to engage all black people in artistic production that focused on the “special characteristics and imperatives of black experience” (Fuller 9). Allen Polite’s life and writing fulfilled the broadly based, democratic imperative of the Black Arts credo. Geographically and psychically removed from African American life and literature, concerned always with the intellectual and aesthetic purity of the craft of poetry, he nonetheless inevitably wrote in his own way about the “imperatives of the black experience.” And, as Smethurst contends in his seminal work on the Black Power and Black Arts movements, “there was no real center to the interlocked movements” (15). Polite recognized both his dedication to telling his African American story and the varied themes or “seeming chaos” that his writing embraced:

What are we all about, each day, but the gathering of comforts of a kind. Among the horizons that have loomed up for our people is art, and the artist is the problem child of every society. I differ only in that I am the definitive artist, the Philosopher initiate.... I want to define, not by scientific-philosophical analyses, the negro born in my time. But by presenting All this without direction or purpose...and yet there is some purpose to it, some sanity in this seething, seeming chaos, or why would I grow so desperate over a day, a moment, a perhaps moment.... (unpublished notebook).

Polite’s apparent unconflicted embrace of “seething, seeming chaos. . . without direction or purpose” is an acknowledgement of his contradictions, and, perhaps, his unfinished project. In “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” Langston Hughes, in 1926, called for the “truly great Negro artist, the one who is not afraid to be himself” (1193). Perhaps it was his insistence on being himself that led Polite to at once acknowledge the “double dedication” that Gwendolyn Brooks announced while rejecting any responsibility to be a spokesman for his race. He is indeed a problem child.

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Unsigned Acrylic



White Feather/Robert Nabess

# WILLIAM STYRON'S DUBIOUS MEMOIR: SOPHIE, AND STYRON'S *SOPHIE'S CHOICE*

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“No one will ever know the secret from which I write and the fact that I say it changes nothing.”<sup>1</sup>

- Jacques Derrida

## I. INTRODUCTION

The following pages assess the 1979 bestselling novel by William Styron (1925-2006), *Sophie's Choice*,<sup>2</sup> and its eponymous hit 1982 film. Attention thereto is summoned afresh by the 2012 publication of *Selected Letters of William Styron*.<sup>3</sup> The underlying factuality of *Sophie's Choice* was attested to repeatedly by Styron. He identified the *Sophie's Choice* widow named Sophie Zawistowska with an actual, widowed Brooklyn-Sophie of 1949. He identified Zawistowska's fictional paramour Nathan Landau with Brooklyn-Sophie's

1. Benoît Peeters, *Derrida: A Biography*, p. ix (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013) (Andrew Brown trans.) (Epigraph).

2. William Styron, *Sophie's Choice* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1979).

3. *Selected Letters of William Styron* (New York: Random House, 2012) (Rose Styron ed.).

actual lover of 1949. On the other hand, Styron denied even recalling Sophie's last name. It is difficult to acknowledge that Styron or his movie's director or their studio would have shot so fraught a screenplay for 1982 release utilizing an original participant's real-life name. Challenging credibility is it also that Styron would reiterate (as he did) his claims to autobiographical accuracy while simultaneously supposing that Sophie might still survive.

For in 1979 the law of libel was such that, in charging fornication, irrelevant was the absence of ill-will. Prominently rose the prospect of extortionate litigation by plaintiffs. Too, in 1979 the public disclosure of private facts objectionable to a person of ordinary sensitivities was tortious. And an independent form of tortious invasion of privacy was publicity emplacing a plaintiff in a false light in the public eye. Such false light did not need to be defamatory. A mores test looked to be applicable.

As of 1979, William Styron must have become completely cognizant of the respective 1970 and 1971 golden motherloads struck in both the publishing, and cinema, enterprises by each of Erich Segal and Herman Raucher. The artistic creations of each of those high-profile celebrities had attained greatly remunerative, popular-cultural success. Each of those two novelists had netted fame and fortune thanks to a smash bestseller and its eponymous filmization. By curious coincidence had each middle-aged man advertised his personal connection to his real-life model for the young lady of teary destiny in his novel. Between 1971 and 1979 William recounted on paper the tragedy of his own star-crossed heroine, Sophia Zawistowska. Between those dates he confided to the planet that he, not unlike Segal and Raucher, had known the flesh and blood incarnation of the inspiration for his fictional heroine. But Styron did not claim, as claimed by Raucher of

his own leading-lady, to have known the inspiration of his heroine carnally. Did Styron conjure Sophie from something so diaphanous as his literary imagination?

## II. THE BROOKLYN-SOPHIE BEHIND *SOPHIE'S CHOICE*: FACT, OR FICTION?

### A. *The Case for Fact: The Summer of '49*

His biographer, James L. W. West, III, recounts how Styron arrived in Manhattan in May 1949.<sup>4</sup> Young Styron located ground floor lodging at 1506 Caton Avenue<sup>5</sup> in Brooklyn. His new, immediately-overhead neighbors displayed their noisy propensity for lovemaking gymnastically. They not only were audible through the ceiling<sup>6</sup> but rattled Styron's ceiling light fixture and "the furniture in his room shook."<sup>7</sup> Thereafter, one morning Styron met a survivor of one of the death camps. She was a fellow roomer at 1506 Caton Avenue: he met her on the doorstep of the rooming house as he was going out for breakfast. She had blond hair and was quite handsome, with high cheekbones and a lovely voice. He talked with her briefly; her English was good, but she spoke it hesitantly and with an accent he could not identify. Her first name, he learned, was Sophie. She told him her last name, but it was a complicated mixture of consonants, and he forgot it. He noticed that she had a number tattooed on her wrist, but he did not yet ask about it. They chatted several more times over the next few days, and she went out with him once or twice on his walks around the neighborhood. During these walks he learned that she had acquired her tattoo at Auschwitz and that she was a survivor of the internment camp there, but that

she was Catholic, not Jewish. The difficult last name and the accent were Polish; though she was not a Jew, she had been imprisoned by the Nazis all the same, as had thousands of other Polish Gentiles. After she had been set free from Auschwitz, she had recuperated in a hospital and had emigrated to the United States. She was now living with her cat in a single room upstairs at 1506 Caton Avenue; her boyfriend lived there too, in a single room next door to hers. Styron did a little discreet reconnoitering and discovered that *it was Sophie who occupied the room above his and that she and her boyfriend were the noisy lovers*. Styron saw the boyfriend from time to time on the stairs or on the walkway outside and nodded to him, but that was all. He seemed innocuous and undistinguished. Styron was intrigued by Sophie, however: she was a little older than he, perhaps in her late twenties, and seemed exotic and mysterious.<sup>8</sup>

However, on a "late June"<sup>9</sup> weekend, the future novelist departed these Caton Avenue digs.<sup>10</sup> The final weekend in June 1949 was June 25-26. And most improbably would the prior weekend, June 18-19, have been recollected as late in June. So Styron's Sophie sojourn spilled into the summer of '49. In 2011, William's daughter, Alexandra, related that her father had hoped to retain his Brooklyn flat as late as "the start of summer 1949".<sup>11</sup> And the story of Styron's narrator Stingo (the Styron-figure), Nathan Landau and Sophie Zawistowska was the story of a summer.<sup>12</sup> Offers West: "On whom is Sophie Zawistowska based? ...Sophie is based on several women. Her physical looks and the fact that she is a Polish Catholic come from the real Sophie whom Styron had known in Brooklyn in the summer of 1949."<sup>13</sup>

8. *Ibid.*, p. 169 (emphasis added).

9. *Ibid.*, p. 171.

10. *Ibid.*

11. Alexandra Styron, *Reading My Father: A Memoir*, p. 90 (New York: Scribner, 2011).

12. William Styron, *supra* note 2, pp. 33 ("the summer") and 455 ("that summer").

13. James L. W. West, III, *supra* note 4, p. 419.

4. James L. W. West, III, *William Styron, A Life* p. 166 (New York: Random House, Inc., 1998).

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 168-69.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 167.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 168.

In June 1974, shortly after visiting Auschwitz, Styron in the *New York Times* wrote, in part, of Nazi genocide victims there:

Or there were the few ravaged survivors, like the once devoutly Catholic Polish girl I knew many years ago, the memory of whom impelled my visit to Auschwitz. It was she who, having lost father, husband and two children to the gas chambers, paid no longer any attention to religion, since she was certain, she told me, that Christ had turned His face away from her, as He had from all mankind.<sup>14</sup>

Already had Styron during April<sup>15</sup> revealed of his new book<sup>16</sup> that ...the story I'm telling is, well, it's half-real and half-fiction. But this girl – the one whom I knew and upon whom my fictional Sophie is based – did go to Auschwitz, she did lose her father, her husband, and her two children to the gas chambers and I'm writing about her. But the way that these things happened are fictional because she told me no more; she vanished from my life for one reason or another. I didn't pursue her any longer. *She did not have any such relationship with the Nathan I've alluded to.* But the agony of her life as it must have been is something I'm seeking, these many years later.<sup>17</sup>

He expatiated that his Auschwitz visit was undertaken so he could proceed “at least having seen the place where all this happened to Sophie.”<sup>18</sup> Moreover: “There are three characters and one of them, a Jewish boy who is very much involved with a Polish girl

14. William Styron, *Auschwitz*, in *This Quiet Dust, and Other Writings*, pp. 302, 304 (New York: Random House, Inc., 1982), from the *N.Y. Times Op-Ed* page, June 25, 1974.

15. An Interview with William Styron *Ben Forkner* and *Gilbert Schricke*, in *Conversations with William Styron*, p. 190 (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1985) (James L. W. West, III, ed.), from 10 Southern R., October 1974, pp. 923-34.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 199.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 200-01 (emphasis added).

18. *Ibid.*, p. 201.

named Sophie, is deranged and certainly a fanatic, troubled, probably schizophrenic.”<sup>19</sup>

Later, Styron shared with Judith Thurman these thoughts on the origins of *Sophie's Choice*:

I don't want to make it sound creepy and metaphysical, but I woke up one morning in the spring with the vivid memory of this girl, whom I met in Brooklyn, in a rooming house, more than thirty years before....<sup>20</sup>

Moreover:

Sophie, however, was really the girl's name. She had survived Auschwitz, was a Polish Catholic, had a tattoo. The real Sophie had a lover, but he was a colorless sort of fellow—not anything like Nathan in the book. Their wild lovemaking was true, though. They were at it night and day. And that was one of the things that allowed me to emphasize Stingo's awful yearning for the same thing—which he couldn't have.<sup>21</sup>

As late as 2002 Styron insisted: “The Sophie I based my heroine on was a real character in my life; the young woman I knew had suffered cruelly at Auschwitz and had been a Polish Catholic.”<sup>22</sup> Evan Hughes in 2011 reiterated: “The real Sophie upstairs on Caton Avenue had in fact been Catholic....”<sup>23</sup>

Thus during 1981 had Styron himself reconstructed his Brooklyn-Sophie connection:

19. *Ibid.*, p. 199.

20. Judith Thurman, *William Styron: An Interview*, in *Sophie's Choice: A Contemporary Casebook*, p. 12 (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007) (Rhoda Sirlin and James L. W. West III eds.) (from *Mademoiselle*, February 1983).

21. *Ibid.*

22. Speech by William Styron at the AJCF Dinner, December 3, 2002, <http://agreg-ink.net/litt/2005/styron1.html>.

23. Evan Hughes *Literary Brooklyn: The Writers of Brooklyn and the Story of American City Life*, p. 195 (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 2011).

In the late forties I moved in a boarding house in the Flatbush area of Brooklyn, precisely where my novel takes place. It isn't New York. It's more like Neuilly, a kind of Nowhere. One fine morning, at the doorstep, I met a young blond woman, superb, older than me but still young. Her English was a bit hesitant. A number had been tattooed on her arm. We took a few walks together. She had come back from Auschwitz and was in love with a man with whom she lived above me (I derived the character of Nathan from him). He was a nice man, really, and quite inoffensive....<sup>24</sup>

On that date, this exchange transpired with his interviewer Michel Braudeau of *L'Express*:

E: Did the Sophie of Brooklyn write to you after the book's publication?

WS: No. Not a word from her. But I did receive a rather astonishing letter: "You seem to be describing a woman I knew in Brooklyn in 1949," wrote my correspondent. And that's what is fantastic. I knew the real Sophie in 1949 and not in 1947 as I wrote in the novel. What makes me believe that the man wrote the truth is what he adds: "This woman lived in an apartment on Caton Avenue." Now, I mentioned that street only in passing at the end of the book, without giving it much importance, so I'm sure that this man was not inventing. He continued: "I knew that woman and together we went to Jones Beach just as you mentioned it; her name was Sophie."

I went nearly mad reading that honest, sincere letter, which gave another incredible detail: "After lying on the beach, I couldn't find the car I had

rented in the parking lot. She became angry. I didn't have enough money to take her out. I didn't call her for a week and one day she called me. She was in tears because of her boyfriend and she said to me: 'Guess what he did to me? *He strangled the cat.*' And she was crying...." Exactly the kind of thing Nathan could have done. And this man asks me if, perchance, I had not taken the same type of twisted mind as a model.

E: And the real Sophie...

WS: ...was called Sophie, of course. And has never written to me. Perhaps she has died, disappeared.

E: Or else does not read novels?

WS: When I knew her, she was absorbed in *Manhattan Transfer*, by Dos Passos. In two years my book has been very widely circulated. She may possibly have read it. I don't know.<sup>25</sup>

The authoritativeness of *Sophie's Choice* Styron extolled to Braudeau beyond its Brooklyn-Sophie element:

I knew very well that I was grappling with an enormous subject which could explode in my face at any moment. This may seem a bit vain, but the fact remains that on all important points, those I felt I absolutely had to deal with, Auschwitz or Occupied Poland for example, I received no fundamental criticism. This allows me to think that in a certain way, in some desperate way, I mastered my theme. I knew that if someone could

24. Why I Wrote *Sophie's Choice* Michel Braudeau, in *Conversations with William Styron*, *supra* note 15, pp. 243, 246, from *L'Express*, February 28, 1981, p. 76.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 246-47 (former emphasis in original; latter emphasis supplied).

point out, “You’re making a grave error there; such a thing did not exist at that particular time,” then the whole book would fall apart. And no one would have missed the opportunity to corner me. But here it is. There are no small errors either, and I’m proud I was able to be precise in this book. I’m proud to have spoken the truth. It gives the book some authority.<sup>26</sup>

Truth speaks with authority.

## ***B. The Case for Fiction***

### **i. The Summer of ‘49**

As already seen in section IIA, *supra*, in 1981 Styron informed Brandeau, respecting Styron’s male correspondent alleging his own acquaintance with Brooklyn-Sophie: “What makes me believe that the man wrote the truth is what he adds: ‘This woman lived in an apartment on Caton Avenue.’ Now, I mentioned that street only in passing at the end of the book, without giving it much importance, so I’m sure that this man was not inventing.”<sup>27</sup> Styron’s announced certainty is incredible, unless Styron never had read *Sophie’s Choice*.

Sure enough, late therein, the janitor of the rooming house<sup>28</sup> of Sophie, Nathan and Stingo, is dispatched by Sophie to purchase a fifth of whiskey: “He ambled the five blocks over to Flatbush Avenue. ... Returning in the sweltering heat, he loitered for a moment at the edge of the park, watching the playing fields of the Parade Grounds....”<sup>29</sup>

Thereafter, “... he hurried back to the Pink Palace at a dogtrot now, nearly getting run

26. *Ibid.*, p. 251.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 247.

28. William Styron, *supra* note 2, p. 501.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 502.

down on Caton Avenue....”<sup>30</sup>

Their overwhelmingly pink<sup>31</sup> rooming house borders Prospect Park.<sup>32</sup> Stingo’s room has a view of the corner of that Park, called the Parade Grounds.<sup>33</sup> Sure enough, the Prospect Park Parade Ground remains bordered by Caton Avenue. For Caton Avenue extends along some eight blocks south of that Parade Ground. Their length leaves them some four to twelve blocks west (Stingo: “five blocks”) of Flatbush Avenue.<sup>34</sup> How challenging was a surmise of 1979 (or 2015) that Sophie rented a residence on Caton Avenue?

As already seen in section IIA, *supra*, Styron told Braudeau, regarding Styron’s male correspondent, that this correspondent relayed Sophie’s long-ago, weepy report that her boyfriend had strangled the cat.<sup>35</sup> Said Styron to Braudeau: “Exactly the kind of thing Nathan could have done.”<sup>36</sup> Styron’s announced certainty (“exactly”), is incredible, unless Styron had not been listening to his own interview. For shortly before had Styron thus characterized to Braudeau his real-life Nathan figure: “He was a nice man, really, and quite inoffensive. ...”<sup>37</sup> But were Styron’s true-life model for Nathan a nice man, really, and quite inoffensive, why would strangling Sophie’s cat and making her weep be exactly the kind of thing Nathan would do? Were Styron’s real-life “Nathan” a colorless fellow, nothing like the novel’s character (as Styron told Thurman), why would he strangle her cat?

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 33, 178 (“Yetta Zimmerman’s Pink Palace”).

32. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

34. <http://maps.google.com/>.

35. Why I Wrote *Sophie’s Choice* Michel Braudeau, in Conversations with William Styron, *supra* note 15, pp. 243, 247.

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Ibid.*, p. 246.

## ii. The Saga of Benjamin Crovets

Therefore, while Styron's male correspondent, Ben Crovets of Wantagh, New York, indeed was a three-dimensional incarnation, his own existence did not substantiate any existence of the wraithlike Brooklyn-Sophie. Only his 1982 (not 1979) letter to Styron lies within the William Styron Papers, 1855-2007, in the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, imaginably was there never any such 1979 letter to Styron. For during 1982 a playful Bill might have recruited a co-hoaxer as his 1949 Brooklyn-Sophie witness. Thereupon, Bill could have drafted or dictated Crovets's alleged letter to Styron of 1982.

Speculating less luridly, Bill between 1979 and 1982 could have warmed to the prospect of holding a 1949 Brooklyn-Sophie witness in the wings, although Brooklyn-Sophie was altogether a Styronian invention. Could a correspondent excited by the novel actually synthesize a spot of shared history with the wholly unreal Brooklyn-Sophie? (Remember William's quotation from Crovets that he and Sophie "went to Jones Beach just as you mentioned it.") For certain. For it shortly will be seen that no less a witness than Alexandra Styron attests that more than one woman crawled out of the woodwork to announce *herself* Brooklyn-Sophie. Their boast was far more daring than would be a male's claim of mere acquaintance with Brooklyn-Sophie.

Yet could not Ben Crovets have been a genuine witness to a genuine Brooklyn-Sophie? Not likely. For most conveniently to some and inconveniently to others, the very last thing the 1982 letter tells Styron is that this supposed Brooklyn-Sophie acquaintance never knew her last name. Ben Crovets did not forget Brooklyn-Sophie's last name normally over the

38. Ben Crovets to William Styron, June 6, 1982, William Styron Papers, 1855-2007, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University ("a short dating period," "I never even knew her last name").

course of three decades. He never knew it at all. Not unlike Bill Styron, who either forgot it according to biographer Bill West or never knew it either. Some coincidence.

## iii. The Seductiveness of Manhattan Transfer

Styron recollected that Brooklyn-Sophie was absorbed in *Manhattan Transfer*<sup>39</sup>, by John dos Passos.<sup>40</sup> Published in 1925, what was *Manhattan Transfer*? Explained John Dos Passos biographer Townsend Ludington:

*Manhattan Transfer* perplexed some critics and was an outright offense to upholders of the genteel tradition like Paul Elmer More, who would soon term it "an explosion in a cess pool." But others found it superior. "Wasn't Dos Passos' book astonishingly good?" Scott Fitzgerald asked Max Perkins late in December. The reviewer for the *New York Times*, H. L. Stuart, called the novel "a powerful and sustained piece of work," despite what he termed Dos Passos's "exasperated sense of the unpleasant." He correctly linked the author with impressionist and "super-naturalist" writers, the latter term being akin to what the reviewer for the *Literary Review*, Herschel Brickell, called "Neo-Realism," which stressed "the ugly and sordid." "One must grant it a rough vigor and something of the vitality of our island," Brickell wrote, "much, too, of its commonness and sheer vulgarity." For him, as for many readers, however, the book was interesting primarily as "a literary experiment."

But most pleasing of all to Dos Passos whenever it was that he read the reviews clipped and mailed him by Harper and Brothers was that of Sinclair Lewis, who in the *Saturday Review of Literature* declared *Manhattan Transfer* to be "a novel of the very first

39. John dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer: A Novel* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1953).

40. Townsend Ludington, *John Dos Passos: A Twentieth Century Odyssey* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1980).

importance” which could be “the foundation of a whole new school of novel-writing.” Lewis speculated that Dos Passos might be the originator of “humanized and living fiction” more nearly than were already renowned American novelists like Dreiser, Cather, or Sherwood Anderson. “I regard *Manhattan Transfer*,” Lewis wrote, “as more important in every way than anything by Gertrude Stein or Marcel Proust or even the great white boar, Mr. Joyce’s *Ulysses*.”<sup>41</sup>

In 1949, was that a lure for all those fetching blonds in their twenties, reading English as a second language and residing among the impecunious at 1506 Caton Avenue? (Impecunious Styron departed Sophie and their boarding house when he was broke.)<sup>42</sup>

But Ludington continues:

With *Manhattan Transfer* Dos Passos achieved artistic maturity. The novel, which included the expressionistic techniques he had developed during the previous several years, was a montage about New York that presented a wide variety of characters who passed through the pages of the novel to demonstrate the author’s themes of materialism, conformity, political corruption, and lack of communication. The book was a satire, in places harsh and bitter, but also amusing because of Dos Passos’s use of burlesque as well as the ludicrousness of the lives of some of the characters, who dashed helter-skelter about a city that loomed larger throughout the book than any of the individual figures. If he had not achieved the “humanized and living fiction” which Sinclair Lewis claimed *Manhattan Transfer* was, he had caricatured New York and members of its populations effectively –

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 242-43.

42. Why I Wrote *Sophie’s Choice Michel Braudeau*, in *Conversations with William Styron*, *supra* note 17, p. 246.

had succeeded brilliantly in achieving what he had set out to do.<sup>43</sup>

Was this a magnet for youthful males come to Brooklyn, aspiring to be novelists themselves? In 1949, did Bill Styron know that Dos Passos had been writing *Manhattan Transfer* when Dos Passos lived in Brooklyn at 106-110 Columbia Heights, facing the Brooklyn Bridge?<sup>44</sup> *Who* at 1506 Caton Avenue really was absorbed in *Manhattan Transfer*?

For that matter, Sophie Zawistowska in Brooklyn reads *The Sun Also Rises* (a creation of the 1920s) in French.<sup>45</sup> In the 1947 springtime beauty of Brooklyn’s Prospect Park, she plunges deeply into *Studs Lonigan*<sup>46</sup> (a product of the 1930s). Concededly, the long paragraph preceding the longer paragraph ending in the title ‘*Studs Lonigan*’ reveals Sophie’s inexperience with urbanism and fear of New York. Therefore, Sophie Zawistowska could be absorbing American urban literature like an anthropology student. Sure enough, *Manhattan Transfer* concerns Gotham. But Zawistowska’s *Studs Lonigan* is about Irish Catholics in Chicago, tending to distance Zawistowska’s supposed self-education via fiction from the Dos Passos city where she has Jewish associates. And for Styron to have Sophie Zawistowska exposed through French to that Hemingway novel twice distances her from New York: Hemingway’s is a novel set in Europe being read in an alien tongue.

Anyway, how would a thirty-something Polish woman happen to devote herself to Ferrill and Hemingway? True, these works were popular in their time and thereafter, e.g., 1947. But most bestsellers fade into obscurity. How could Sophie Zawistowska happen to embrace this already-aging pair of books which, like *Manhattan Transfer*, survived to be

43. Townsend Ludington, *supra* note 40, p. 242.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 228.

45. William Styron, *supra* note 2, p. 349.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 91.

canonized by 1979 as Great American Literature? At 1506 Caton Avenue in 1949, who really plunged into works the like of *The Sun Also Rises*, and *Studs Lonigan*? Was it a Polish Brooklyn-Sophie? Or was it a William Styron who conjured both Brooklyn-Sophie and Sophie Zawistowska from thin air?

#### iv. Dialing Up a Dreamboat

Were lusty lads of 2015 to encounter a superb young blond in Brooklyn, they would go Google her. In benighted 1949, they would exploit that 1506 Caton Avenue lead, looking her up in the telephone book. And what would they find there?

Sure enough, the 1506 Caton Avenue listing read: “Apts&Apt Houses”<sup>47</sup> to be phoned at BU 4-9197. Too, listed at that address was “Terrill EdwC”,<sup>48</sup> number UL 6-4215. But nobody else. No Sophie. No Polish name. Not in the Brooklyn Address Telephone Directory of November 18, 1949. That date followed Styron’s springtime fix on Sophie, and would have likewise succeeded the Jones Beach (i.e., warm weather) outing with Sophie of Styron’s male correspondent.

#### v. Cruising For a Bruising

Alan J. Pakula was nominated for the 1982 Academy Award for Best Writing, Screenplay Based on Material from Another Medium for adapting the script from Styron’s novel. In 1981, would a seasoned writer like Styron and Hollywood director like Alan J. Pakula make a seemingly autobiographical movie about Sophie’s fornication, using Brooklyn-Sophie’s real name? Would the movie’s studio, ITC Entertainment, have permitted this?

47. Brooklyn Address Telephone Directory (New York Telephone Company, pub., 1949).

48. *Ibid.* The City Directories had ceased publication in 1934. Correspondence to author, June Koffi, Brooklyn Public Library, November 28, 2011.

(ITC Entertainment, the Incorporated Television Company, sold distribution rights to Universal Studios, which sale meant Universal would handle release of pictures like *Sophie’s Choice* still in production at the time of sale.) To do so would mean cruising for a bruising. For the separate torts of invasion of privacy, and of defamation, were in hand for any real Sophie to unleash. And a surviving corner of defamation is attributing “unchastity to a woman.” This old legal phrase was less quaint-sounding in 1979 than today.

After all, how many young Sophies were Polish, formerly Roman Catholic, had lost a father and husband to the Nazis (and two children to the gas chambers), survived Auschwitz, lived during the late nineteen-forties in a boarding house in Brooklyn in the Caton Avenue neighborhood, and bore a number tattooed upon her arm? Well might a real-life Sophie have been egged into suing either by a gallant, protective husband eager to vindicate her honor in the eyes of contemporaries who recognized Sophie, or else by an avaricious spouse merely smelling 1979 or 1982 damages.

For that matter, how many heterosexual Jewish men lived during the late nineteen-forties in a boarding house in Brooklyn in the Caton Avenue neighborhood with handy 24-7 access to a young Polish woman named Sophie with an Auschwitz tattoo? Both the novel<sup>49</sup> and movie<sup>50</sup> style Nathan an “expensive funny farm” denizen. Both the movie<sup>51</sup> and novel portray Nathan as dependent upon, e.g., cocaine: “‘He took this stuff called Benzedrine,’ she [Sophie] said [to Stingo], ‘also cocaine. But huge doses. Enough at times to make him crazy...it was not legal.’”<sup>52</sup> Not legal is right. Cocaine has been a

49. William Styron, *supra* note 2, p. 425.

50. *Sophie’s Choice*, ITC Entertainment, at one hour, 56-58 minutes (Artisan Home Entertainment) ([www.artisanent.com](http://www.artisanent.com)).

51. *Ibid.*

52. William Styron, *supra* note 2, pp. 311-12.

federally controlled substance since the 1914 passage of the Harrison Narcotics Tax Act.<sup>53</sup> Well might an identifiable “Nathan” (however actually denominated) consult a lawyer in 1979 or 1982 when seeing himself depicted as a pathetic, unemployable, funny farm alumnus, illegal drug-indulger, suicide-prone, dependent widow-fornicating, psycho. How deranged? Exactly the sort of chap to strangle the cat and make Sophie weep.

Certainly was Styron accessible circa 1979. Recounts his daughter Alexandra:

After the book [*Sophie's Choice*] came out, I used to answer the phone at home so my father wouldn't have to.

More than once, I remember women with heavy accents explaining the nature of their call in tearful and dramatic tones. *Dad* – my notes would read – *a lady called. I can't spell her name. She says she's Sophie.* And a number somewhere in Michigan, or New Jersey.<sup>54</sup>

Does anyone wonder why Alexandra here drops her Sophie-claimant topic in the middle of a paragraph? It is as if her father had tipped-off Alexandra that Sophie was as real as Tinkerbelle.

During World War II, Styron served in the United States Marine Corps. Might not even a middle-aged ex-Marine (if there be ex-Marines) have been nervous that Alexandra one day would answer their doorbell only to witness some hulking sons of Sophie push past Alexandra to punch Alexandra's progenitor in his probosis? Would Styron as an interviewee affirm Sophie's real name, and advertise the actual 1949 Caton Avenue

whereabouts of both Brooklyn-Sophie and Nathan, if he believed such a real fornicatrix

53. Ch. I, 38 Stat. 785 (1914).

54. Alexandra Styron, *A Sentimental Education*, in Brooklyn Was Mine 43, 57 (New York: Riverhead Books, 2008) (Chris Knutson and Valerie Steiker eds.).

(to say nothing of her 1949 co-fornicator) might still live? Alternatively, Styron had sworn to Pakula and ITC Entertainment that Brooklyn-Sophie (and therefore any “Nathan”) never walked the earth. Which alternative sounds the more like Hollywood?

### III. LAW AND LIABILITIES IN 1979-1982

#### A. *Sophie Zawistowska, Fornicatrix and Felon*

##### i. The Washington Caper

In Styron's novel, Stingo and Sophie journey by train from New York southward.<sup>55</sup> In “a shoebox of a room in Washington, D.C.,”<sup>56</sup> of the Hotel Congress<sup>57</sup> the virginal Protestant male and the lapsed Catholic share, e.g., unwed orthodox sexual copulation,<sup>58</sup> and oral sodomy.<sup>59</sup> In Washington, again, Stingo and Sophie copulate in the movie.<sup>60</sup> If legal in the 1947 of the novel, fornication in the District during 1949 had been criminalized in 1948.<sup>61</sup> It still was a crime in 1979. Oral copulation, and placing a sexual organ into another's mouth, both were felonies.<sup>62</sup> Fornication remained legally taboo until a statutory repeal of 1981, which left unrepealed the outlawing of those oral felonies.<sup>63</sup>

##### ii. The Connecticut Caper

In Styron's novel, Sophie has arrived in America in 1946.<sup>64</sup> In the autumn of that year,<sup>65</sup>

55. William Styron, *supra* note 2, p. 447.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 475.

57. *Ibid.*, pp. 456 and 495.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 496.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 497.

60. *Sophie's Choice*, *supra* note 50, at 2 hours, 8 minutes (Washington) and 2 hours, 20-22 minutes (fornication). *Ibid.*, p. 498.

61. D.C. Code, § 22-1601 (1948) (repealed 1981).

62. D.C. Code, § 22-3502.

63. D.C. Code, § 22-1002.

64. William Styron, *supra* note 2, p. 66 (“last year, when she arrived over here in America”).

65. *Ibid.*, p. 315.

Sophie and Nathan motored to Connecticut.<sup>66</sup> There Landau treated the widow to a benzedrine sulphate-fueled “twentieth-century Superfuck”.<sup>67</sup> This diaphragm-protected,<sup>68</sup> unmarried Sophie, delighted with “his extravagant ability to make her *come*”<sup>69</sup>, whispered Polish into his ears, translating for Nathan “It means *fuck me, fuck me!*”<sup>70</sup> Sophie recounted to Stingo of her spell at a Connecticut inn<sup>71</sup> during this sojourn with Nathan: “After a bit he said, ‘Want to fuck?’ And I said right away without even thinking twice, ‘Yes. Oh, yes!’ And we made love all afternoon...”<sup>72</sup>

Could it be rendered plain to a 1979 jury that the 1947 Sophie Zawistowska and Nathan Landau represent the 1949 Brooklyn-Sophie and a male 1506 Caton Avenue fellow-boarder, why might a publisher’s attorneys fret? At least as late as 2009 the nation’s law reviews still could cite to Connecticut judicial authority for the proposition that words spoken of an *unmarried woman* and charging her with fornication were per se actionable.<sup>73</sup> As of that date America’s law reviews still could cite to Connecticut statutory law as sustaining the proposition that words imputing *to a man* his commission of the crime of fornication are per se actionable.<sup>74</sup>

66. *Ibid.*, pp. 317 and 329.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 331.

68. *Ibid.*

69. *Ibid.* (Styron’s emphasis).

70. *Ibid.* (Styron’s emphasis).

71. *Ibid.*, p. 343.

72. *Ibid.*, p. 345.

73. Amanda Connor, *Is Your Bedroom a Private Place? Fornication and Fundamental Rights*, 39 N.M. Law Review 507, 522 (2009), citing *Page v. Merwine*, 8 A. 875 (Conn. 1886).

74. *Ibid.*, citing Conn. Gen. Stat. Anno. § 52-237 (West 2004). Most jurisdictions also recognize “per se” defamation, where certain allegations are automatically presumed to cause damage to the Plaintiff. Typically, the following may constitute defamation per se:

Attacks on a person’s professional character or standing

Allegations that an unmarried person is unchaste

Allegations that a person is infected with a sexually transmitted disease

Allegations that the person has committed a crime of moral turpitude.

Joshua A. Roberts, *Internet Defamation: Defending Your Name*, *The Forensic Examiner*, p.19 (Winter 2011).

## B. Libel in 1979 or 1982

The suits at ITC Entertainment circa 1981 would have investigated the law of defamation, and the right to privacy. The law of that juncture authoritatively would be summarized in the fourth edition of William L. Prosser’s *Handbook of Torts*.<sup>75</sup> Circa 1981 they would learn that libel extends to motion pictures,<sup>76</sup> the sound in a talking picture accompanying and being identifiable with the film itself.<sup>77</sup> A number of states by statute, and several courts, determined that the charge of the crime of adultery or fornication, encompasses infamous punishment or moral turpitude.<sup>78</sup>

Neither ill-will, nor absence of honest belief, was essential for liability in the initial instance<sup>79</sup>:

The only limitation placed upon the liability is that the defamatory meaning and the reference to the plaintiff must be reasonably conveyed to and understood by others; and in the case of the use of a name for an obviously fictitious character in a book, it has been held that there is no liability where no sensible man would understand that it is intended to depict the plaintiff.

The effect of this strict ability is to place the printed, written, or spoken word in the same class with the use of explosives or the keeping of dangerous animals. If a defamatory meaning, which is false, is reasonably understood, the defendant publishes at his peril,

75. William L. Prosser, *Handbook of the Law of Torts* (St. Paul: West Publishing Company) (4<sup>th</sup>. Ed., 1971).

76. *Ibid.*, § 112, p. 752.

77. *Ibid.*, p. 753. Generally speaking, defamation is the issuance of a false statement about another that causes that person or entity to suffer harm. Slander involves the making of defamatory statements usually by an oral (spoken) representation. Libel involves the making of defamatory statements in a printed or fixed medium, such as in a magazine or newspaper. Today, most courts treat both forms of defamation the same.

Joshua A. Roberts, *supra* note 74, p. 19.

78. William L. Prosser, *supra* note 75, §112, p. 759.

79. *Ibid.*, p. 772.

and there is no possible defense except the rather narrow one of privilege.<sup>80</sup>

Naturally, the prospect for extortionate litigation loomed large. Plaintiffs' frequent exploitation of their opportunity constituted an open secret.<sup>81</sup> *Explosives. At his peril. No possible defense.*

### ***C. The Right to Privacy in Tort in 1979 or 1982***

Akin to the traditional civil tort of libel is the civil tort of invasion of privacy.

#### **i. Public Disclosure of Private Facts**

Problematical is privacy. Privacy represents a series of interconnected social and policy issues.<sup>82</sup> Its definition commands no consensus even within the English-speaking lands.<sup>83</sup> The struggle over privacy is a power struggle.<sup>84</sup> Some see privacy as an ethical responsibility impinging upon a party accessing second party-information: "The question is, once they have that information, what do they do with it? That is where the ethical choices are

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80. *Ibid.*, p. 773 (footnote omitted).

81. *Ibid.* "Damages are typically to the reputation of the Plaintiff, but depending upon the laws of the jurisdiction, it may be enough to simply establish mental anguish." Joshua A. Roberts, *supra* note 74, p.19. On the other hand, there recently has been empirically evidenced a human propensity to overestimate the negative impact of defamation on other persons (a third party effect). Consequently could an ordinary reasonable person-standard unreasonably lower the defamation standard, and thereby check freedom of expression. Roy Baker, *Defamation Law and Social Attitudes: Ordinary Unreasonable People* (Northampton, Mass.: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2012). Acknowledges even the seasoned defamation law practitioner Roberts:

Regardless of the nature of the communication, coming up with a numerical value to quantify the damage is difficult in every defamation case where actual monetary loss is negligible, speculative, or impossible to determine.

Joshua A. Roberts, *supra* note 74, p.19.

82. Colin J. Bennett, *The Privacy Advocates: Resisting the Spread of Surveillance*, p.1 (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2008).

83. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

84. Christena Nippert-Eng, *Islands of Privacy*, p. 167 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010). "Privacy is about nothing less than trying to live both as a member of a variety of social units – as part of a number of larger wholes – and as an individual – a unique, individuated self." *Ibid.*, p. 6.

made and where the responsibility lies."<sup>85</sup> Exclusion can protect privacy<sup>86</sup>: "Exercising control over private information becomes much easier if one can exclude third parties

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85. Jeff Jarvis, *Public Parts: How Sharing in the Digital Age Improves the Way We Look and Live*, p. 110 (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011).

86. Lior Jacob Strahilvitz, *Information and Exclusion*, p. 22 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

from one's property."<sup>87</sup> Privacy tort law influences people's incentives to exclude, or not.<sup>88</sup>

The distinguished expert on the law of privacy,<sup>89</sup> Professor Daniel J. Solove of George Washington University Law School, in 2011 dismissed attempts to isolate the essence of privacy. For the concept is too complex to be distilled thus.<sup>90</sup> Privacy means diverse things that resemble one another but overlap at one simple element.<sup>91</sup> The forms of the invasion of privacy are numerous.<sup>92</sup> One such is the disclosure of secrets.<sup>93</sup> The harm can

lie in the exposure of one's concealed information.<sup>94</sup>

87. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

88. *Ibid.*, p. 99.

89. See, e. g., Daniel J. Solove, *Understanding Privacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); Daniel J. Solove, *The Future of Reputation: Gossip, Rumor and Privacy on the Internet* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); and Daniel J. Solove, *The Digital Person: Technology and Privacy in the Information Age* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

90. Daniel J. Solove, *Nothing to Hide: The False Tradeoff Between Privacy and Security*, p. 24 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

Why does our concept of privacy vary from time to time? Here's one theory: Privacy is allied with shame. We are all ashamed of something about ourselves, something we would prefer that no one, or just a few people, know about. We want to keep it private. Sometimes, of course, we should be ashamed. Criminals always want privacy for their acts. But we're also ashamed—or at least feel embarrassment, the first cousin of shame—about a lot of things that aren't crimes. We may be ashamed of our bodies, at least until we're sure we won't be mocked for our physical shortcomings. Privacy is similar; we are often quite willing to share information about ourselves, including what we look like without our clothes, when we trust our audience, or when the context makes us believe that our shortcomings will go unnoticed. Stewart A. Baker, *Skating on Stilts: Why We Aren't Stopping Tomorrow's Terrorism*, p. 316 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010). Less loftily, informational self-determination commonsensically could evidence itself to an untutored runaway slave confronting interrogators: "The first point decided, was, the facts in this case are my private property. These men have no more right to them than a highway robber has to my purse." James W. C. Pennington, *The Fugitive Blacksmith: Or, Events in the History of James W. C. Pennington*, ch. 2 (London: Charles Gilpin, 1849) (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (<http://ia700506.us.archive.org/12/items/thefugitiveblack15130gut/15130-h/15130-h.htm>).

91. David J. Solove, *supra* note 90, p. 24.

92. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

93. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

94. *Ibid.* Sure enough, the *Bundesverfassungsgericht* (Federal Constitutional Court) in the Federal Republic of Germany, a society sensitive to privacy issues, Vanessa Fuhrmans, *Germans Tally Their Concerns Over Census*, Wall St. J., July 29, 2011, at A29, recognized rights to information self-determination. (*Rechts auf informationelle Selbstimmung*) with its *Volkszählungsurteil* (census verdict) of December 15, 1983, drawing upon Articles 1(1) and 2(1) of Germany's Basic Law is (*Grundgesetz*), her *Constitution*. BVerfGE 65, pp. 1ff ([https://zensus2011.de/live/uploads/media/volkszaehlungsurteil\\_1983.pdf](https://zensus2011.de/live/uploads/media/volkszaehlungsurteil_1983.pdf)).

Now, storage costs are virtually nil, and processing power is increasing exponentially. It is no longer possible to assume that your data, even though technically public, will never actually be used. It is dirt cheap for data processors to compile dossiers on individuals, and for them to use the data in ways we didn't expect.

Some would argue that this isn't really "privacy" so much as a concern about abuse of information. However it's defined, though, the real question is what kind of protection it is reasonable for us to expect.

Stewart A. Baker, *supra* note 90, p. 318.

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Sure enough, even in 1979 the law of privacy comprised several distinct types of invasion of different interests of a plaintiff. All were linked by the plaintiff's right "to be left alone."<sup>95</sup> And one such invasion of the privacy right was the public disclosure of private facts.<sup>96</sup> This entailed publicity of a highly objectionable nature given to private information about a plaintiff, although it be true and no defamation action would lie.<sup>97</sup> Long-familiar to ITC Entertainment's motion picture attorneys would have been the leading precedent regarding the public disclosure of private facts:

But the decision which became the leading case, largely because of its spectacular facts, was *Melvin v. Reid*, in California in 1931, where an exhibited motion picture revived the past history and disclosed the present identity of a reformed prostitute who, seven years before, had been the defendant in a notorious murder trial. Other decisions have followed...<sup>98</sup>

Concededly such matters rendered public must be offensive and objectionable to a reasonable person of ordinary sensibilities.<sup>99</sup> While everyone might anticipate some casual observation of her,<sup>100</sup> "It is quite a different matter when the details of sexual relations are spread before the public eye..."<sup>101</sup> There appeared to be a sort of mores test, whereby liability obtains only for publicizing what is highly objectionable given the ordinary views and customs of a community.<sup>102</sup>

And in 2011 University of Pennsylvania School of Law Professor Anita L. Allen, the

95. William L. Prosser, *supra* note 75, § 117, p. 804.

96. *Ibid.*

97. *Ibid.*, p. 809.

98. *Ibid.* (footnote omitted), citing inter alia *Melvin v. Reid*, 112 Cal. App. 285, 297 P. 91 (1931).

99. *Ibid.*, p. 811.

100. *Ibid.*

101. *Ibid.*, (footnote omitted) citing inter alia *Garner v. Triangle Publications*, 97 F. Supp. 546, (S.D.N.Y. 1951).

102. *Ibid.*, p. 812, citing *Sidis v. F-R Pub. Corp.*, 34 F. Supp. 19 (S.D.N.Y. 1938) *affd.* 113 F.2d 806 (2 Cir. 1940), *cert. den.* 311 U.S. 711.

feminist philosopher, reflected:

Dredging up the past can hurt feelings, stir negative emotions, and ruin lives. We can see clearly the potential cruelty and harmful consequences of resurrecting the past in the patterns of a familiar line of privacy tort cases. In these cases, someone suffered humiliation and loss of standing in the community because someone else chose to bring up – the victims might say dredge up – the truths of their past. In 1931, *Melvin v. Reid* pitted a homemaker, who had once been a prostitute acquitted for murder, against filmmakers who *used her actual maiden name* in *The Red Kimono*, a movie based on her life...

Three short decades ago, reliance on expectations of substantial privacy about the past were [sic: was] highly reasonable.<sup>103</sup>

Bear in mind that three brief decades prior to 2011 was 1981. Styron's novel was published in 1979. Styron claimed of Brooklyn-Sophie that his novel *used her actual name*. The film *Sophie's Choice*, was released in 1982.

*Sexual* relation. *Mores* test.

## ii. False Light in the Public Eye

Publicity placing a plaintiff in a false light in the public eye represents an independent form of the invasion of privacy. The false light need not be defamatory. In all probability would a *mores* test apply.<sup>104</sup> Should anyone value the opinions of others, then the

103. Anita L. Allen, *Unpopular Privacy: What Must We Hide?*, p. 166 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) (Studies in Feminist Philosophy) (emphasis added) (footnotes omitted).

104. William L. Prosser, *supra* note 75, § 117, p. 813.

feeling of shame can result from the loss of her good reputation<sup>105</sup>: “Privacy cases do go considerably beyond the narrow limits of defamation, and no doubt have succeeded in affording a needed remedy in a good many instances not covered by the other tort.”<sup>106</sup>

Especially sensitive to the ITC Entertainment motion picture attorneys and Styron would have been the tort of placing a plaintiff in a false light in the public eye given *Time, Inc. v. Hill*.<sup>107</sup> In 1952 the Hill plaintiff's home had been invaded by escaped convicts and he and his family held hostage.<sup>108</sup> A 1953 novel was published about the incident (including purely fictional elements), and a play resulted from this novel (incorporating those same fictional elements).<sup>109</sup> A 1955 *Life* magazine story about the play portrayed the play as the factual experiences of the Hill family (whom *Life* named).<sup>110</sup> Paramount had turned the play into a movie with Humphrey Bogart, Fredric March, and Gig Young (i.e., a high-profile movie) in 1955.<sup>111</sup> In an action under New York statute, New York courts

105. David C. Rose, *The Moral Foundation of Economic Behavior*, p. 23 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). Even psychiatrists and psychoanalysts who acknowledge the phenomenon of private, internal shame appreciate the reality of public external shame:

Shame is a sharp and searing *feeling* of failure and defectiveness about oneself. When shame asserts itself, it must always be acknowledged, for it takes precedence over thoughts, plans, or other feelings. A conviction of unworthiness descends upon us and we long to “sink into the ground.” This devastating feeling of self-consciousness and inferiority seems unremitting as well as unalterable and we shrink from the gaze of others (public, external shame) or we avert our *own* eyes (private, internal shame) and pretend that we feel otherwise. Just as the external response to shame is *hiding*, the internal response is *disavowal*...[W]e will consider a variety of feelings and emotions that relate either directly or more subtly to shame. While at times these responses may seem to overlap, with only slight semantic differences between them, each in its way conjures a particular shade or hue of shame.

Andrew P. Morrison, *The Culture of Shame*, p. 40 (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996) (Morrison's emphasis). “Embarrassment is the less intense version of interpersonal shame.” *Ibid.*, p. 41. “Humiliation is an intense version of interpersonal shame – for example, the little boy's response to his mother's scowl when he wets his pants.” *Ibid.* “Guilt differs from shame, because whereas shame is derived from feelings of embarrassment and humiliation that result from being discovered, feelings of guilt will be experienced even if there is no chance of discovery.” *Ibid.*, p. 228n.2 (emphasis added).

106. William L. Prosser, *supra* note 75, p. 813.

107. 385 U.S. 374 (1967).

108. William L. Prosser, *supra* note 75, § 118, p. 826.

109. *Ibid.*

110. *Ibid.*

111. *The Desperate Hours* (film), page 1 ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Desperate\\_Hours\\_\(film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Desperate_Hours_(film))).

held there was liability for the falsity.<sup>112</sup>

The Supreme Court of the United States held those misstatements privileged because rendered with neither knowledge of falsity nor with a reckless disregard for truth.<sup>113</sup>

Plainly would this defense be missing for one or another potential 1979-1982 defendant in a false light action brought by either Brooklyn-Sophie or “Nathan” regarding *Sophie’s Choice*. Certainly would it have been absent had William Styron been sued in 1981 over his interview. The false light invasion of privacy doctrine as applicable to motion pictures had been drastically narrowed by 2002.<sup>114</sup> Nonetheless, its revitalization, at any rate regarding docudramas, was even at that date being championed.<sup>115</sup>

Both of these privacy actions – public disclosure of private facts (*mores*), and false light in the public eye (*mores*) – required something secluded or secret pertaining to the plaintiff.<sup>116</sup>

Generally agreed was that a plaintiff need not plead nor prove special damages.<sup>117</sup> Should there exist evidence of special damage such as the unjust enrichment of the defendant, it was recoverable.<sup>118</sup> Should a wrongful motive or state of mind appear, punitive damages were awardable upon an identical basis as in other torts.<sup>119</sup> A defendant’s mistaken yet honest belief in the plaintiff’s consent could go to mitigate damages.<sup>120</sup> Otherwise it marked no defense.<sup>121</sup>

112. William L. Prosser, *supra* note 75, § 118, p. 826.

113. *Time, Inc. v. Hill*, 385 U.S. 374, 390-98 (1967).

114. Matthew Stohl, *False Light Invasion of Privacy in Docudramas: The Oxymoron Which Must be Solved*, 35 Akron L.R., pp. 251, 254 (No. 2, 2002).

115. *Ibid.*, p. 282.

116. William L. Prosser, *supra* note 75, § 118, p. 814.

117. *Ibid.*, p. 815.

118. *Ibid.*

119. *Ibid.*

120. *Ibid.*, p. 817.

121. *Ibid.*

Traditionally was sexual behavior thought to entail economic externalities.<sup>122</sup>

Externalities are spillover effects onto bystanders.<sup>123</sup> The stigma attaching to deviant sexuality<sup>124</sup> is born of social attitudes<sup>125</sup> towards intimacy and sex (problematicity, externalities). And those attitudes evolved over millenia in the context of varying governmental policies.<sup>126</sup> (Tangled are the law, values, and emotions.<sup>127</sup>) This history indicates that the law does not, primarily, create the stigma borne by unconventional sexual behaviors. In fact, illegality does not correlate reliably with social stigma. For example, acting in pornographic films is legal. In most of the United States, marijuana

122. George Steven Swan, *The Economics of Obstruction of Justice and Employment at Will: Rowan v. Tractor Supply Co.*, 81 U. Det. Mercy L. R. 305, 311-14 (2004).

123. According to Ronald H. Coase, awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1991, Graham Bannock, R. E. Baxter and Evan Davis, *Dictionary of Economics*, p. 61 (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1998), “...economists usually call for government intervention, which may include direct government regulation, when the market does not operate properly--when, that is, there exist what are commonly referred to as neighborhood or spillover effects, or, to use that unfortunate word, ‘externalities.’” Ronald H. Coase, *Essays on Economics and Economists*, pp. 72-73 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

124. Repugnance plays a role in attitude-formation, Andrea L. Bonnicksen, *Chimeras, Hybrids and Interspecies Research: Politics and Policymaking*, p. 116 (Washington; Georgetown University Press, 2009), but need not equate with wisdom. *Ibid.*, p. 115. The bases of the intuitive reactions to human-nonhuman research, for example, could be clarified via researching repugnance’s psychological roots. *Ibid.*, p. 133.

Social liberty is intimately bound up with certain intellectual virtues. It can hardly exist in a world where large groups of people feel dogmatic certainty about matters which are theoretically doubtful. It is the nature of the human animal to believe not only things for which there is evidence, but also very many things for which there is no evidence whatever. And it is the things for which there is no evidence that are believed with passion.

Bertrand Russell, *Fact and Fiction*, p. 71 (New York: Routledge, 1994).

125. Peter de Marneffe, *Liberalism and Prostitution*, pp. 18-19 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Liberalism, as I understand it, is constituted primarily by a principle of liberty: that the government may not limit individual liberty for insufficient reason, when this principle is interpreted by a certain kind of view about what reasons are insufficient. Because liberal theorists regard many different reasons as insufficient, and because those who regard themselves as liberal do not completely agree on which reasons these are, it is impossible to specify completely the content of this principle of liberty in a way that would gain universal assent.

*Ibid.*, p. 159.

126. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

127. See, e.g., John Deigh, *Emotions, Values, and the Law* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). For that matter, what is wrong with cannibalism? See, e.g., Allan G. Hutchison, *Is Eating People Wrong?: Great Legal Cases and How They Shaped the World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Apparently is naught deemed deranged with cannibalism, to judge from the behavior of some:

South Korea began to scrutinize the pill [“stamina boosters”] last year after SBS, one of the nation’s major television broadcasters, ran a documentary accusing Chinese pharmaceutical companies of collaborating with abortion clinics to make pills allegedly from human fetuses and the remains of dead infants.

Laurie Burkett, *Seoul Moves on China Pills Said to Come from Fetuses*, Wall St. J., May 8, 2012, at A14.

possession is not. Yet it is the latter which is the far less socially stigmatized of the two.<sup>128</sup>

*Mores.*

Such psychohistorical attitudes demarcate the (multimillennial) mores-momentum.<sup>129</sup>

Fornication and consensual sodomy constitute the solitary criminal laws in American history whereby the state acts purely to curtail consenting adults' forms of intimacy.<sup>130</sup>

Therefore, even were the 1949 stigma of fornication generated primarily by the supposition that such sexual behaviors are distinctively problematic, and even were said supposition today deemed erroneous, those two truths might prove nearly irrelevant to the practical law of 2015 America<sup>131</sup> (let alone of the 1949 or 1979 United States).

Tort. Privacy. 1949. *Mores.*

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128. Peter de Marneffe, *supra* note 125, p. 18.

129. *Ibid.*, p. 19. Today's mores are such that the Wharton School's Judd B. Kessler and Harvard Business School's Alvin E. Roth emphatically find: "Proposals to introduce monetary payments for organs are constrained by concerns about the morality and ethicality of such practices, and *repugnance* toward cash markets for organs...." Judd B. Kessler and Alvin E. Roth, *Organ Allocation Policy and the Decision to Donate*, 102(5) Am. Econ. R. 2018, 2019 (2012) (authors'emphasis).

The revulsion that modern America experiences toward bestiality exemplifies, even more clearly than does public revulsion to infanticide, a feeling deeper than any reason the public can articulate. Richard A. Posner, *Sex and Reason*, p. 230 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992). A public policy of indifference to bestiality would clash with the core of contemporary Western morality. *Id.*, p. 231. Bestiality taboos ranks among the surviving fragments of the moral tradition of the West. *Id.*, p. 232. "Twenty-five states make it a crime to have intercourse with an animal in private. Prosecutions still occur, but not often." William N. Eskridge, Jr., *Dishonorable Passions: Sodomy Law in America 1861-2003*, p. 341 (New York: Viking Adult, 2008).

130. Even so much was acknowledged emphatically by the petitioners in the Supreme Court sodomy case of *Lawrence v. Texas*, 539 U. S. 538 (2003): "Consensual sodomy and fornication have been the *only* criminal laws in American history where the State has acted solely to limit forms of intimacy by consenting adults." Brief of Petitioners, text at n. 16 (emphasis of Petitioners) (<http://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Brief+of+Petitioners>).

131. Peter de Marneffe, *supra* note 125, at 19 (example is prostitution). In fact, even the sale of controlled substances only doubtfully relates to morality. Richard A. Posner, *The Problematics of Moral and Legal Theory*, p. 109 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999). Concededly, to criminalize such a service tends to "immoralize" it. *Ibid.* But why?

This is not because most people take their moral cues from the criminal law; it is because criminalization has a selection effect. Law-abiding people (that is, people who have better opportunities in legal than illegal business) exit, and the criminal class becomes the provider of the service, lending an unsavory air to it. Just consider who distributed alcoholic beverages before and after Prohibition, and during it.

*Ibid.*

## IV. THE BIRTH OF SOPHIE ZAWISTOWSKA

Assuming, *arguendo*, that the tale of Brooklyn-Sophie as a flesh and blood woman is a yarnspinner's gentle hoax, where might one seek an inspiration behind Styron's publicization of his *Sophie's Choice* as drawing upon some real-life Sophie?

### A. What Happened in 1970

The 1970 Paramount Pictures romantic drama film, *Love Story*, was the highest grossing film in the United States and Canada of 1970.<sup>132</sup> It then ranked, in United States and Canadian gross only, as the sixth highest grossing film of all time.<sup>133</sup> It originated in a screenplay by Yale Professor Erich Segal (1937-2010).<sup>134</sup> Paramount solicited Segal's adoption of its movie into a novel as publicity anticipating the film release<sup>135</sup> of December 16, 1970.<sup>136</sup> Segal's novel, *Love Story*<sup>137</sup> was released on Valentine's Day 1970.<sup>138</sup> It became the bestselling work of fiction in the United States in 1970. It was translated into 33 languages (at least ultimately).<sup>139</sup> By the week of Valentine's Day 1971, *Love Story* already had undergone translation into 17 languages (only twelve months post-release).<sup>140</sup>

In each nation wherein it had been published it had been ranked as the bestseller.<sup>141</sup>

In a February 10, 1971, interview for the *Washington Post*<sup>142</sup> Segal declared:

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132. *Love Story* (1970 film), pp.1, 4 ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Love\\_Story](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Love_Story)) (1970\_film).

133. *Ibid.*

134. *Love Story* (novel), p. 1 ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Love\\_Story](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Love_Story)) (novel).

135. *Ibid.*; *Love Story* (1970 film), *supra* note 132, p. 2.

136. *Love Story* (1970 film), *supra* note 132, p. 1.

137. Erich Segal, *Love Story* (New York: HarperTorch, 2002).

138. *Love Story* (novel), *supra* note 134, p. 1.

139. Erich Segal, pp. 1, 2 ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erich\\_Segal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erich_Segal)).

140. Phil Casey, *Erich Segal: The Loved One*, p. C1 (*The Washington Post*) (Feb. 11, 1971).

141. *Ibid.*

142. *Ibid.* ("in town last night").

“Some people seem to want to make me out to be a meretricious, mercenary character,” he said. “And I’m not guilty of that rap.”

The idea for the novel came when a student visited him and told him of a young woman who had supported her husband through graduate school.

“I sat down and started writing immediately. The story poured out of me. I changed everything except for the girl’s death and the fact that she supported her husband through graduate school. I wrote sincerely, for myself. I wasn’t thinking of publication. I just had to write the story...Jennie (the heroine) was modeled on a girl I used to go with.”<sup>143</sup>

Subsequently, Styron told Hilary Mills during 1980:

Q: What was the original inspiration for *Sophie’s Choice*?

A: It was a kind of revelation, a dream, in which I woke up one spring morning.... I sensed I had dreamed a vision of a girl named Sophie whom I remembered from Brooklyn in the postwar years. She was a very vivid image in my mind and in dream. When I woke and lay there for quite a long time with a sense that (and I don’t mean to sound fancy or imply that this was a psychic experience because it wasn’t) but I realized and had almost been given a mandate to write this book. I saw the whole thing plain:

<sup>143</sup>, *Ibid.*, p. C3. Meretricious or mercenary? “One may or may not admire certain aspects of Erich Segal’s character, but it must be admitted that these less savory attributes do not get in his way.” Nicholas Meyer, *The Love Story Story*, p. 121 (New York; Avon Books, 1971) (1<sup>st</sup> ed.).

...I discovered something very interesting about Erich Segal: if he wasn’t talking he had nothing to say. Which is to say, he wasn’t interested in what anyone had to say. In fact, so far from being interested, he was absolutely unequipped to hear any speech that did not pertain to him directly, either as a question or else as some form of unbounded admiration. I have said earlier that I discovered no egomaniacal directors or stars working on *Love Story*. This is true. But there were egomaniacs involved with the film.

*Ibid.*, p. 53.

the idea of combining Sophie’s story with a story I had heard of another victim of the camps who had to make a choice between her children – all this seen through the eyes of a young man. It was almost as if the story was outlined.<sup>144</sup>

Top that, Segal!

### B. *What Happened in 1971*

One recalls the 1971 bestselling novel by Herman Raucher, *Summer of ’42*,<sup>145</sup> and the hit 1971 film of the same name from a screenplay by Mr. Raucher. His novel derived from his screenplay. Each of these versions of the story presents, or insinuates, the sexual intercourse of an adult war widow with a virginal, teenaged boy during the summer of 1942.

The underlying substantial factuality of *Summer of ’42* was attested to repeatedly into the twenty-first century by Raucher. He identified the *Summer of ’42* widow named Dorothy with an actual, widowed, Dorothy, and its virginal lad named Hermie (who is initiated by Dorothy) with himself. On the other hand, Raucher denied ever learning Dorothy’s last name. Raucher in a 2002 interview says that the Dorothy affair developed “Just as I wrote it.”<sup>146</sup> Raucher says his “most autobiographical” script “moved events around, as far as who my friends were and who was with me at the time.”<sup>147</sup> Raucher “knew not to talk

<sup>144</sup>, Creators on Creating: William Styron *Hilary Mills*, in *Conversations with William Styron*, *supra* note 17, pp. 235-36.

<sup>145</sup>. Herman Raucher, *Summer of ’42*, (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1971).

<sup>146</sup>. Herman Raucher Interview (extended), pp. 1, 4 (<http://web.tcpalm.com/specialreports/summerof'42/raucher.html>).

<sup>147</sup>. *Ibid.*, p.3.

about”<sup>148</sup> the Dorothy affair: “I never told anyone until I wrote the book.”<sup>149</sup> So Raucher in 2002 cited no witnesses.

Raucher recalls of the letters sent to him in the aftermath of the movie: “I recognized her [Dorothy’s] handwriting...but we were talking about 1971, which was almost 30 years after the incident, and I get this letter—and I never knew her last name—and the postmark was Canton, Ohio, and she had remarried.”<sup>150</sup> *Never knew her last name.* (Would *you* have caught Dorothy’s last name?) Did Raucher’s Canton, Ohio, letter-story slyly bait a gullible Great Unwashed? Had Herman surmised that Brooklyn-Sophie was a fraud, spiced by Styron with Bill’s 1981 story of a correspondent recounting his own *Caton Avenue Sophie*. When did you last think upon Canton, Ohio? (When have *you* ever thought “Caton” at all?)

Raucher’s screenplay and novel displayed sympathetically the intercourse of a widow with a virgin. The widow was like Sophie, a World War II-era widow. Raucher’s screenplay (and novel) exploit a wraparound format whereby the now-aging male reflects on his haunting past. Likewise do both the novel and film, *Sophie’s Choice*. Brooklyn-Sophie appears to be a hoax conjured by an author with a twinkle in his eye.

*Love Story* and *Summer of ’42* are romances with young married couples. Both climax with the death of a young spouse. According to Erich Segal, *Love Story’s* beloved, doomed spouse Jennifer Cavilleri (played by Ali MacGraw in the film released on December 16, 1970) was modeled on a girl with whom Segal used to go. A Herman Raucher reading Segal’s *Post* interview could not miss the parallels. Segal connecting himself personally to his goldmine-romance (his dying heroine being “modeled on a girl I used to go with”),

148. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

149. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

150. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

who could call Erich meretricious or mercenary? And who could call Herman, inserting himself into *Summer of ’42* as a heartbroken war-widow’s solitary comforter, meretricious or mercenary?

Erich Segal was a screenwriter who novelized his script for a 1970 movie into a 1970 romantic novel. Herman Raucher was a screenwriter who novelized his script for a 1971 movie into a 1971 romantic novel. Erich Segal was solicited to do Segal’s novelization by Paramount Pictures. Herman Raucher was solicited to do Raucher’s novelization by Warner Brothers. Segal’s blockbuster novel heralded Paramount’s blockbuster film. No hermit, Herman could not have missed Ali MacGraw on the cover of the issue of *Time Magazine* dated January 11, 1971,<sup>151</sup> not even a month past the release of her movie. Raucher could not have avoided Segal’s case. It was a hopeful precedent for his own.

But wasn’t Segal’s story true? Nicholas Meyer is a formidable author in Meyer’s own right.<sup>152</sup> Meyer was the Paramount Pictures unit publicist (i.e., the press host, and official scribe) on the movie *Love Story*.<sup>153</sup> All of the material that concerned *Love Story’s* making necessarily passed through Meyer’s hands.<sup>154</sup> His 1971-published, personal account of that production<sup>155</sup> relied on his contemporaneous notes from those events, his press

151. *Time Magazine*, January 11, 1971 (cover). For that matter, Ali MacGraw graced the cover of *Town & Country* magazine dated February 2012. But her photo dated from 1969. Perhaps coincidentally was MacGraw the *Town & Country* covergirl at age 72, Leslie Bennetts, *The Real Ali MacGraw*, *Town & Country*, February 2012, p. 62, for the month of the Blu-ray re-release of *Love Story*. *Ibid.*, p.64.

152. See, e.g., Nicholas Meyer, *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1993); Nicholas Meyer, *The West End Horror* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1994); and Nicholas Meyer, *The Canary Trainer* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1993).

153. Nicholas Meyer, *supra* note 143, p. 11.

154. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

155. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

releases and articles about the film, and upon the memories of himself among others.<sup>156</sup>

As to the veracity of Segal's workproduct:

There are conflicting rumors about the origins of *Love Story* and Segal himself has told different versions of how he got the idea for the script. Besides his blurred statements on the subject, various friends and enemies have their own theories as to how he came up with it. Almost all agree that the story was inspired by an actual couple that Segal knew at Harvard. Whether the girl died or lived is uncertain. Whether they were married or not is also obscure. Whether one was rich and the other poor, whether the boy's parents forbade the match on pain of disinheritance—this is all speculation. In any case, there can be no doubt that the story is essentially Segal's original creation.<sup>157</sup>

In other words: "What elements of Segal's autobiography are present in *Love Story* are difficult to ascertain. Unable to describe the genesis of the work we must content ourselves

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156. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

Accuracy is of primary importance in such a work, and, while I feel confident in my account of events and incidents to which I was—in what I believe is the legal phrase—a material witness, I feel bound to say that in researching the vast body of supplementary material required to round out the history of this film, it was not unusual to come up with two or more conflicting versions of the same story. In such cases I have tried to indicate the uncertainty in which they are shrouded by mentioning the difference of opinion on the subject and including, where possible, the principal versions of the incidents in question. When dealing with the scattered recollections of a number of people—some of whose interests in this history were diametrically opposed—the author must tread a wary path and hope that no grotesque or significant error has marred his attempt at truthfulness.

157. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

Having suggested the general source of inspiration it is less simple to explain what was within it that struck him so powerfully. Why did a professor of classics and comparative literature, an intellectual with no particular reputation for either sentiment or sentimentality (there is no record, for instance, of his ever having come close to marriage, himself), choose to throw himself with such vigor and authority into the writing of a work of flagrantly emotional appeal?

with its vague origins."<sup>158</sup>

Meyer errs. One need not (at least in 2015) content oneself with the "vague origins" of Segal's blockbuster novel in their "different versions." For the literary critic of 2015 finds available that novel's own 1970-2015 aftermath. Observe that in the frenzy of 1970-1971, no (supposed) widower of the doomed Ali McGraw-character himself strode forth to tell their tale for profit. No dollar-incentivized publisher hunted-down that young man with an offer to publish his ghostwritten memoir. (President William J. Clinton was impeached by the House of Representatives on December 19, 1998. The Senate acquitted him on February 12, 1999. Monica Lewinsky's publishing contract to co-write a memoir with celebrity biographer Andrew Morton<sup>159</sup> was only announced mid-November 1998.<sup>160</sup> Yet "their" memoir already was published by March 5, 1999.<sup>161</sup>) If he were half of "an actual couple Segal knew at Harvard," then was such a publisher's search guaranteed not to be hopeless. Nonetheless, no such man appeared even following Segal's 2010 death.

Did he ever exist?

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158. *Ibid.*, p. 58. Meyer at once adds parenthetically:

(It is interesting to note that there was another film called *Love Story*. Made in 1944, the British film starred dark-haired Margaret Lockwood as a pianist with an incurable disease. Also starred were Stewart Granger and Patricia Roc; the film is remembered today, if at all, for the beautiful score by the distinguished British composer, Hubert Bath.)

*Ibid.* Many are the comparisons of *Love Story* with *Camille*. *Ibid.*, pp. 216-19. In turn, a later movie reminiscent of *Love Story* was the love story directed by Lone Scherfig entitled *One Day*. Joe Morgenstern, 'One Day': A Stutter-Stop Affair to Forget, Wall St. J., p. D3, August 19, 2011.

159. See, e.g., Andrew Morton, *Andrew, the Playboy Prince* (New York: Severn House, 1983); Andrew Morton, *Duchess: An Intimate Portrait of Sarah, Duchess of York* (Chicago: Contemporary Books Publishers, 1989); Andrew Morton, *Diana's Diary: An Intimate Portrait of The Princess of Wales* (New York: Summit Books, 1990); Andrew Morton, *Diana: Her New Life* (London: Michael O'Mara Books, 1995); and Andrew Morton, *Diana: Her True Story in Her Own Words* (New York: Pocket Books, 1998).

160. Post *Reports Lewinsky Book Deal* (November 16, 1998) (<http://articles.chicagotribune.com/keyword/andrew-morton>).

161. Andrew Morton, *Monica's Story* (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 1999). Notice whose name is in the title (on the cover) but absent (as author) from the title page?

Compare with the discretion of a hypothetical real-life widower underlying Segal's *Love Story* the 1972-2005 denials by Mark Felt of his role as Watergate's "Deep Throat." Felt, after the death on May 2, 1972, of J. Edgar Hoover, became Associate Director of the F.B.I. until his June 12, 1973 retirement. Going public only by May 31, 2005, Felt seemingly had consumed 31 years of federal pension. He had told his wife he feared prosecution for his misdeeds.<sup>162</sup> But Felt's family saw potential profit in his coming-out. This Felt agreed was good reason.<sup>163</sup> Segal's widower would have feared neither prosecution nor forfeiture of pension. Yet his silence stretches longer than the lies of Mark Felt.

With Segal's bogus story on the record first, a bolder Raucher could go Segal one better. Segal's sympathetic young heroine's original Segal claimed he actually knew personally. Daringly for 1970s America, Raucher could communicate of the vague origins (in his own biography) of *Summer of '42* that a real-life Dorothy (Raucher's sympathetic young heroine's original) Herman actually knew Biblically. And he knew her in a Biblical sense as a mere pubescent. Even so might an imaginary Dorothy to catch America's imagination have been born.

### ***C. What Happened between 1974 and 1979***

In 1974, William Styron unburdened himself to the public. William did so on the heels of the 1970 and 1971 respective bonanzas running to Segal and Raucher. Styron related that he had known a Polish girl many years prior. Upon her the fictional Sophie was based. Styron's true-life acquaintance had lost her father, husband, and children to the Nazis, and had lost her religion. Top that, Erich and Hermie!

162. According to John D. O'Connor, his attorney. John D. O'Connor, "I'm the Guy They Called Deep Throat," *Vanity Fair*, July 2005 (<http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2005/07/deepthroat200507>).

163. *Ibid.* "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Matthew 6:21; Luke 12:34 (King James).

Like Raucher, Styron would profess ignorance of his heroine's real last name, while noising (to his own profit) her first name. Like Raucher, Styron would profess ignorance of whether his onetime young lady still survived. Like Raucher, who had professed to have received mail from the long-ago Dorothy, Styron would profess to have received mail from a male long-ago acquaintance of Sophie: Ben Crovets. Said correspondent, by most agreeable coincidence, told a tale of a man sounding just like Styron's model for "Nathan." In turn, by most agreeable coincidence had said correspondent, like Styron, somehow never caught Sophie's last name. Had an avaricious Styron, shrewdly skirting catastrophic litigation, himself begotten Sophie Zawistowska's supposed model, Styron's Brooklyn-Sophie?

### **V. WHO MIGHT HAVE MIDWIVED BEN CROVETS?**

William Styron and novelist Philip Roth already were friends when Bill began work on his *Sophie's Choice* manuscript.<sup>164</sup> Virtually simultaneously with the publication of Styron's book, Roth published Roth's novel *The Ghost Writer*<sup>165</sup> in *The New Yorker* issues of June 25, 1979<sup>166</sup> and of July 2, 1979.<sup>167</sup> Set in 1956,<sup>168</sup> this novel is narrated by Roth's fictional alter ego, Nathan Zuckerman. Zuckerman, then publishing his first short stories, is 23 years of age; when Styron moved into 1506 Caton Avenue, Styron's age was 23.<sup>169</sup>

While Zuckerman visits a literary celebrity, he is introduced to a lovely, 26-year-old<sup>170</sup>

164. Selected Letters of William Styron, *supra* note 3, p. 498.

165. Philip Roth, *The Ghost Writer* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Girous, 1979).

166. Philip Roth, *The Ghost Writer*, *The New Yorker*, June 24, 1979, p. 26 (Part One).

167. Philip Roth, *The Ghost Writer*, *The New Yorker*, July 2, 1979, p. 28 (Part Two).

168. Philip Roth, *supra* note 165, p. 3.

169. *Ibid.*, p. 3-5.

170. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

woman with a faintly foreign accent, Amy Bellette.<sup>171</sup> A 34-pages long interlude entitled *Femme Fatale*<sup>172</sup> reveals Amy to be Anne Frank, snatched by the British from the jaws of death in Belsen.<sup>173</sup> An anguished Amy-Anne says of her alias Amy (Amy: beloved) Bellette (Belle: beautiful): “So I took the sweet name – to impersonate everything that I wasn’t.”<sup>174</sup> Only in the following section of the book does Zuckerman disclose that the entire Anne Frank persona of Amy (who is real enough in Roth’s world of *The Ghost Writer*) is a “fiction I had evolved about her [Amy].”<sup>175</sup>

Like Styron’s, Roth’s tale is told through the eyes of a young, male alter ego, who fixes himself upon a young, foreign-accented woman. Like Styron’s, Roth’s story prominently features a Jew named Nathan. Like Styron’s novel, Roth’s *Femme Fatale* fiction recounts the horrific history of a Holocaust survivor. Like author Styron (who evoked Miss Zawistoska: one of a kind, hence, his wholly fictional woman without a real-world counterpart) Roth-Zuckerman evoked Amy Bellette, whose name conjures everything she wasn’t. What Amy wasn’t was survivor Anne Frank: a woman wholly fictionalized by the himself-fictional Zuckerman, hence doubly devoid of a real-world woman-counterpart.

At least as early as 1979, did Philip Roth know something about his fellow-fictionalist’s friend Brooklyn-Sophie that most of the world did not? Had a profit-prone Styron fathered Brooklyn-Sophie? Roth was a high-profile author of comic stories as well as of more somber literature. Roth himself was no stranger to the politically-correct pillorying of a fictionalist.<sup>176</sup> Did Roth suggest Styron’s recruitment of a jolly, third-party partner,

171. *Ibid.*, pp. 23-25.

172. *Ibid.*, pp. 122-155.

173. *Ibid.*, pp. 125-26.

174. *Ibid.*, p. 153.

175. *Ibid.*, p. 157.

176. Claudia Roth Pierpont, *Roth Unbound: A Writer and His Books*, p. 7 (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013).

to be let-in on Styron’s joke, to serve as substantiating witness to Brooklyn-Sophie? What qualification would a storyteller like Philip Roth find attractive in a party to such hoax? Styron’s Wantagh correspondent was Mr. Crovets. In Yiddish, *vits/vitz* means joke.<sup>177</sup>

Published on June 11, 1979, *Sophie’s Choice* already had been sold to Hollywood by July 5, 1979.<sup>178</sup> By 1979, William Styron was experienced in the minefields of politics and culture. His previous novel, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*,<sup>179</sup> had elicited a storm of racial controversy.<sup>180</sup> And the producer, director and screenwriter of *Sophie’s Choice* was Alan J. Pakula. Born in The Bronx to parents of Polish Jewish descent, Pakula could have been sensitive to attacks (as anti-Semitic) upon Styron’s story of a Polish Catholic in Auschwitz.<sup>181</sup>

Robert Mulligan had directed *Summer of ’42* from Herman Raucher’s screenplay. Between 1959 and 1968, Mulligan was known for his extensive collaborations with (as his producer) Pakula.<sup>182</sup> Had Mulligan been well-aware that Raucher’s tale of Raucher’s own adolescent sex with Dorothy was imaginary, and tipped-off Pakula and Styron on the merits in adhering to an imaginary, Styronian Brooklyn-Sophie story? Was an implicit threat (that Styron and Pakula could deliver a witness to their flesh and blood Auschwitz victim, Brooklyn Sophie) weighed as a deterrent to minimize assaults on *Sophie’s Choice*? For how many critics would dare scorn the biography of a provable Holocaust survivor?

### Was Brooklyn-Sophie Styron’s human shield?

177. Leo Rosten, *The New Joys of Yiddish*, p. 416 (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001) (Lawrence Bush rev.).

178. Selected Letters of William Styron, *supra* note 3, p. 534.

179. William Styron, *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (New York: First Vintage International edition, 1993).

180. See, e.g., William Styron’s *Nat Turner: Ten Black Writers Respond* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968) (John Henrik Clarke ed.).

181. See, e.g., Phyllis Deutsch, *Sophie’s Choice: Undeserved Guilt*, *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, pp. 9-10 (February 1984) (no. 29) <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinesays/JC29folder/SophiesChoice.html>: “moral perversity”; “the novel’s basic anti-Semitism”; “Indeed, the depiction of Jews in *Sophie’s Choice* suggests that Jews—dark, dishonest, vindictive, obsessional, cruel—got just what they deserved”.

182. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert\\_Mulligan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Mulligan).

## VI. WILLIAM STYRON AS STUDENT OF DEFAMATION

Did Roth and/or Mulligan and/or Pakula midwife the Ben Crovets-role of convenient correspondent? Immediately post-July 5, 1979, did Styron-Pakula recruit some such handy witness? Perhaps coincidentally, on September 1, 1979, William Styron wrote to his aforementioned male correspondent, in Wantagh, New York:

The reason I'm certain that 'your' Sophie and 'mine' must be the same girl is that I *did* know her in 1949 (not 1947, as I wrote in the book) and also she did live, as I did, in a rooming house on Caton Avenue—something I did not mention by name in the book. Those two facts clinch her identity.<sup>183</sup>

That Styron letter on the heels of the novel's publication prefigured this one of July 26, 1982:

Still no word from our Sophie, so I suspect she either went a long way off (back to Europe?) or met some unkind fate. I never learned her last name, either. Perhaps the movie, when it appears in December, will cause her to surface, but I doubt it. Meanwhile, if you ever hear anything, let me know.<sup>184</sup>

By most agreeable coincidence did this missive anticipate the movies' release, with its risk of reignited controversy. Yet why suppose Styronian cynicism between September 1, 1979, and July 26, 1982?

William Styron was a close friend of,<sup>185</sup> a neighbor of,<sup>186</sup> and a 1984<sup>187</sup> eulogist of,<sup>188</sup> playwright Lillian Hellman. Remarks of January 25, 1980, concerning Hellman by novelist Mary McCarthy on *The Dick Cavett Show* resulted in a defamation suit. Hellman sued McCarthy, Cavett, and a PBS affiliate (Channel Thirteen) for \$2,225,000. According to Hellman's complaint, McCarthy had broadcast statements "false, made with ill-will, with malice, with knowledge of its falsity, with careless disregard of its truth, and with the intent to injure the plaintiff personally and professionally."<sup>189</sup> Would plaintiffs Brooklyn Sophie and phantomlike "Nathan" have been situated to sue Styron, Styron's publisher, and the *Sophie's Choice* studio, for defamation with ill-will, with knowledge of its falsity, with careless disregard of its truth, and with the intent to injure plaintiffs? No, not were they nonexistent.

Between those two letters to Wantagh of September 1, 1979, and July 26, 1982, Styron wrote to Hellman on April 2, 1980. He discussed her defamation suit:

Had she [McCarthy] said—just for example—that you [Hellman] were a card carrying Party member until the year 1960 (or that you were a lesbian, or that you had committed a fraud) you would probably have a sound case. But the very grossness of her statement—I was about to say, a kind of sublime silliness, paradoxically protects McCarthy, since it is so ludicrous that it plainly defies belief.<sup>190</sup>

185. William Wright, *Lillian Hellman: The Image, the Woman*, p. 316 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986).

186. *Ibid.*, p. 289.

187. *Ibid.*, pp. 421-22.

188. *Ibid.*, pp. 423-24.

189. *Ibid.*, p. 386.

190. Selected Letters of William Styron, *supra* note 3, p. 540.

183. Selected Letters of William Styron, *supra* note 3, p. 537.

184. *Ibid.*, p. 557.

Is this the language of a *naïf* so unalerted to defamation or invasion of privacy issues as to noise the reality of his Brooklyn Sophie-Nathan” dyad (Brooklyn Sophie being a reality, and both perhaps alive to sue)? Or are these the words of an author media-wise, and media-advised, on the perils of naming living persons in unpleasant fictions (and secure in his knowledge that Brooklyn-Sophie was ever-insubstantial)?

Prudent, prior to any answer, would be a rereading of Styron’s letters to Wantagh. On September 1, 1979, Styron said: “...she [Brooklyn-Sophie] did live, as I did, in a rooming house on Caton Avenue—something I did not mention by name in the book.”<sup>191</sup> Well, yes. Not mentioned *by name*. His implicit joke is: *Anybody* could decipher my Caton Avenue clues! On July 26, 1982, Styron said: “Perhaps the movie, when it appears in December, will cause her to surface, but I doubt it.”<sup>192</sup> Well, yes. Obtrusive is his jest: *But I doubt it!*

Black humor. Irony. Who is Sophie Zawistowska? The Polish word *swoistość* means individual nature,<sup>193</sup> or specificity.<sup>194</sup> Styron’s fictional Sophie *Zawistowska* is one of a kind. There is no Brooklyn-Sophie. Nor is Sophie’s last name coincidental.

An unignorable name (“Jemand von Niemand”) Styron inserts eight times in seven pages,<sup>195</sup> adding “von Niemand’s,”<sup>196</sup> and “Dr. von Niemand.”<sup>197</sup> Styron as Stingo declares of the M.D. who demanded Sophie’s fraught choice between her son and daughter in

191. *Ibid.*, p. 537.

192. *Ibid.*, p. 557. See, e.g., Alan Ackerman, *Just Words: Lilian Hellman, Mary McCarthy, and the Failure of Public Conversation in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

193. <http://polish.slavic.pitt.edu/polish/main/php>; <http://en.bab.la/dictionary/polish-english/swoistość>.

194. Jacek Fisiak, *The New English-Polish and Polish-English Kosciuszko Foundation Dictionary*, p. 920 (Krakow: Publishing House Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2003) (1<sup>st</sup> ed.); <http://en.bab.la/dictionary/polish-english/swoistość>.

195. William Styron, *supra* note 2, pp. 481-87.

196. *Ibid.*, p. 485.

197. *Ibid.*, p. 486.

Auschwitz: “I have christened [interesting verb] him Fritz Jemand von Niemand because it seems as good a name as any for an SS doctor—....”<sup>198</sup> *Jemand*, in German, means someone, somebody, anyone, anybody.<sup>199</sup> *Niemand*, in German, means “nobody, no one, not anybody.”<sup>200</sup> So the satanic SS physician is the opposite of a specific individual, he being devoid of *swoistość*.

As noted hereinabove, during 1981 Styron (who previously had been burned by critics scorching his historical-novelization of African-Americans’ slavery ordeal) knew his *Sophie’s Choice* subject could explode in his face at any moment. Yet, at the risk of appearing a tad vain, he held that concerning every important point *Sophie’s Choice* attracted zero fundamental attack. Styron understood that were anyone to highlight any grave mistake concerning an anachronism his novel could collapse. For nobody would have passed-up the chance to corner him. In 2002, Styron related:

[T]he prohibition against the outsider attempting to grapple with the mystery of Auschwitz strikes me as empty piety. *Certainly I was aware of the hazards*. I sensed an infringement, almost an indecency, on my part should I dare try to delineate the core of the camps, with its tortures, its unspeakable barbarities. Therefore I deliberately distanced myself from the interior of Auschwitz, setting all the action outside the camp, in the Commandant’s house, where the horrors could be registered through Sophie’s consciousness as remote sights, sounds and smells. This distance helped bolster my conviction that, with further discretion, I should be able

198. *Ibid.*, p. 481.

199. Langenschiedt’s *German-English English-German Dictionary*, pp. 13, 161, 583 (New York: Pocket Books, 2009) (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. rev., updated).

200. *Ibid.*, p. 209.

to extract from Auschwitz some central truths.<sup>201</sup>

Yet in 1981, there stood *Sophie's Choice*, uncompromised, with its author declaring his pride in telling the truth. Can that 1981 Styronian speech have accompanied Styronian delight in simultaneously silently rejoicing:

Sanctimonious critics lay in wait, eager to corner me and to explode my *Sophie's Choice*. But I'm proud to have evaded that wolfpack eager to corner me. I've made morons of everyone who swallowed whole my Brooklyn-Sophie fairytale, despite my manifest clues. In this very interview I've presented the Caton Avenue venue of my apartment as an item only a Brooklyn Sophie's acquaintance could know (a conclusion preposterous given details in my novel), and I've alleged that my model for Nathan was both inoffensively nice plus exactly the kind of man to strangle Brooklyn Sophie's cat. Lord what fools these mortals be!

Indeed, how tightly parallel the actual McCarthy and the hypothetical Styron cases? McCarthy had excoriated Hellman to Cavett and his PBS viewers as a prevaricator.<sup>202</sup> Pressed by Hellman's attorneys to name every example of Hellman's dishonesty,<sup>203</sup> McCarthy had listed, inter alia, "The unbelievability of 'Julia'."<sup>204</sup> ("Julia" was a section<sup>205</sup> in Hellman's 1973 memoir,<sup>206</sup> *Pentimento*.<sup>207</sup>) McCarthy added to her interrogatory answer, inter alia: "That no one ever came forward in the years following *Pentimento's* publication to say that they also knew Hellman's remarkable and heroic Julia."<sup>208</sup> (McCarthy's interrogatory

answer, filed with the court, was available to the public.<sup>209</sup>) How many witnesses between 1979 and 2015 strode forth to attest how they, likewise, knew Styron's remarkable if not heroic Brooklyn Sophie, or ectoplasmic "Nathan"?

How many, indeed. On May 2, 1949, Styron wrote to his father from 1506 Caton Avenue that by June he would be sharing his apartment with Bob Loomis of Duke, who was to arrive in New York to jobhunt.<sup>210</sup> For Robert Loomis had edited Styron's work for the student magazine at Duke. A book editor at Random House between 1957 and 2011, Loomis was to edit each of Bill's books but Styron's initial novel.<sup>211</sup> Had Loomis and Styron sworn, side by side, to Random House (as later to Pakula and ITC Entertainment) that litigation was not to be feared because Brooklyn-Sophie (and consequently any "Nathan") never walked the earth?

## VII. CONCLUSION

The preceding discussion has reviewed the novelist William Styron's 1979 bestseller *Sophie's Choice*, and its adaptation, the 1982 hit movie<sup>212</sup> of that title. Creative industries are so understood in the context of today's cultural economics that they plainly embrace both low and high culture. This comports with a world wherein both consumers and producers of cultural services and goods engage in busy crossover activities.<sup>213</sup> There already has emerged an entire adaptation industry, with a cultural economy of literary

201. Speech by William Styron at the AJCF Dinner, December 3, 2002, *supra* note 22.

202. William Wright, *supra* note 185, p. 387.

203. *Ibid.*, p. 389.

204. *Ibid.*, p. 390.

205. *Ibid.*, p. 345.

206. *Ibid.*, p. 343.

207. Lillian Hellman, *Pentimento: A Book of Portraits* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1973).

208. William Wright, *supra* note 185, p. 396.

209. *Ibid.*

210. Selected Letters of William Styron, *supra* note 3, p. 56.

211. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert\\_Loomis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Loomis).

212. Texts offering analyses of cinema and genocide include *Film and Genocide* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012) (Krisi M. Wilson and Tomás F. Crowder – Taraborrelli, eds.) and *Marek Haltof, Polish Film and the Holocaust: Politics and Memory* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011).

213. Ruth Towse, *Creative Industries*, in *A Handbook of Cultural Economics* pp. 125, 126. (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2011) (Ruth Towse ed.).

adaptation.<sup>214</sup> And there exists an entire discipline of adaptation studies.<sup>215</sup>

The substantive factuality underlying *Sophie's Choice* had again and again been attested to by Mr. Styron. He in 1974 identified his novel's Brooklyn widow named Sophie with a real-life, widowed Brooklyn-Sophie who had lost her father, and who also had been in Auschwitz<sup>216</sup> where she had lost her two children. As late as 2014 Gavin Cologne-Brookes submitted: "Sophie may be a fiction (though Styron did meet an Auschwitz survivor named Sophie), ...."<sup>217</sup> Nonetheless, Styron disclaimed remembering Brooklyn-Sophie's last name.

Notably, when the novelist confronted, personally, a pair of potential cross-examiners, the story Styron spun (age, midsummer, year) tangled tangibly. Styron turned 24 on June 11, 1949, the month he departed Caton Avenue:

*Interviewer:* Was there a chance you might have fallen in love with the real Sophie?

*Styron:* I don't think that would have been possible because, for one thing, she was about ten years older than I was, so therefore she was not really available. A woman of 31 is still young, but is markedly older in the eyes of a 21-year-old.

*Interviewer:* Was there any connection between meeting Sophie and *Lie Down in Darkness*? Between her and Peyton's tragedy?

214. Simone Murray, *The Adaptation Industry: The Cultural Economy of Contemporary Literary Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

215. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

216. In the camps-complex styled Auschwitz, Auschwitz One was the chief site. Frank Stiffel, *The Tale of the Ring: A Kaddish*, pp. 169-70 (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1984). It was Auschwitz One's sinister sister-site Birkenau that encompassed ovens and gaschambers, proving the destination of Jewish transports of occupants for gassing at once. *Ibid.*, p. 170.

217. Gavin Cologne-Brookes, *Rereading Styron* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2014).

*Styron:* I don't think there's any direct connection. I don't actually know what happened to the real Sophie. I mean, that was fiction. I stayed in that house where the real Sophie lived only, I would say, about six weeks, and then I left. I left in the middle of the summer of 1947 and moved up the Hudson River.<sup>218</sup>

That Styron, or his film's experienced director (Alan J. Pakula) and studio (ITC Entertainment) would have shot any screenplay on so sensitive a topic toward a 1982 release while using a true-life participant's name is hard to credit. Questionable also is it that a Styron of 1981 would confirm, as Styron did, a claim of autobiographical accuracy while in the same breath speculating that Brooklyn-Sophie could yet be numbered among the quick. (A Brooklyn-Sophie of 30 in 1947 or 1949 would in 1981 have been only 64, or even 62, years of age.) For the 1979 libel law was such that gold from the defendants' teeth-litigation on the part of a plaintiff Brooklyn-Sophie against Styron and the studio was a live menace. The absence of Styronian ill-will was beside the point. Distinctly loomed extortionate litigation.<sup>219</sup> Moreover, during 1979 a public disclosure of private facts objectionable to persons of ordinary sensitivities was a tort. Too, publicity placing a plaintiff in a false light in the public's eye marked an independent variant of tortious invasion of privacy. That tortious false light could be one non-defamatory. Applicable, apparently, was a mores test.

218. *Interview with William Styron: Victor Strandberg and Balkrishna Buwa*, 49 *Sewanee Review*, pp. 463, 467 (Summer 1991).

219. Still evolving is today's law of privacy, its domains encompassing, e.g., intimate relations, and digital-age information control. *Imagining New Legalities: Privacy and Its Possibilities in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2012) (Austin Sarat, Lawrence Douglas and Martha Umphrey eds.) (The Amherst Series in Law, Jurisprudence, and Social Thought). For that matter, it is argued that (even if it is impossible legally to defame the dead) it is possible maliciously to "defame" the dead to their harm. Raymond Angelo Belliotti, *Posthumous Harm: Why the Dead Are Still Vulnerable* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books) 2013). And philosophers have confronted the challenge of explaining the duty to treat with dignity even the dead (beyond profiting from our respect). Michael Rosen, *Dignity: Its History and Meaning*, p. 10 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

## APPENDIX

### *Even Still the Ghost of William Styron Stalks*

Can one now think of the Holocaust as culture?<sup>220</sup> A 2011 Balaji Ravichandran review discussed the publication of the 1988 novel *Fiasco*,<sup>221</sup> by Hungary's Imre Kertész in a Tim Wilkinson translation. It is a prequel to Kertész's 1975 novel *Fatelessness*.<sup>222</sup> And *Fatelessness* follows Kertész's adolescent alter ego, Köves. Mr. Ravichandran explained that the first third of *Fiasco* is a prelude, seen through the eyes of "old boy"<sup>223</sup> (apparently Kertész). Thereafter the real novel unfolds with Köves's life in a fictionalized Communist Hungary. The main element of *Fiasco* is Köves's aim to write about the Holocaust. Köves is told by editors that the topic already has been heavily published-upon.<sup>224</sup> Kertész's "old boy" asks if these horrors can be diluted. How might an author prevent readers' withering of emotion? "One way suggested implicitly in the book, through its very structure, is formal diversity, a fragmentation of the narrative."<sup>225</sup> The story of Köves is "a story within the story to keep the critics and average reader reading."<sup>226</sup>

The emotional high point<sup>227</sup> emerges from a minor character's reading to Köves his preface<sup>228</sup> to a yet-unwritten novel. He is unable to start the novel – about a mass murderer – because he is incapable of grasping one's descent into moral monstrosity: "Köves replies

220. Imre Kertész, *The Holocaust as Culture: A Conversation with Imre Kertész* (London: Seagull Books, 2012) (Thomas Cooper trans.).

221. Imre Kertész, *Fiasco* (New York: Melville House, 2011) (Tim Wilkinson trans.).

222. Imre Kertész, *Fatelessness* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004) (Tim Wilkinson trans.). The Köves Trilogy concludes with Imre Kertész, *Kaddish for an Unborn Child* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004) (Tim Wilkinson trans.).

223. Balaji Ravichandran, Book Review, *Times Lit. Supp.*, September 9, 2011, p. 19.

224. *Ibid.*

225. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

226. *Ibid.*

227. Ravichandran says Berg's preface-reading scene affords "The finest moment in *Fiasco* – which has the emotional impact of the scene from *The Brothers Karamazov* in which Ivan hands back the keys to Heaven—...." *Ibid.*

228. The preface is found in Imre Kertész, *supra* note 220, pp. 295-308.

by recounting an incident from the time when he was a prison guard...A single incident, such as an otherwise pacifist guard being induced to strike a prisoner because of the latter's refusal to eat, is enough to trigger the transition."<sup>229</sup>

Kertész won the 2002 Nobel Prize in Literature. Had Kertész copped William Styron's Nobel? Styron's *Sophie's Choice* was published well before 1988. And it was a novel (set in 1947) written about the Holocaust. In 2011, Ruth Franklin in her study *A Thousand Darknenses: Lies and Truth in Holocaust Fiction*<sup>230</sup> recorded of "A *Kudarc* (*Fiasco*, translated into German, Spanish, Hebrew, and other languages, but not English), ...."<sup>231</sup> But *not* English.

Too, *Sophie's Choice* was a novel seen through the eyes of an older man. Further, that older man is obviously the novel's author, Styron himself. And Styron's young, male protagonist, Stingo, aims to become a writer. The structure of *Sophie's Choice* is one of formal diversity, with a story within a story. Also, Stingo makes express reference to a (in 1947) yet-unwritten novel that the *Sophie's Choice* reader knows will be written by Styron (=Stingo). The background of *Sophie's Choice* is one of mass murder. Furthermore, the emotional peak of *Sophie's Choice* is the revelation that unthreatening, almost pacific, Sophie during 1943<sup>232</sup> had been entrapped in that morally monstrous Nazi project by a "single incident". Moreover, during 1945, Styron was U.S. Marine "prison guard" as the commander of a guard platoon in the U.S. Naval prison on Harts Island in Long

229. Balaji Ravichandran, *supra* note 223, p. 20. The prison guard-recalcitrant prisoner scene is found in Imre Kertész, *supra* note 220, pp. 341-49. This Köves "reply" is by way of a letter. *Ibid.*, pp. 330-52.

230. Ruth Franklin, *A Thousand Darknenses: Lies and Truth in Holocaust Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

231. *Ibid.*, p. 122.

232. William Styron, *supra* note 2, pp. 389-90 and 392.

Island Sound.<sup>233</sup> Ravichandran overlooks that Köves, a draftee,<sup>234</sup> is assigned to “a post as a prison guard in the central military prison.”<sup>235</sup>

Are these random coincidences?

233. William Styron, *Letters to My Father*, p. 39 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009) (James L. W. West III ed.).

234. Imre Kertész, *supra* note 220, p. 332.

235. *Ibid.*, p. 334.

Moccasins #1



White Feather/Robert Nabess

# **Tarnished Dreams and Toxic Waste: The Slippery**

## **Meaning of Science and Rectification at Love Canal**

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The mere mention of Love Canal recollects memories of one of the nation's worst environmental disasters. Headlines splashed across newspapers carried stories of chronically sick children, chemically burned pets and the idyllic American dream gone wrong. Love Canal has very much become a "code word for environmental disaster" still used today, especially when referencing proposed changes to the Superfund laws (Esch). The area was largely razed during the 1980s after a full evacuation of homes. By the mid-1990s, development began creeping back into the region, and the area was deemed "clean" by Superfund standards in 2004. Despite the publicized the plight of Love Canal residents, the development of Superfund for its rehabilitation, and the persistent fear of chemical waste contamination, the area has largely been redeveloped. Homes with picket fences and proudly waving flags line the streets, reminiscent of the homes that were there thirty years before.

It is not without irony that Niagara Falls, heralded for its natural beauty and power, has become synonymous with hazardous waste. Love Canal began as a dream for a utopian community, linked to the hydroelectric power driving waves of business and population to the area. Harnessing the power of the Falls and the renowned natural beauty of the region perpetuated the notion of a utopian harmony between humankind and nature. It was during this time that William T. Love purchased a large parcel of land and revealed his utopian plans for it in his 1893 investment prospectus, "The Model City—Niagara Power Doubled." Love's plans for Model City were so grandiose that a reporter remarked, "on paper the model city is a wonder of order and magnificence, beside which the beauties of the greatest cities in the world are tawdry" (McGreevy 122). He planned to build a canal connecting the upper Niagara River to his planned Model City. Love had great plans for the area, imagining that the 90 square mile area would soon house over one million residents, and most notably, that it was "designed to be the most perfect city in existence" (McGreevy 153). A few streets were laid and work began on the canal in hopes that future construction would be funded by factories seeking free power for employing residents of the proposed city. The city was to include the latest in modern convenience, such as heat, electricity, as well as new community centers. In addition, Love planned to have an esteemed technical school in the community to maintain a skilled workforce, and no establishments serving alcohol to keep a peaceful community. Skilled, "steady" workers would not have to give a down payment in order to buy a home, and strikes would be avoided by giving workers a direct voice in their industrial communities (Irwin 147). Soon after construction began, the Panic of 1893 and the invention of AC power transmission caused Love's dreams for a utopian community to fold, leaving half

completed canal work—which was called ‘Love’s Ditch’ by residents—and a few blocks of a city paved, miles away.

The desire for an idealized community was complicated by growing issue of pollution. As factories lined the waterways, spewing forth smoke, smell and various wastes resulting from manufacturing processes, the effects of pollution began being raised around the 1890s, commencing with the great increase in population during the building of the hydroelectric plant and associated factories (Irwin 149). By 1900, Carborundum and Union Carbide, among other corporations, created factories that tarnished the landscape, with smoke emitting a “putrid stench” and “vile smoke” from the smokestacks (Irwin 186). In many ways, residents and city officials became immune to the smoke and smells because of the lucrative jobs and growth the factories brought to the area. Solidifying the region’s commitment to industry, the 1901 Pan-American Exposition was held in sister city, Buffalo, NY, but highlighted widespread use of electricity from nearby Niagara Falls.

Chemical corporations continued the residents’ desire for a utopian community for several decades after emerging in the region. By providing well-paying jobs and sponsoring the community through several outlets including sponsored baseball teams, community activities, and educational institutions, the chemical and metallurgical companies became ingrained in the region. As a result, some employees drawn by loyalty to these chemical companies would assist local chemical corporations like Hooker Chemical Company with dumping hazardous chemicals in waterways under the cover of nightfall. Niagara Falls was not only convenient for its power generation, but ease in eliminating chemical waste produced by companies. Some residents felt that these transgressions were acceptable

in order to maintain the idyllic work and social communities the chemical companies provided for them.

However, not all waste was dumped in waterways. The remnant of William Love’s canal to Model City, later termed Love Canal, was initially used by children as a swimming hole in the summer and a skating rink in the winter, but began being used as dumping grounds in the 1920s. Both the city and federal government utilized this area for waste storage. The city used it as a smaller municipal dump, whereas the federal government utilized it during World War II to dispose of chemicals associated with the Manhattan Project. In 1942, Hooker Electrochemical Company purchased the canal for purposes of dumping hazardous chemical waste. The canal was lined with clay and ultimately filled with 22,000 tons of 55-gallon barrels of chemical waste, including caustics, alkalines, fatty acids and chlorinated hydrocarbons. The canal was capped and sealed in 1952 (Blum 22). The population was still growing exponentially, and new community developments began to encroach in the area near Love Canal. Compounding this issue, the Niagara Falls School Board persisted with attempts to buy the Love Canal to build the proposed 99th Street School. The Board felt that the open area and low cost would serve the needs of the community and their limited budget perfectly. Well aware of the chemicals buried, Hooker Chemical Company resisted efforts and demonstrated the toxicity of the ground. However, in 1953 for \$1 and full relinquishment of responsibility for any future damages caused by usage of the site, the School Board gained control of the site and began construction on the 99th Street School.

After initial plans were adjusted to account for the buried waste, construction took

place between 1954 and 1955. Despite exposing several areas of chemical waste the school was opened in 1955. Unfortunately, the construction breached the clay seal over the canal, weakening the overall structure of the clay seal in several places. Two years later, single family residences and low-income housing projects were built adjacent to Love Canal. The additional construction in the area further destabilized the clay cover of the canal and allowed the chemicals to contaminate the surrounding soil and groundwater. However, it was not until 1977, after an exceptionally wet winter, the elevated levels of groundwater in the area brought the chemical contamination to the surface and to the greater awareness of residents. Reporting by David Pollak, David Russell, and Michael Brown brought instances of chemical contamination and severe corrosion of sump pumps in the area to local attention. Initial attempts by residents in Love Canal community to address these issues were brushed off by local and state officials. As a result, the community turned to a variety of protest action in order to gain relocation rights. However, it was not until 1980 that President Jimmy Carter officially recognized the area as a major health emergency and issued full evacuation orders for all families living near the Love Canal. What is most interesting about the events of Love Canal is that, even though the residents living in the surrounding areas were evacuated, the school closed down, neighborhoods raised and several laws were enacted in its wake, the actual threat of hazardous contamination to residents remains unresolved. While some theorists have speculated that the act of performance, of oral history, of 'felt' memory is slighted in favor of scientific evidence and historical fact, the events at Love Canal have demonstrated the converse, that it is performance and protest that led the government to act, whereas the base of scientific research was found faulty, and was unable to compel

government officials to respond to the issue. By promoting family values, and a general concern children's well-being nationwide, the members of the Love Canal Homeowners Association (LCHA) utilized protest and performance in order to gain a national stage to forward their goals of relocation.

The interests of the local, state and federal government played a significant role in the lack of action at Love Canal, and contributed to the difficulty in presenting concrete evidence regarding the severity of health risks to residents of Love Canal. At the local level, the government wanted to downplay the effects because it would harm the tourist industry, which was experiencing resurgence at the time with the recent building of the Rainbow Center and the Niagara Falls Convention Center. These projects were created through a joint effort of the Niagara Falls Urban Renewal Agency, the State of New York Urban Development Corporation and the Niagara Falls Gateway to America Corporation, and were viewed as being instrumental "in making the City the world's foremost convention, trade show, and tourist mecca" (Williams 40). During the 1970s, the City of Niagara Falls began serious efforts to encourage tourism in the area, recognizing it as a new economic source as manufacturing companies began to shutter their doors (Williams 39).

It is no surprise then, with the recent unveiling of the downtown tourist restructuring and rebuilding, that the local government and the Love Canal Homeowner's Association had an antagonistic relationship. News of the toxicity of Love Canal splashed across national headlines gave the average American the notion that the city was entirely polluted and covered in a dangerous toxic sludge. Mayor Michael O'Laughlin blamed residents

of the Love Canal area for harming the tourism industry, and remained mute while touring the polluted grounds of Love Canal (Gibbs “My Story” 42). Residents viewed the revitalization of the downtown area as “part of a faith—a philosophy—a dream of an entire community” that was being robbed by the LCHA (Williams 40). As a result, the local government was unsympathetic to the needs of the Love Canal area residents, and to greater concerns about the environmental impact that widespread chemical dumping had on the region.

The issues faced by Love Canal residents also fell on deaf ears at the state level. As Lois Gibbs discovered while attempting to have her sickly son’s urine tested for contaminants, New York State Health Department’s (NYSHD) laboratories were unwilling to perform the test as NYSHD laboratories also performed testing for Hooker Chemical Company, and the idea of testing urine for chemicals resulting from pollution by Hooker was considered a conflict of interest. The irony is that at this time, New York State was in the process of suing Hooker Chemical Companies for damages caused by careless disposal of chemical wastes. The lack of sources for laboratory testing and other scientific research, as restricted by New York State, made it nearly impossible for the Love Canal residents, scientists and others working on this issue to gain access to needed data and research. Initial research of the Love Canal residents by biochemist Beverly Paigen, Gibbs and others was considered invalid because it failed to employ a set of simultaneous controls, due to lack of access to NYSHD labs, and as a result relied on historical controls (Gibbs “My Story” 64). Ironically, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) research that contradicted with Gibbs’ findings utilized historical controls, although Gibbs’ data

utilizing the same historical controls was considered invalid (Shaw 751).

The federal government was also hesitant to act because it was not a single case of hazardous contamination. In fact, at the time, the federal government suspected that there were between 30,000 to 50,000 sites of contamination across the nation (Gibbs “Story Continues” 202). By allowing the residents to relocate, the federal government was concerned that this might create a massive wave of Americans seeking relocation and financial compensation for living in close proximity to hazardous waste. Specific to the Love Canal case, on May 29, 1980, the State Assembly report was released and found that the Department of Defense used the canal to “improperly dispose of...munitions, nuclear materials and items of chemical warfare... regardless of the potential dangers... and transferred parcels of dangerously contaminated property to private companies” (“Where does DOD fit”). The federal government was found to be just as responsible as Hooker Chemical Company in disposing of nuclear and other hazardous waste without concern for residents. By downplaying the seriousness of the allegations at Love Canal, the federal government wished to hide their own culpability.

However, it was the overall characterization of the LCHA as a group of concerned housewives that simultaneously drew national media attention, but confounded scientific results. The LCHA was characterized as a group of benevolent housewives battling a large, seemingly monstrous set of chemical factories. President of the LCHA and outspoken member, Lois Gibbs was characterized as “the housewife who went to Washington” (Gibbs “My Story” xiii). Gibbs in particular used often demeaning, self-depreciating ways of describing herself in order to give the impression of being a simple

mom seeking out safety for her children without an ulterior motive. In doing so, Gibbs would make remarks such as “I’m just a dumb housewife; I’m not an expert” in relation to a technical explanation of underground stream networks (Gibbs “My Story” 31). She enlisted the help of biologist and brother-in-law Wayne Hadley “to translate some of that jibber-jabber in the articles into English” (Gibbs “My Story” 10). Gibbs’ statements regarding her lack of comprehension of scientific data made it difficult for her scientific revelations regarding the clustering of health ailments around underground streams be accepted as valid. As a significant amount of research and evidence came from surveys that these “dumb housewives” submitted, it made it difficult for the public and scientific researchers to take their research seriously.

While scientific evidence has remained contradictory and inconclusive, the experiences of residents clearly point to serious environmental issues—ones that were recognized by the local, state and federal governments. As Lois Gibbs found:

“In one house, a divorced woman with four children showed me a letter from the New York State Health Department. It was a thank-you letter, and a check was enclosed. I asked the woman what the check was for. She said the health department had contacted her and asked if her son would go onto Love Canal proper, find two “hot” rocks, and put them into the jars they sent her. The so-called hot rockers were phosphorous rocks that the children would pick up and throw against cement, and in the process, burn themselves” (Gibbs, My Story 23).

Families living in the Love Canal area reported that pets would return with burned noses, and children were prevented from playing in yards after they came back with burned feet, hands and knees after coming into contact with hazardous waste on the ground. However, these firsthand accounts were disregarded, as the mothers that frequently reported these issues were likened to “hysterical women” or simple “housewives” in order to downplay the seriousness of these allegations (Gibbs “Story Continues” 5).

Efforts to relocate the Love Canal citizens had largely fallen on unsympathetic ears. As a result, the LCHA turned towards gaining national media attention in order to draw attention and greater action to their cause. As Lois Gibbs stated, “We had to keep the media’s interest. That was the only way we got anything done. They forced New York State to answer questions. They kept Love Canal in the public consciousness” (Gibbs “My Story” 96). In order to gain the attention, the LCHA utilized their positions as homemakers and concerned mothers in order to gain sympathy and make their cause universally felt. As Gibbs later noted, the media “loves women and children, especially the visual media” so Gibbs and other LCHA members made sure to emphasize the familial aspects of their protest (Hay 111).

The majority of women in the LCHA felt that the feminist movement railed against the lifestyle they chose for themselves—homemakers seeking a quiet life in the suburbs. However, while utilizing protest actions taken by various feminist movements, the women of the LCHA employed a conservative frame to their protests by asserting the traditional role for mothers as a part of a nuclear family (Hay 124). As one mother framed her work with the LCHA in relation to feminist and civil rights protest, “I’m not a person who

would do a sit-in or anything like that but when it came to the point where it's your health and your family you can't put a price on that" (Hay 125). Members of the LCHA met with those with "experience in protesting and picketing...a couple of them were hippies with long beards that went down to their belt buckles and long hair," in contrast to prominent activist Lois Gibbs, who felt that she was, "basically square" (Gibbs "My Story" 47). In these instances, women felt that their actions that went beyond "square": protesting, picketing, marching and more, were acceptable because they were done so in order to reaffirm their family's well-being.

As the scientific evidence failed to move government officials, the LCHA turned to a wide variety of protest actions that largely centered around the notion of protecting the traditional family. Lois Gibbs called the child-abuse hotline and reported that New York State Health Commissioner Robert Whalen should be arrested for abusing hundreds of children by failing to accept evidence of trauma to children caused by chemical exposure (Hay 118). Later, during a protest at the state capitol in Albany, members of the LCHA took an adult and child's coffin to present to then Governor Hugh Carey at the State Capitol in order to remind the public about the most serious effects of toxin exposure. To further reinforce the impact that living among pollutants had on families, children became a significant part of public protests. Similar to the tactics utilized in the Civil Rights Movement, young children dressed in fine attire and greeted Governor Carey with their parents when he first toured the Niagara Falls area. The children were grouped together and Lois Gibbs asked the governor if he was "going to let [these] three-, four-, and five-year olds stay in Love Canal and die?" (Hay 118). Print and television news

crowded around these incidents for the high ratings they would bring. In addition, children held protest signs along with parents at these rallies with poignant messages, such as "We Want Out Now"; "Evacuate Us All, NOT Just Little Kids"; "We Have Better Things to do Than Sit Around and Be Contaminated"; "Please Don't Let Me Die" and "Help My Brothers and Sister, It's Too Late for Me" (Hay 118). These signs not only demonstrated the physical tolls that the contamination that Love Canal had on children, but the mental anguish it caused as well. Children had to deal with issues of ill friends, personal health issues and the fear of future sickness. Within families, health became an issue between siblings, as some older children not born in the Canal area were healthy, while younger siblings who were born while their family lived in the Canal were subject to ailments. This issue affected Lois Gibbs' family, as her older daughter, Missy was largely healthy, while her younger son, Michael faced epilepsy, asthma and regular urinary tract infections.

Like the economic issues that complicated government action in the area, the LCHA also faced dilemmas as they challenged the chemical and metallurgical industries. Many of the males living within the Love Canal area were also employed by the chemical industries that their wives were protesting (Gibbs "My Story" 127). As a result, it made public participation in the protests nearly impossible, as they would become targets for harassment by not only company officials but coworkers concerned about the impact that a Love Canal resolution would have on the future of their jobs. As a result, men were involved in the LCHA, but they served insulated roles such as street representatives and minor office holders in addition to attending meeting (Gibbs "My Story" 117). This

is not to say that all males served a quiet role in the LCHA. Fatherhood was a theme utilized by the LCHA in order to gain attention, as evidenced by one protest activity where LCHA members delivered a Father's Day card to Health Commissioner David Axelrod with the names of women who had miscarried (Gibbs "My Story" 123). One man held up a picture of his young daughter's face that was scarred by a mysterious rash, and "stressed his role as a father and emphasized the need to protect children everywhere" to news cameras (Gibbs "My Story" 122).

The usage of family themes in order to forward the goals of the LCHA, namely relocation and compensation, were not superficial. As scientific researchers came in droves, testing, prodding, extracting samples from residents only to give unclear results, the residents became frantic. As Gibbs retells of an encounter at a meeting:

"A pregnant woman was standing there crying. 'What's going to happen to me, Mrs. Gibbs? What's going to happen to my baby? I am already five months pregnant. Look at my stomach. This baby's already been through the first three months. What's going to happen to my baby? Should I get some more tests? Is it going to be all right? Is it going to have a birth defect? Other women, those with children under two (or over two) wondered what had already happened to their children, to their bodies or their brains. Would they die of leukemia? Would they get some other form of cancer? Would they have a crippling disease? If they had children, would their children be able to have children?'" (Gibbs "My Story" 35).

The death of seven-year-old resident John Allen Kenny on October 4, 1978 only helped to solidify these fears. After an autopsy was performed, it was found that he had no evidence of infection, but there was damage to his brain and thymus as well, which pointed to overexposure to toxins (Brown 45). While the cause of death was said to be nephrosis, the findings of the autopsy were officially inconclusive, which only maddened parents and hampered the efforts of the LCHA.

Despite Kenny's death, it took the most dramatic protest by the LCHA members in order to gain the attention of President Jimmy Carter. After initially arriving to discuss the results of another health survey, the Love Canal residents took two EPA officials hostage. The hostages were told that they should remain inside a building to prevent harm by outside residents angered by the results of health tests just delivered by the EPA workers. The officials were kept in a room, given food and waited for a calmer outside climate while a stream of men and women spoke to them about various issues they experienced as a result of living in the Love Canal area. Meanwhile, Lois Gibbs had contacted government officials to notify them that two EPA officials had been taken hostage until further, meaningful action on the Love Canal issue had been taken (Hay 116). Hours into the standoff, Gibbs was notified of FBI sharpshooters positioned in the area willing to take action. The EPA officials were quickly released, and two days later President Carter declared the area a health emergency.

In addition to the relocation and compensation given to Love Canal residents, the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) of 1980, better known as the Superfund law, was passed. It originally began as a \$1.6

billion dollar trust fund, hence the colloquial name, in order to remove or contain hazardous waste at sites across the country. CERCLA was initially set up with provisions that allowed various facets of the US Government, specifically the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) through the Justice Department, the ability to sue organizations responsible for creating conditions of hazardous waste sites. CERCLA has been amended over time, which is a clear indication of the general attitudes the government, and to a lesser extent, the public, has held regarding toxicity in the environment. The Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986 (SARA), increased the program funds to \$9 billion and added new regulations, including new amendments on states regulation of hazardous waste sites and community right-to-know initiatives (Fletcher 60). Even reports of financial corruption and mismanagement of the cleanup process at Love Canal failed to persuade citizens away from the overall efforts of the Superfund (“\$5 Million”).

However, as the memory of these environmental disasters has faded in public memory, in combination with the rise of neoliberal politics, support for the Superfund has largely waned. In 1993, the EPA issued the “Land Use in the CERCLA Remedy Selection Process” directive to allow for lowered standards of acceptable toxin removal in conjunction with future land use. In other words, sites intended to remain in use as industrial sites would face less stringent cleanliness codes than areas intended for residential usage (Fletcher 61). However, public tide began to turn away from CERCLA because they felt that a considerable amount of resources were spent on attempting to remove toxins. As Dr. Richard Goodwin, a private environmental engineer proposed, “the best thing we can do is evacuate people if they want, then put up a fence and a flag

that says, ‘Stay Away’” (“Costly Solutions Seeking Problems”).

A few years later in 1998, new issues faced CERCLA as its funds dramatically decreased. Environmentalists and other groups felt that industries responsible for producing or using hazardous wastes should be assessed higher taxes and fees. However, economics played a major role in the decision of lawmakers who, during an election year, were unwilling to pass on higher costs to industries that contribute to their party (Hernandez). Attempts to regulate the chemical manufacturing industries were foiled by a desire to protect jobs potentially lost through “the expense of litter and solid waste problems” (Fletcher 84). Disposing of hazardous waste is an expensive issue due to the high cost of building an appropriate storage site, storage containers and ongoing monitoring of the site. In over twenty states, mercury contamination is so high that residents are warned not to consume fish, yet most state and federal governments do nothing to prevent further contamination; Congress remained mute on this issue because they felt that utility companies, a large source of the pollution in these states, had recently spent a considerable amount on preventing acid rain and should not be subject to further regulation (“Costly Solutions”).

The issue regarding the level of cleanliness was never resolved, with more reports and articles appearing that both questioned and praised CERCLA laws for their lack of specific guidelines set. For example, ‘success’ was achieved at the Love Canal site by leaving the toxins buried in the canal, and placing a new, larger cap on top and enlarging drainage ditches along each side. It was determined that attempting to remove the mass of chemicals that have largely broken through drums and have mixed together would be

more dangerous than leaving the chemicals in place and rebuilding containment walls around it. To describe these new areas of rehabilitated, although still contaminated land, the term of 'brownfield' has emerged. Ironically, although recent results released in the 2009 health report on Love Canal by the New York State Health Department have found no elevated risks of cancer, the Superfund site was unable to reach its "gold standard... level of cleanliness where there was only a one in a million chance that there would be more cancer in the area than normal" and, rather, the Love Canal area poses a "level of risk of additional cancers...at one in 10,000" (DePalma "Pollution").

CERCLA laws are currently being questioned for their economic value. Home values, rental rates and shifts in demographics found that a "clean" evaluation found little positive growth in these valuations, even twenty years later after the cleanup. While the research "noted that there may be health and aesthetic benefits that were not captured in their data," it ultimately concluded that the lack of change in economic value of these tarnished areas called for a reexamination of the necessity of CERCLA (Bejamin). Other research focused on the costs to businesses, specifically the "joint and several liability" aspect of CERCLA, which ultimately means that any organization found accountable for dumping hazardous waste can be held financially liable for the costs associated with cleanup. Other researchers felt that this CERCLA provision "trapped many chemical companies into paying big bucks for cleaning up waste sites they had little to do with" (Hanson 39). While it is true that government organizations can use this to shield themselves from contributing to the cost of cleanup of areas they contaminated, the notion that companies should not have to be "burdened" with the cost of cleaning up

hazardous waste contamination is the type of thought that the Bush administration utilized when deciding to move the funding of the CERCLA laws from corporations to taxpayers (Garrett). The high rates of potential liability were effective in coercing potentially hazardous corporations from polluting, but without the economic penalty companies have no incentive to monitor their production.

Further complicating the matter are the politics of science. The health claims of residents of the Love Canal have never been proved beyond a doubt. As a result, the legacy of Love Canal and subsequent changes to the law, including the Superfund, has been questioned. Ultimately, this illustrates the fallacies of science, and that in the quest for uncovering the heart of the matter; science has proven to not be a universal truth. Politics, personal interests, differing opinions on methodologies and mistakes often come into play. The scientific research has proven inconclusive, as some studies confirm that there is cause for alarm, while others suggest there are no elevated risks.

A recent 2010 study on the presence of accumulated organochlorines and chlorinated benzenes on 373 former residents living in the Love Canal area between 1978-79 found that "residential proximity to Love Canal contributed to the body burden of certain contaminants" and recommended that "further surveillance of the Love Canal cohort" be taken (Kielb, et al 225). These accumulated toxins have implications for serious long term health effects including serious damage to the liver and various types of cancer. However, most other studies are unlikely to make conclusive findings regarding the health implications of Love Canal. A year before the study of accumulated organochlorines and chlorinated benzenes, research was performed on the rate of cancer incidence by residents

of Love Canal to the general rate experienced by residents of Niagara County and New York State. Although the study found increased rates for bladder and kidney cancers, the study ultimately concluded that “the role of exposure to the landfill is unclear given such limitations as a relatively small and incomplete study cohort, imprecise exposure measurements, and the exclusion of cancers diagnosed before 1979” but suggested that “further surveillance is warranted” (Gensburg 1269). Tests on native animals in the Love Canal region also supported the notion that the elevated levels of chemical toxins in the area had a negative impact on health. It was found that the life expectancy of voles living closer to the center of the Love Canal disaster experienced a shorter life span, most likely due to significantly higher pesticide content in fatty tissue and lower levels of glycogen, which serves as an important source of energy (Kevles).

Limitations of small sample sizes, funding and other issues affect scientific research, making it difficult to draw conclusions from (Clapp A54). Scientists have been critical of the work by other colleagues on this area, especially when New York State published its results from a thirteen-year tracking study on former Love Canal residents in 2009. Overall, the study found that Love Canal residents were “slightly less” prone to cancer than other New York State residents, and that “the rates of pre-term births, low birth weight, and birth defects among Love Canal residents were statistically indistinguishable from those found across the state, although Love Canal birth defects were double the rate reported in neighboring Niagara County” (Bailey 14). These results from the New York State have not faced the same amount of challenges that initial research performed by Gibbs and Paigen did, especially considering the length of the study and its seemingly

more credible source. However, a previous study released in 2002 by New York State on birth defects comparing Love Canal residents, Niagara County residents and New York State residents found that women living in close proximity to the Love Canal area “had more very low birth weight babies,” “more premature births,” and that, “rate of birth defects for Love Canal mothers was slightly higher” (NYSHD). Studies by the same source, using the same controls, and test groups came to different conclusions, further complicating the legacy of Love Canal and harming future legislation regarding environmental contamination and clean-up.

A major concern regarding these studies is using general inhabitants of Niagara County as a control group to test findings against. A 1983 study by the Center for Disease Control contradicted a study by the Environmental Project Agency and “concluded that residents or former residents of Love Canal are no more likely to have chromosomal damage than are other residents of Niagara Falls” (“US Denies Genetic Damage”). However, this study and the article failed to mention the presence of hazardous and toxic chemical waste throughout Niagara County, including that at Model City, the Niagara Falls Storage Site, and the waterways known as “Bloody Run” for their red appearance after being inundated with chemicals. The Niagara County regions has an elevated risk for multiple ailments overall, and by using the county as a control group, it fails to compare the results of residents of Love Canal with a more normalized population segment. This issue was alluded to by Love Canal resident, Louise Lewis, who lived in the Love Canal area even through the evacuations stated, “at least I know exactly what’s on my property. Do you?” (“State Agency Closes”).

Slowly developers are encroaching into the vacant lots, slowly turning each blacktop lot with overgrown grass into a newly constructed home. The memories of Love Canal are pushed away by local residents in favor of its new moniker, Black Creek Village. In 2000, attempts were made to build a museum dedicated to remembering Love Canal and its legacy. However, these plans were met with “fierce opposition” from many residents (Blum 14). Incoming residents in the newly built Black Creek Village “want all reminders of the place that gave birth to Superfund laws buried like the wastes that still sit in the canal” (Nieves “House is Still a Home”). While some felt that building a museum was a waste of limited tax dollars, most felt that they did not want a reminder of the events of Love Canal, and were concerned with the long-term image of the city as a toxic wasteland. Although the city typically embraces any ideas capable of bringing in tourism, the idea of dabbling in ‘dark tourism’ especially centered on Love Canal has been off limits. Perhaps it is a testament to the long standing desire to realize a utopian community in this area that has made it anything but. As a result, both residents and government on various levels wish to obliterate the spacial dimension of Love Canal and replace it with rectified memories of a place that was successfully contained by the government. The only monument that attests to the disasters of the Love Canal area are buried underground; specifically, a leachate containment and collection system was installed in the southern sector of the Love Canal in December of 1979, and has operated since then (McDougall 2918).

Even residents who remained in the Love Canal through mass evacuations, such as Sam Giarrizzo, who “never considered the canal all that dangerous to begin with” could

not help but feel “relieved when the Environmental Protection Agency said...that the \$400 million cleanup was over. While attempts to rename and revitalize the community have been largely successful, Giarrizzo stated, “You can never get rid of Love Canal [in regards to chemical contamination and subsequent fears]...we’ll have it forever.” (DePalma “Looking For Some Help”). This process of rectification began in 1993, when many new families moved into the Love Canal area, lured by homes that were 20% and less than typical market value. To further entice buyers, these “rehabilitated” homes offered new appliances and other conveniences. When questioned about residing near one of the country’s most notorious hazardous waste zones, one incoming resident, Leon Demers, stated “well, we were old anyway, so it wouldn’t matter that much” (Nieves “Toxic No More”).

Public memory, however fragile, is incapable of forgetting the tragedies of the Love Canal area. While attempts to “gussy up the old neighborhood” and giving “it a fancy new name: Black Creek Village” have attracted many new residents to the area, it is still referred to as the Love Canal area by most (DePalma “3 BDRMS”). Despite the ghost of the Love Canal, residents are working hard to erase that image. As Jane M. Kenny, the EPA federal agency’s regional administrator, said in regards to the recently revitalized and repopulated area, “The good news here that needs to be told is that we now have a vibrant area that’s been revitalized, people living in a place where they feel happy, and it’s once again a nice neighborhood” (DePalma “Delisting Love Canal”). Although residents were wary of the chemicals that remained buried under the surface, they largely felt secure in the presence of monitors designed to recognize leaks in the sealed hazardous

waste vessel. Today, despite the chemical waste buried in close proximity, the Black Creek Village community has emerged as the idealized community that Love Canal residents hoped it would be. Children play baseball in nearby fields, lawns are manicured and new paint gleams off homes, as the new community works hard to forget the memory of the residents that attempted to live there once before. Little is said about the limited life of storage methods for hazardous waste. In recent tests of new methods that include plastic liners and leachate detectors, research shows that all land-based storage methods are “almost guaranteed to leak eventually” (Pienciak).

In order to prevent future fiascos such as the one resulting from Love Canal, some scientists have proposed creating a:

“sensibly designed, controlled, collaborative study...that would be acceptable in advance, considering all of the possible parameters, such as culture conditions, intraobserver consistency, interobserver differences, suitable control groups, appropriate staining procedures, number of cells per individual and number of individuals to be scored, number of laboratories, and blind scoring of subjects and controls” (Shaw 751).

The myriad of research studies done by, for and on Love Canal residents have caused them unneeded fear and trauma, as well as costing a significant amount of resources. With no study being universally accepted, especially considering the political implications of the findings, further research is largely without value until all parties can come to an agreement regarding a proper method of evaluation.

As scientist Margaret Shaw similarly concluded, “we should recognize our ignorance and uncertainties and try to help the regulators as well as the human subjects to appreciate the concept of probabilities rather than certainties” (Shaw 752). Rather than hold science as an unquestionable source of knowledge and understanding, we should recognize that science is just as slippery as performance, but both utilized together can yield a greater truth. The Love Canal area is seen as a marker of shame to residents, both for its tarnishing of the local image, and the lowered economic status of most residents who chose to move into the area. The recent removal of the site from the list of Superfund areas should not mean that the site is forgotten from memory, both through the passing of time, as well as the forced removal from memory of local residents. This site is more than a site of environmental contamination, as it also “represents one of those moments when ordinary Americans discovered that they would have to fight for their own welfare against corporate interests and against the governmental echo of those interests” and did so successfully (DePalma “Delisting Love Canal”). However, considering that over 90% of residents in Love Canal moved out after the 1980 evacuation order was given, it seems difficult for newly arrived residents to celebrate the ability of past residents to vacate the very same area.

The paradox of a desire and a need to remember, as well as a conflicting desire to forget by local populations that potentially face the same fate as their Love Canal predecessors remains an issue. Although not prominent, the simple chain link fence and unmarked building in the center of Love Canal serve as clear reminders to residents who must view these daily. It is easy for outsiders, and even residents living far outside

the borders of Love Canal to wish for a monument to this disaster and the strength of residents who fought successfully against the economic interests of the government and large industry; however, it is not us who must live with this memory, and the continual fear of what lies buried beneath the ground.

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Inukshuk



White Feather/Robert Nabess

# The Resilience of Women in the Face of Trauma

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## “Waiting to Not Know”

We wait. We wait and make small talk. We wait and make small talk and we ignore the monster in the middle of the room. We talk about the weather and books and movies and how long we have been waiting and how much longer we still have to wait. We quickly flip through the pages of a magazine or two or listen to our ipods as we attempt to distract our minds. There is an unspoken need to insure that we mention a future plan, such as “Next summer we’ll go to the Cape for a few weeks,” or “I wanted to go to Greece this year but I think I’ll wait until I can be in the full sun.”

Sometimes friends or a family member wait with the others and I alternately regard them with envy or resentment. Not knowing the unstated protocol, they might be tempted to talk about the monster. It is enough to deal with our own unspoken complicity of fear and hope. Most likely the accompanied ones have warned them about the guidelines of waiting.

When a new person arrives the rest of us hold our breath until we

see that she will intuitively understand the protocol. Some do not, and we quickly change the subject or put in our ear buds. Some of the more distressing ones have returned to wait once more, and before our minds go to the calculations and percentages we try another distraction, such as the half finished jigsaw puzzle.

Usually there are snacks to be had, celebratory offerings in honor of someone’s last day, assembled next to the puzzle on the small table in the already crowded room. At times there are not even enough chairs on which to wait. I wonder why the snacks often consist of unhealthy sweets such as brownies or cookies and I resolve to bring in healthy choices on *my* last day. We wish them the best and imply that we will keep in touch but I suspect almost no one ever does.

We are in all sorts of stages of waiting and other things, and if we are lucky we wait still but remain hours or days or years ahead of the monster who waits for no one if it takes a notion to strike. I have no memory of the snacks I brought on my last day ... I was probably so relieved the waiting was over that I indeed brought brownies, or Sun Chips, or fruit, or cookies ... or left it up to chance.

I wrote the above piece after completing radiation treatment for early stage breast cancer. Treatments consisted of a short dose of radiation five days a week for six weeks, and waiting for the machine varied from half an hour to hours if one of the machines malfunctioned. Usually the same women, suffering from various forms and stages of cancer, were scheduled for the same time everyday, so we became superficially acquainted. At first I was surprised that we rarely discussed the cancer, but I have come to realize that one does not play the typically mythical role of the female heroine as a nurturer,

caregiver, or damsel in distress when in the midst of battle. We needed to garner all of our resources, and recognizing the strength of the enemy would in turn allocate it even more power. Rather, we needed to recognize and summon our own determination and focus to overcome the threatening chaos of cancer in order to eradicate every last malicious cell.

During the last decade, I have been in awe of the resilience of women to confront adversity with a unique courage and creative intensity to rise above it, reinventing themselves in the process. I have witnessed testimonies of survival from various groups: breast cancer survivors, victims of violence who were in a testimonial writing workshop in which I also participated as part of the Voices and Faces Project, and through my research and work with the non-profit organization Step Up!, whose aim is to counsel and support the female survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. In this discussion of examples of women who reclaim their lives after experiencing extraordinary trauma, I plan to intersperse my comments with pieces of creative writing that they have inspired me to compose, preceded by a clarification of the various connotations of the terms “testimony” “trauma” and “resilience.”

### TESTIMONIES OF TRAUMA

The word “testimony” normally signifies a statement given under oath in a court of law by a witness or certified expert. Additionally, it often refers to a spiritual “witnessing” during which a person testifies to the sacred effect of a particular religious experience. Both of these connotations imply a patriarchal situation where a law, either divine or by some other agreed authority, substantiates the legitimacy of the truth of the witness. This

article will discuss examples of the narrative, or testimony of a trauma, in terms of the self-truth of the survivor: a truth that is recognized and validated by a compassionate and non-judgemental listener. Ideally this listener is a co-survivor herself or someone whose witnessing of the story will in turn inspire her to take positive action toward change.

This repetition of the telling the trauma narrative to a compassionate listener enables the survivor to process the trauma. In her fascinating study *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, Cathy Caruth discusses Freud’s theories in his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* with regard to the unconscious repetition of the trauma itself, characteristic of trauma victims, which Freud defines as “traumatic neurosis” (Caruth 1). However, Caruth goes a step further in her discussion of this neurosis by connecting the wounded voice of the trauma to a literary telling of the traumatic incident:

It is the moving quality of this literary story, I would suggest—its striking juxtaposition of the unknowing, injurious repetition and the witness of the crying voice—that best represents Freud’s intuition of, and his passionate fascination with, traumatic experience, it is because literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing. And it is, indeed at the specific point at which knowing and not knowing intersect, that the language of literature and the psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience precisely meet (2).

Caruth continues by stating that by its very nature, the violent suddenness of the trauma resists “knowing,” resists comprehension because there is in effect no logical

explanation: “What returns to haunt the victim, these stories tell us, is not only the reality of the violent event but also the reality of the way that its violence has not yet been fully known” (4). She then introduces her discussion of Paul de Man’s notion of referentiality and its relationship to narrative. Although it is not my intention here to theorize a philosophical or psychoanalytical definition of trauma, I do indeed understand a direct relationship with the narrative of a testimony, or repeated telling of the trauma, with this concept of unknowing and incomprehensibility. At the least, voicing the trauma portrays the knowing of the pain and suffering, which in turn can diminish its power through repetition.

In his study *Making Minds and Madness: From Hysteria to Depression*, Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen defines the original meaning of trauma as “an injury, an open wound, a violent rupture in the surface of the skin” (19). He continues by giving the description of a “psychic” wound:

... some violent or unexpected event wounded this person spiritually, psychically: he suffers from depression and fits of rage ever since that terrible slaughter in Vietnam (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder); she suffers from insomnia and anorexia ever since she was raped (Rape Trauma Syndrome); their personality split into pieces because they were sexually abused by their father (Multiple Personality Disorder) (19).

Certainly these definitions of trauma apply to the testimonies I will be discussing, but a

difference should be delineated by what I understand as the narrative of the trauma, and the traditional understanding of therapeutic treatment of the trauma by the so-called “talking cure.”

Borch-Jacobsen’s discussion centres around the Freudian psychoanalytical talking cure as a myth because of its manipulative and “staged” circumstance during which the traumatized patient recounts a narrative, including so-called repressed traumas. He refers to what psychiatrist Henri Grivois describes as “the narrative drift” of the psychotic experience: the patients cannot avoid conferring a signification to the unspeakable that is happening to them, for “such an abstinence would be impossible or superhuman,” and they are led therefore to put forward delusional “explanations ...” (7). Borch-Jacobsen has written extensively about this suggestive nature of the supposed cure,<sup>1</sup> during which the analyst not only pressured the patient to speak about the trauma, but also suggested what that speech should be. While it is not my intention here to discuss this in detail, I mention it in order to differentiate the narrative to which I am referring as being totally separate from a traditionally patriarchal therapist-patient dialogue.

Rather than being intrinsically neurotic or suffering from some other mental illness, traumatized survivors of a violent act are victims of an evil chaos that is indeed unspeakable and incomprehensible. By telling their truth, by eventually speaking their trauma, their words act as a therapist who attempts to make sense out of the chaos of violence and suffering. By finding a way to speak the unspeakable, testimony enables these survivors to re-establish truth and familiarity through the comforting banality of

1. See, for example, in addition to his other cited text: Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen: *Souvenirs d’Anna O.* (Mesnil-sur-l’Estrée: Éditions Aubier, 1995), and Catherine Meyer, editor, *Le Livre noir de la psychanalyse*, (Paris: Éditions les Arènes, 2005).

words. In this sense, it is a “talking catalyst,” because certain traumas are never cured.

## DEFINITIONS OF RESILIENCE

As Liliana Maria Labronici states in her article on female victims of domestic violence, “Resilience is a concept long used in physics and engineering, and is related to the strength of materials” (626). In a psychological context, this strength transfers to one’s emotional fortitude to process adversity and trauma in a manner that results in a positive outcome. In addition to the connotation in physics of a resistant fortification, human resilience contains a “positive momentum” that Labronici also characterizes as enabling the “construction, and even the reconstruction of life” (626). She also notes that, although researchers in many fields of study currently employ the term, not much literature exists that examines the specific relationship of resilience in terms of female victims of violence.

In their study of victims of child and adolescent sex trafficking in the United States, Stacey J. Cecchet and John Thoburn associate resiliency in the cases of those women who are able to escape with the “corresponding themes *desire to live, positive thinking, and motivation for change,*” (489) as well as a spiritual element. To these definitions I would add that the ongoing process of resilience correlates as well to a similar process of forgiveness of the perpetrator,<sup>2</sup> or, in the case of a life-threatening disease, the cause of the illness. In all of the scientific studies I have read, as well as the testimonies I have witnessed, a common catalyst for resilience occurs when a life-threatening trauma drives

the desire to live. Additionally, resilience post-trauma also exhibits the ability to work through the trauma in order to reconstruct a life that often allows the opportunity to interact in a supportive manner with other survivors. A reconstruction, without forgetting or minimizing the trauma, that incorporates emotional scars into a novel definition of the self.

In her book of essays *L’Avenir d’une révolte, (The Future of a Revolt)* linguist, psychoanalyst and philosopher Julia Kristeva discusses the apparent impasse or inability to react in a positive manner to various political, historical and social crises as lacking a required “*expérience intérieure radicale,*” (a radical interior experience) during which one adeptly processes the complexity of the crisis in order to “*décider du présent et de l’après.*” (“confront the present and what lies ahead”) (9). She discusses the significance for the human psyche to allow itself the time to revolt, to “*rompre, remémorer, refaire*” (“break off, remember, redo”) (10). In terms of post-trauma resilience, I would posit that a conscious revolt and rupture with the trauma aids in the constructive momentum of resilience to rebuild one’s life. Perhaps the “radical interior experience” occurs as a consequence of a life-threatening event. Resilience would then indeed necessitate the psychological confrontational “revolt” against remaining defined by the trauma in order to move toward a redefinition of the post-trauma self.

Women’s unique qualities enable and facilitate resilience, especially through the testimonial narrative of the trauma. In her study *Women who Run with the Wolves*, Clarissa Pinkola Estés, Ph.D., chronicles the traditional stories that describe the wild woman archetype as instinctively resilient when confronted with life’s adversities. In her

2. I discuss the complicated aspects of forgiveness in a forthcoming book chapter: Jennifer Vanderheyden, “Extraordinary Forgiveness,” *From Banality to Genocide: Perspectives on Evil*, (Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2016).

chapter on rage and forgiveness, Estés states that women who have access to this inherent component of their female psyche are not deterred by the natural reaction of a collective rage to various traumas and social inequalities:

It is psychically sound for women to feel this anger. It is psychically sound for them to use this anger to invent ways to elicit useful change. It is *not* psychologically sound for them to neutralize their anger so that they will not feel, so they will therefore not press for evolution and change...collective rage is well utilized as a motivation to seek out or offer support, to conceive of ways to impel groups or individuals into dialogue, or to demand accountability, progress, improvements (398).

From what I have observed, a productive process of working through trauma does indeed result in change, which often affects a group or individual in addition to the survivor. Frequently this process involves finding a method of communicating the narrative of the trauma.

Because the ensuing testimonies I have chosen to discuss concern female survivors, the logical question could be posed as to whether resilience contains gender-based differences, and if so, what these differences entail. Certainly such gender based inequalities as economic, social, and cultural, to name only a few, contribute to the additional struggles of women to achieve positive outcomes. Although it is not the purpose of this study to investigate resilience in terms of these differences, such a topic

certainly merits additional future attention.

## SURVIVING CANCER

A diagnosis of cancer often signifies the first sombre encounter with one's mortality; for me it represented the destruction of an inner belief that the voice in my head that periodically hacked my mind with negative thoughts was purely a neurotic symptom. This time the voice was right, and it could not be simply cast aside. Yet somehow strength crawls and scratches its way from the twisted gut of despair and reinforces the stamina to forge ahead and silence that voice. Breast cancer can temporarily destroy one's femininity in the midst of treatment, as the following poem expresses. Being radiated is not at all sexy: it takes time to set up the breast to receive the radiation, then everyone leaves the room as the dose is administered:

“Rad Inferno”

99.6 ...

coordinates

to pinpoint the dose

aided by four

tattooed

dots

left breast taped to the side

the right exposed

to the destruction

that brings

hope

the Stones play  
in the background  
I sing along  
in my head

*start it up*  
*burn, baby*  
*burn*

A few years post treatment, I was waiting to undergo my yearly mammogram, and as soon as I sat down, the elderly woman sitting across from me proclaimed: “I survived the Holocaust. My brother and I were thrown in a large grave and we pretended to be dead. We both survived, and he wrote a book about it.” As we each had our mammograms and then waited to hear the results, she declared the same statement to every new arrival. This was indeed a testimony that I needed to hear, and one that inspires me still. Yes, life post treatment *almost* returns to whatever it was before, although reminders such as the month of October with its pinkness and of course continued check-ups and mammograms bring to surface the fear that lies in wait. Life itself is waiting to not know, for the moment is our only true discernment, and as long as there exists a moment, there goes life. Resilience post-trauma is being able to fight for the awareness of the hope that resides in this instant, whether it is moment by moment as you lie waiting to die in an open grave, or moment by moment as you battle to defeat another type of cancer.

In an article in *Psychology Today* Pamela Weintraub writes about the “new survivors” of cancer: not only is cancer no longer a disease that one keeps secret, recent developments in treatment have transformed many cancers from a death sentence to either complete remission or a chronic disease. Public discourse and personal stories of survivorship have become the norm:

Many cancer survivors are travelers to a highly intense edge world where they battle death and return transformed. They leave as ordinary and burdened mortals and come back empowered and invigorated. In coming closer to fear, risk, and death than most of us, they wind up marshalling qualities not even they knew they had (Weintraub 1).

Weintraub continues by discussing the importance of hope for patients in the midst of treatment, and of that of being able to reflect upon their experience by re-telling their stories when in the process of post-trauma growth. She also cites research that demonstrates the positive changes that result from this reflection upon the meaning of life after the painfully real threat of death. She quotes University of Connecticut psychologist Keith Bellizzi as saying that post-trauma growth is more than resilience, that “it is above and beyond resilience” (Weintraub). In his study of survivorship, Bellizzi found that the “generativity” that cancer sparked (which he defines as “making the planet a better place, giving children the love they need, being creative in work or intimate with family and friends” (Weintraub)) was more prominent in women.

## FEMALE SURVIVORS OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

In the fall of 2013 I was invited to participate in a workshop at Mount Mary College in Milwaukee developed by the Voices and Faces Project, a non-profit organization founded by writer and human rights activist Anne Ream, who recently published a book *Lived Through this: Listening to the Stories of Sexual Violence Survivors*. Defined on their website as “a national documentary initiative created to bring the testimony of sexual violence and trafficking survivors to the attention of the public,”<sup>3</sup> the award-winning national project “seeks to change minds, hearts and public policies on sexual violence and exploitation.” Ream and writer and Professor R. Clifton Spargo established the testimonial creative writing workshop to provide a safe venue for these survivors to find their voice and reclaim their identity, and they invited me to participate in the workshop since I was experiencing difficulties in processing my recent trip to Rwanda, and the testimonies I had heard by the female survivors of the 1994 genocide.

The writing that these women produced during the two days was stunningly inspirational and brave, as raw emotion found a voice to allow the survivors to move beyond the pain and suffering. Poems, essays, letters, and even short stories expressed the devastation and violation that such violence perpetrates, yet the hope was dawning that the trauma does not need to perpetuate the damage. By identifying the trauma, articulating the suffering, then reading the words to everyone in the room, these women were reclaiming their power to become stronger than the cowardly violation. One workshop exercise was to envision a world without violence:

3. *The Voices and Faces Project*, <http://www.voicesandfaces.org/>.

“Serenity”

Eyes closed

I see your truth

you speak my desires

in the silence

of a moment

hands unclenched

empty

we touch each other’s

soul

Affinity

becomes

Infinity

joy abounds

serenity surrounds

the Universe breathes

a sigh of

relief

In a recent talk at the Clinton School of Public Service at the University of Arkansas, Anne Ream, a survivor herself of sexual violence, discussed the various survivors she interviewed for her book, and the difficulties they faced in telling their stories. Ream gives

examples of women who were often faced with indifference and a lack of compassion on the part of the listener when they attempted to talk about their experience. Yet once the trauma finds expression, recovery can begin. Ream refers to one such woman, Christa Desir, who participated in the Voices and Faces testimonial writing workshop, and who subsequently wrote a book for young adults (*Fault Line*) about sexual violence: “Once she could speak, everything changed” (Ream, Clinton School).

In her study on whether female victims of domestic violence can become resilient, Labronici writes of the moment of an existential threat to their lives that serves as an impetus to leave the home: “The escape to the outside world, a temporal horizon of infinite possibilities, this departure from the state of immobility placed them in existential movement ...” (629). If by so doing these women succeed in finding a support system where they feel safe to recount their trauma, they can continue “the process of resilience through the narrative of the experience” (629). Labronici continues: “Moreover, the trauma narrative itself allows the women to make sense of what happened and redeploy it affectively, so that it can be understood as a factor of resilience, in addition to the narrative of others” (629). Like Anne Ream, she also emphasizes supportive compassion as a crucial component of healing. I offer the following poem to express my compassion for the victims, especially the children involved in sexual trafficking.

“Broken Girls”

Timeless taste of pain

dark, poisoned

legacies

robbed childhoods

held hostage

my pain

lurks there too

toughened

by repeated assaults

on its raw truth

I want to armour your heart

protect and defend

any remaining innocence

no—I want to liberate your heart

allow love to reside

in the fearless deserving need

at the core of your being

There now, don't cry

we'll take our pain and our dolls

to the far end of the forest

sheltered by the trees

with the sun-drenched meadow

in sight.

## FEMALE SURVIVORS OF GENOCIDE

During a trip to Rwanda during June of 2013, I was able to witness first hand the extreme courage and fortitude of those who survived the genocide. I attended lectures regarding the genocide and the ensuing reconciliation process, organized by my friend Dr. Rangira Béa Gallimore for her study abroad program at the University of Missouri. Béa and I were students together in graduate school at the University of Cincinnati, and although we grew up in so very different environments and cultures, it was obvious that our love for our families transcended any borders. Her mother, sister, three brothers and many extended members of her family were brutally murdered during the genocide. She was at a conference in Canada when the genocide began, and she stood helpless in a hotel room as her sister and mother called to tell her good-bye. After the genocide and the shock of losing her family members, Béa's devastation turned into determination to fly to Kigali, find any surviving members, and bring them to live with her in Columbia, Missouri. She not only achieved that goal, but she also vowed to do something tangible for the female survivors in honour of her mother; thus she founded Step Up, the American Association for Rwandan Women. They have raised money to assist the women in becoming independent, such as providing them with cows and bees. One of Béa's major goals was to open a trauma-counselling centre for these women, and although volunteers from Step Up have been consistently travelling to Rwanda to provide this counselling, in the summer of 2015 the trauma counselling Abasa center, named after Béa's mother, officially opened in Rwanda.

In 2009 we invited Béa to come to Marquette University to introduce the film

*Mères Courage*, a documentary about the female survivors, and after hearing her story, several of my students were inspired to found the first university chapter of Step Up!, and I have been fortunate to serve as their faculty advisor. We have sponsored many panel discussions, a mini-film festival, and other activities in order to raise awareness of the continuing recovery process for the female survivors of the genocide. I have also been fortunate to meet several of these survivors and to hear their stories, and am in absolute admiration of their abilities to confront the unspeakable trauma they endured. I have written elsewhere of one such woman, Consolee Nishimwe;<sup>4</sup> here I would also like to mention her cousin's story of survival.

In her book *Left to Tell: Discovering God Amidst the Rwandan Holocaust*, Immaculée Ilibagiza (who also presented a talk at Marquette) describes how she survived the genocide by hiding in a pastor's three by four foot bathroom. At first there were a total of six women in that small space, then later two sisters whom the pastor's daughter had been hiding in her home took refuge there as well. Sharing the food and water that the pastor was able to give them when he felt it was safe, forced to develop sign language to communicate because of the imperative to remain silent, listening to the Hutu killers outside the bathroom window bragging and celebrating their slaughters, tormented by the constant threat of being discovered and even hearing the *génocidaires* constantly inspect the pastor's bedroom, Immaculée turned to her faith in God to provide her with the comfort and hope she urgently needed.

She states that a crucial step in that process was asking God's forgiveness for the

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4. I write about Consolee's testimony of survival (Consolee Nishimwe, *Tested to the Limit: A Genocide Survivor's Story of Pain, Resilience, and Hope*) in the forthcoming chapter "Extraordinary Forgiveness."

killers, because holding onto her anger was inhibiting her ability to conserve her energy and concentrate on survival. She developed a spiritual plan:

I found a place in the bathroom to call my own: a small corner of my heart. I retreated there as soon as I awoke, and stayed there until I slept. It was my sacred garden, where I spoke with God, meditated on his words, and nurtured my spiritual self (96).

She constantly held her rosary beads and prayed, meditating for hours and even days on a single word.

When she became ill, her faith and hope sustained her: “No, illness wasn’t going to take me. I was certain that God had a greater purpose for me, and I prayed every day for him to reveal it to me” (117). Not only did she hold to her spiritual plan, she also decided to teach herself English so that she would be marketable for a job when the genocide ended. Although most of her immediate family was killed, Immaculée’s remarkable determination, faith and resilience enabled her to survive. Similar to other survivors of such trauma, she did indeed find a greater purpose by telling her inspirational story.

As the genocide was finally coming to an end, the pastor and his family assisted Immaculée and the other women hiding in the bathroom to safely find refuge with the French soldiers. While these women were fortunately able to avoid direct contact with the *génocidaires*, many of the female survivors were not only raped, but sexually mutilated as well in an attempt to mitigate their ability to experience sexual pleasure. Yet for me they epitomize femininity and strength:

“Survivors”<sup>5</sup>

Woman

say you,  
am I no more  
if not you,  
say I,  
what is woman?

May the river of tombs  
cleanse your soul  
preserve the memory  
of beloved  
innocence  
allow the evil  
to flow  
into the universe  
of forgiveness  
and justice

Let your nurturing duality  
birth your suffering  
send it  
into the silent dark  
night from which  
it came

5. This poem is also forthcoming in the book chapter “Extraordinary Forgiveness.”

May your womb  
expel the bloody weight  
that crushes your truth  
restore the  
Woman

that has always been,  
that is forever,  
say I,  
*You*

In conclusion, what I have shared represents a discussion, interspersed with personal examples, of written and experiential testimonies of women who have found that active confrontation and expression of trauma facilitates the process of resilience. As Clarissa Estès observed in her study of the wild woman archetype's unique inherent ability to channel rage in a constructive manner, it is indeed *not* psychologically sound to repress trauma. And as Kristeva commented on the advantages of artistic expression and the meditative aspect of narration, this type of "révolte" is necessary in order to "préservé la vie de l'esprit, et de l'espèce" ("preserve the life of the mind and species").

The women of whom I have spoken have channelled their painful rage into artistic and constructive endeavours. By using words as tools rather than weapons, they have succeeded in a reframing and reconstruction of the trauma in order to reclaim their power. Vulnerability transforms into hardy stability as the desire to overcome serves as the nails to construct and fortify the hope of spirituality and renewed trust. They

have discovered a process to live productively after suffering trauma, transforming victim hood into a testimonial sisterhood of implicit, transcending courage.

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Turtleshell Rattle

White Feather/Robert Nabess

## The Gendered Self and the Invention of the Kashmiri Identity in *I, Lalla*

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The publication of a new translation of fourteenth-century Kashmiri mystic Lal Ded's poetry by Ranjit Hoskote has brought to light new issues surrounding her identity and work, not least the fact that since it has been handed down through the oral tradition, the text of Lalla's work may now be seen as a collaborative endeavour that has evolved considerably over the years. This paper will argue that although contributors of both genders have participated in the 'collaborative' legend that is the text of Lalla's works, the sensibility that emerges from the evolved text is female in nature, and that the collaborative nature of the venture has also contributed to the evolution of the Kashmiri identity.

The first consideration in such an endeavour is that while those contributing to the text were undoubtedly of varying genders, they would also have been conscious of retaining

the responsibility of maintaining a cohesive voice. The authorial persona is identifiably Lal Ded, who was married at twelve and maltreated by her in-laws before she gave up her marriage and socially normative identity to become an ascetic. Some of her work retains an autobiographical sense of the person. “Don’t think I did all this to get famous,” she says in *vaakh* 142; “I knew hunger well,/ and sorrow” (144). Inevitably, a work that has evolved communally over the course of centuries cannot be identified as possessing a homogenised authorial persona. Lalla’s projected self is necessarily fragmented, even, in one case (poem 101), almost certainly a construct affected by the sensibility of a male contributor. Although there is a “patriarchal bias” associated with the oral tradition that has maintained her poetry over the centuries, she is also embedded in Kashmir’s popular consciousness (Hoskote xv-xvi). In this, her sensibility supersedes the biases of gender, religion and caste associated with those who have taken on the task of preserving her work.

Secondly, Lalla’s *vaakhs* often present the ‘Other’ (usually in the sense of ‘God’ or the unknowable) in terms of the male gender. *Vaakh* 133 describes this being as someone who is protean rather than absolute:

Look out for Him.

He’s played many roles on this stage.

Slough off envy, anger, hate.

Learn to take what you get.

You’ll find him. (135)

In this poem, the advice to “Learn to take what you get” suggests that the ‘divine’ can be discovered through one’s own experience: indeed, that there is no other way to discover it. One may argue that the distinction between the genders is not merely sexual; rather, the poems reflect a dialectical sense of self and other. The authorial persona seems to be the female self, look for reconciliation with its opposite, the male other, who is often identified in the text as Shiva. In this, the male-female dichotomy may be defined in terms of the juxtaposition of antitheses, a contrapuntal relationship between the self and what is not the self that suggests that “all dualisms are illusory,” and that leads to a “collapse of restrictive identities” (Hoskote xxii). As Hoskote observes, there is a constant sense in Lalla’s poetry of self and other merging, defying definitions, refusing to be relegated to easily definable categories. Like the yin and the yang, the gendered self and other may also be seen as halves of a cohesive whole rather than as irreconcilable oppositions, and “the symbolic and the sensuously palpable are not in opposition, but rather, suffuse one another” (Hoskote xxiii). Also, Hoskote suggests that her work is indicative of a trans-caste “Tantric underground” that had existed in Lalla’s time, and in which she locates herself as “Shakti to Shiva, the female principle to the male, the female worshipper playing her role in the rituals of Kulacara, the Kaula school, of the Tantric underground of mediaeval Kashmir” (161). In this, she seems to be identifying the gendered self in terms of “the religious landscape of Kashmir in the fourteenth century” (Hoskote 151).

Looked at from the perspective of this “Tantric underground” that was spread over several castes and social strata, unlike the restrictive religious beliefs of the time, it is not unfeasible to suggest that mystics such as Lal Ded also took the mystical experience

‘trans’-gender or beyond gender, in the sense that access to the divine was no longer limited to the male gender. In vaakh 68, she uses the familiar image of the garden (which will be discussed later in this essay) to describe a union of Shiva and Shakti within the individual’s soul:

I, Lalla, came through the gate of my soul’s jasmine garden  
and found Shiva and Shakti there, locked in love!  
Drunk with joy, I threw myself into the lake of nectar.  
Who cares if I’m a dead woman walking! (70)

In this vaakh, Lal Ded describes the sexual union of Shakti and Shiva as taking place within her own soul, suggesting that both female and male elements comprise the individual’s identity. This is accompanied by the rather violent image of drowning herself in the lake of nectar and becoming a “dead woman walking”. She seems to indicate here that reaching a state of spiritual ecstasy necessarily involves the death of the self: at the very least, in a figurative way that allows the dichotomies of self and other to be superseded until the soul reaches a transcendental level of existence.

That Lalla was seeking a transcendental state is clear from the choices she seemed to have made in her life, renouncing family and society to live as a yogini. As Hoskote observes, her position is a “peculiarly paradoxical one” since none of her male counterparts had to renounce their lives to be spiritual seekers:

In an ethos where male Saiva questors lived within society rather than in

retreat from it, she could not, as a woman, do likewise. Precisely because she was a woman, whose life was far more closely and rigidly governed by domestic duties and expectations than a man’s, she could not lead a life of spiritual aspirations at home—and so, was forced to leave it. (xix)

Nevertheless, there are reflections in her poetry of a female sensibility, such as in the lyricism of her vaakhs that seems to have evolved out of women’s folksongs (Hoskote liii). What she seems to give up are the conventions and duties associated with a woman’s life, which, as Hoskote observes, was not a necessity for male spiritual seekers of the time. Her act of renunciation and of claiming for herself the right to be a seeker won “conceptual space and social legitimation” for later Kashmiri women such as Rupa Bhavani who were also saint-poets (Hoskote xix).

What is also intriguing is the effort to create a female sensibility that represents a Kashmiri identity, even, as Hoskote suggests, ‘the Kashmiri identity’ (italics added). Chitrlekha Zutshi writes in *Languages of Belonging: Islam, Regional Identity, and the Making of Kashmir* of Lal Ded that she “is credited with having introduced and given substance to the idea of Kashmiriyat through her verses, which have formed the cultural repertoire of generations of Kashmiris” (19). For S. S. Toshkhani she “is quintessentially Kashmiri, having shaped the Kashmiri language and literature” (30). The dispute over whether she subscribed wholly to the Shaivite philosophy or if she later adopted Islam is one of the debates that rages around her religiosity, with both Hindu and Muslim scholars claiming her as their own. Zutshi writes: “Herein lies the irony and contradiction: the poet who represents the uniquely Kashmiri culture that transcends religious boundaries

has herself become the centre of contentious debate over those very boundaries between the two communities of the region” (20). It seems more apt to see Lal Ded’s mysticism, as Michelle Voss Roberts does, in terms of dualisms in the mind-body dichotomy: indeed, she seems to move toward pluralism. For her, “the body is no single thing” (Roberts 86).

As Zutshi observes, it may be anachronistic to see Lal Ded’s work as representing a Kashmir in which religious affiliations are pluralistic or irrelevant:

LalDedwasundoubtedlyagainstorganizedreligion,particularlyasrepresented by Brahmanism, and probably laid the groundwork for the propagation of Islam among the Kashmiri populace by the Rishis. Furthermore, her verses illustrate the union of the streams of Shaivite philosophy and Sufism in fourteenth-century Kashmir. However, it is significant that her poetry does not attempt to present the vision of a land where religious affiliations do not matter. Instead it presents society in a state of flux, with religious and regional affiliations in the process of redefinition. To identify an “ethos of tolerance” in Lal Ded’s verse is an anachronistic reading of the Kashmiri mystic tradition, which was revived and popularized, significantly, in the 1930s and 1940s by an emergent Kashmiri nationalism. (22)

Lal Ded, therefore, does not seem to subscribe to a nationalistic principle, probably because the Kashmiri identity was not definable at the time since it was still emerging. As Agha Shahid Ali says, he is willing to be identified as Kashmir’s “national poet”, but never a “nationalist” one (Ghosh 14). Similarly, Lal Ded’s poetry suggests an affiliation

with a geographical space that reflects the Kashmiri landscape in empirical terms but is never prescriptive in terms of defining its cultural identity.

Besides the religious aspects of the Kashmiri identity, Lal Ded also reflects a physical sense of the landscape of Kashmir. In one instance, the geopolitical landscape of the region is presented in a mythologised way. She says in *vaakh* 131:

Three times I saw a lake overflowing a lake.

Once I saw a lake mirrored in the sky.

Once I saw a lake that bridged

north and south, Mount Haramukh and Lake Kausar.

Seven times I saw a lake shaping itself into emptiness. (133)

In this *vaakh*, Lal Ded clearly references the Kashmiri landscape, locating her poetry in an identifiable physical setting. However, her mapping of Kashmir is done by referencing the ancient boundaries of prehistoric Kashmir, and she ends the *vaakh* by further mythologising the landscape. Hoskote explains: “the extent so described is, in fact, the Valley of Kashmir, which was said to have been a lake called Sati-saras at the beginning of our present *kalpa* [a period of 432 million years according to the Hindu cosmology]” (226). The Kashmir she is describing possesses “an ancient and mythic geography” (Hoskote 226) that allows her to involve the landscape in which she lives in her mystical framework as she compares a geographical lake with mythical ones.

Also, there are numerous instances of descriptions of locales that are intrinsic to

the Kashmiri's experience. In vaakh 83, she refers to saffron, which is again inherently associated with Kashmir: "make sure you've corralled your ass/ Or he'll champ his way/ through your neighbours' saffron gardens" (85). In vaakh 65, she refers to the vegetable garden that is ubiquitous to the region:

Knowledge is a garden. Hedge it with calm,  
self-restraint, right effort. Let your past acts graze in it,  
goats fattened for the altars of the Mother Goddess.

When the garden is bare, the goats killed, you can walk free. (67)

In this vaakh, the analogy of the garden contextualises a spiritual notion in terms of imagery that is accessible to most Kashmiris, since the poem "takes place in a haka-woru or vegetable garden, such as is found even today in the Valley of Kashmir" (Hoskote 187). By describing the mystical in terms of the familiar, Lal Ded makes the spiritual more accessible to the average Kashmiri. There is again a sense in this vaakh of the significance of Islam in Lal Ded's mysticism, for Hinduism is generally associated with vegetarianism and is not traditionally associated with animal sacrifice.

Finally, she also reflects a sense of being a wanderer that suggests a curiously contemporary sensibility, since many of today's Kashmiri writers are immigrants or exiles. In vaakh 6 she proclaims: "Wander, my poor soul, you're not going home anytime soon" (8). This sense of the poet-as-wanderer is also reflected by many contemporary writers in exile, whose only sense of 'home' seems located in the text of the poem and

in the imagination rather than in any empirical physical location. Such an endeavour is also closely related to language. For Hoskote, Lal Dad's poetry represents "the moment Kashmiri began to emerge as a modern language" (x). Rather than use Sanskrit, which was regarded as the "language of the gods," she composed her vaakhs in the organic, everyday language that Kashmiris used (xxvii). While there are Sanskritic elements in her poetry, they "share conceptual and linguistic space with more Arabic or Persianite locutions" (xi). In this, Lal Ded clearly reflects a modern sensibility that hybridises language to reflect its own fragmented sense of self and identity, choosing to use poly-linguistic elements in her work rather than be confined to a homogenised sense of language.

Of the many ways in which Lal Ded's poetry shapes and anticipates the evolution of the Kashmiri identity, a particularly significant image in her work seems to be that of the author as wanderer, especially in terms of her preoccupation with landscape. Her identity is hybrid, fluid, freed from social conventions but lost in the sense that there are no norms within which she fits, and for Hoskote her poetry suggests that she is "looking for anchorage in a potentially hostile landscape" (ix) and battling "the obdurate landscapes that the questor must negotiate" (xix-xx). This is particularly evident in poems such as vaakh 10, in which "pastoral images evoke the landscape of rural Kashmir" (Hoskote 156):

I'm carrying this sack of candy, its knot gone slack on my shoulder.

I took a wrong turn and wasted my day, what's to be done?

I'm lost, my teacher's warning blisters me like a whiplash.

This flock has no shepherd, what's to be done? (12)

It must be remembered, in the post-Christian context, that poetry at the time would likely not have been associated with the religious connotations of 'God' as a shepherd leading a flock. Instead, the visual images in Lalla's vaakhs are more closely identified with similar images elsewhere in her poetry, in which she refers to the rearing of goats and cows, and tending to vegetable gardens. Again, she is using bucolic imagery that would be easily accessible to people of her time and context: her teachings are clearly for working-class, rural people rather than those who are privileged by having access to Sanskrit and learning and philosophy. By presenting the self as lost and leaderless, she is also suggesting that the individual's salvation is in her or his own hands.

While Lal Ded is a household name in Kashmir and her vaakhs have undoubtedly influenced the Kashmiri identity and sense of self, it must also be remembered that there is little to no evidence to identify what was in her original compositions, and what was redacted by later contributors. As Hoskote observes, "the body of the vakh is the only Lalla there is" (xxxvi). Her individual identity is subsumed into the corpus of the Kashmiri identity, and her work remains a collaborative text that both reflects a gendered identity and supersedes it to become representative of the evolution of the Kashmiri identity.

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Mukluks #3

White Feather/Robert

## Woman's Selfhood Presentation: from Carol Shields to Indigenous Women Writers

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### INTRODUCTION

As one who came of age on a collective farm during the Cultural Revolution in China, and who once believed in the Party's image of the self as a selfless public servant, I hope I can be forgiven my lasting fascination with Western concepts of the individual and individual rights. In 1997 I met Carol Shields at a conference at a university in the northern city of Harbin where I lived and taught before I came to Canada. She was talking about *The Stone Dairies* shortly after it was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. Although at that time I did not know much about the relationship between life writing and identity formation, the particular way in which the fictional autobiographer, Daisy Goodwill,

imagines herself and her life appealed to my curiosity and desire to know more about the subject. A year later I came to study at the University of Manitoba for my doctoral degree in the history of the selfhood and life writing, under the supervision of Dr. David Williams.

During my years of teaching Chinese Literature for the University of Winnipeg, I couldn't help associating my academic training in Occidental literature with my course offerings in Oriental culture. I compared Western selfhood and its self-creation with Chinese collective selfhood and life writing. My research paper, "*Dictionary of Maqiao: Meta-fiction of Collective Biography*," were published in both English and Chinese. They were well received by English and Chinese readers. When I taught Canadian Literature, Indigenous Women and Literature at the University College of the North, 60 percent of the students were Aboriginal, so instinctively I made comparative readings of the self in a middle-class white woman's works with that of indigenous women writers' works. My students were so interested in the comparative readings that some of them are studying in my Indigenous Literature of the World class to satisfy their curiosity on selfhood presentation between main-stream literature and indigenous literature.

The aims of my comparative research are not just limited to selfhood formation and presentation in indigenous women's literature and culture but in a large range of life writing forms: oral, written and digital writing. My starting point is to understand the roots of selfhood, what Charles Taylor calls the "Sources of the Self," or what my advisor sees as the self-contained book of Occidental selfhood, which is neatly summed up by Rene Descartes: "I think therefore I am." But what about a remote village in Nigeria

where people, especially women, are not trained to read or given the right to think? My second general aim is to see how that notion of selfhood evolves and changes in new historical and cultural contexts. My third and more important aim is to read literature comparatively in the light of historical, cultural, and technological change so that we can better understand the world, whether we see ourselves as part of the mainstream or as Aboriginal culture.

## **SELFHOOD FORMATION AND CULTURAL CONDITIONS**

Selfhood is the quality that makes a person or thing different from others. Selfhood formation and evolution is very much bounded by the culture and society in which the self exists. Selfhood as a cultural presentation in literature is the game that authors play, in which the individual attains selfhood. Culture, in this narrative theory of selfhood, determines the forms of selfhood. We tell stories which are socially acceptable in terms of a dominant cultural script. Auto/biographical narrative is thus founded in social relations; as Eakin puts it, "identity is conceived as relational" (56). Autobiography, therefore, "offers not only the autobiography of the self but the biography and autobiography of the other." This idea does not only apply to Shields's *Small Ceremonies* as a meta-narrative of life writing that demonstrates how biography is necessarily a form of autobiography, a "translation" of one's life into another form, but also raises moral questions about the propriety of life writing. Shields adopts the form of fictional autobiography to discuss some of these biographical issues. Judith Gill, the first-person narrator of her autobiography, confesses to a moral dilemma in being a biographer: because biography is about someone else, she

has a moral obligation to be fair to the subject or, in some way, to honor the subject.

In contrast to Shields, Tsitsi Dangarembga uses self-referential autobiography to tell stories of women in her culture. The narrator, Tambu, is very straightforward, “I was not sorry when my brother died” (1). Obviously, it is unusual for a sister to reveal her coldness in the face of her brother’s death. However, this cruel revelation immediately serves as a trope for the narrator to tell stories about her family members: “For though the event of my brother’s passing and the events of my story cannot be separated, my story is not after all about death, but about my escape and Lucia’s; about my mother’s and Maiguru’s entrapment; and about Nyasha’s rebellion.”

As a white female author, Shields is more concerned about the paradox of privacy in life writing. Auto/biographical ethics are a concern for Judith Gill, who feels that she must be ethically responsible to both her own story and those of others. One theorist of life-writing suggests that “we talk in this way...because we are disciplined to do so by ‘social accountability’”: “what we talk of as our experience of our reality is constituted for us largely by the *already established* ways in which we *must* talk in our attempts to *account* for ourselves—and for it—to the others around us.... And only certain ways of talking are deemed legitimate” (Eakin 62). Thus, Paul John Eakin points to ways in which our various selves are shaped, if not determined, by culture. Shotter’s theory of “social accountability” suggests that we fashion ourselves according to the available cultural models (62-63). The danger that Judith Gill’s career points to is the violation of another’s privacy. How much privacy should be revealed in a biography is one of Shields’s lasting concerns. In “Narrative Hunger and the Overflowing Cupboard,” for example, Shields

confesses: “I suffer a sort of scavenger’s guilt” (21). She shows how biography always risks betraying the subject; at the same time she also seeks a solution to this moral problem.

Born into a white middle-class family in the United States, Carol Shields chooses to write the life stories of her own class. Most of the female characters in her books are writers, such as Judith Gill, a biographer in *Small Ceremonies*, or Charleen Forrest, a poet in *The Box Garden*, or Mary Swann, a dead poet, or Reta, a writer of multiple genres in *Unless*. Even in her biography, *Jane Austen*, Shields imagines Jane Austen to be herself, as one who died of a kind of unknown cancer. Shields claims to write “a real biography” about “writers written by writers” (Eden 147).

My favorite character is Daisy Goodwill, an ordinary woman in *The Stone Diaries*, who imagines her life from birth to death through almost a century. Even though Shields is sensitive to a cultural shift in concepts of the self, all the characters in Shields’ stories invent new ways of living or new forms for self-creation to overcome the disease of solipsism in Western culture. It is no accident that Carol Shields chooses to write books which neither simply reproduce the history of the self as authorized by the book, nor merely to follow the models of her predecessors. Instead, she questions both traditional and modern forms of life writing by combining and paralleling them in her writing. Shields goes beyond models of historical, philosophical, and poetic self-presentation to find new ways and new forms for self-representation in life writing.

For Tsitsi Dangarembga, a black female who experiences double prejudice in a patriarchal and colonized society, a woman’s voice is more important. She gives a strong voice to her narrator, Tambu, a black girl who has no right to an education if there is a

male heir in the family. The death of the only boy in her family would grant her the rare opportunity for the education she has longed for. When gender and patriarchal oppression are so prevalent in Rhodesian culture, “voicing is self-defining, liberational, and cathartic” (Uwakweh 75). For Dangarembga, as long as the narrator or the implied author, occupies “an interpretive position, a perspective that is necessary for our appreciation of the new insights she acquires about her experience as female in a patriarchal and colonial society,” writing down stories to give a body to her traditions and culture is more important than the ethical issues Judith worries about in *Small Ceremonies*. As Uwakweb points out, these African writers “seem to content themselves with an appeal to their readers’ voyeuristic inclination rather than to their general interest in the predicament of the African woman” (76). Through the narrator, we see the dominant figure, Babamukuru, the head master of a mission school. He is haughty, authoritarian, unsympathetic, and a bully who suppresses the women’s voices in his family. The story of Maiguru, who receives a high education in England, is trapped in a relational self. On one side she wants her children to retain the mark of distinction they have achieved from living in a Western society after they returned to Rhodesia; and on the other side, she is suppressed by her patriarchal husband, Babamukuru. Nyasha, the daughter of Babamukuru and Maiguru tries very hard to maintain the self she wants to be. But her status as a product of two worlds, Africa and Europe, hinders the development of an integrated self. Her independence in thinking leads to self-hatred, a dangerously negative body image that results in an eating disorder, and mental illness. Nyasha becomes a symbolic victim of the pressures to embrace modernity, change, enlightenment, and self-improvement. Tambu, the child adopted by her uncle, Babamukuru, narrates her efforts to be recognized by

both worlds as a young and an adult self. In the end she decides to leave her community for self-improvement. Although the female voice promises a fresh insight into women’s reality and experiences that are generally inaccessible to the male tradition, “it is not a very elaborate or sophisticated literature in terms of style, innovation or techniques” (Uwakweh 76).

A relational self is still important in Western discourse. Shields’s second novel, *The Box Garden*, belongs to a long tradition of social novels which make the self “a product of social discourse” (65). It gives an alternate version of Judith’s account of the McNinn family history, illustrating how a lonely autobiographer must overcome “the most debilitating of diseases, subjectivity” (109), to write herself out of “the box garden” of solipsism. Charleen Forrest, Judith’s sister, turns to writing poetry out of her own social and narrative malnutrition in childhood. But, instead of expressing herself through poetry, Charleen buries “the greater part of [her] pain and humiliation” (152); and finally, she locks herself up in a “box garden,” retreating to a visible form of solipsism. At the same time, she likes to think of herself as “a bit of a mystic” (83), holding out the hope of an eternal self. By tracing Charleen’s differences from Judith, Shields provides another version of the McNinn family history with a new eye to preventing or curing a “hereditary disease” (126).

Using Charleen’s story, Shields reinforces Charles Taylor’s moral view of the self: “I am a self only in relation to certain interlocutors; in one way in relation to those conversation partners who were essential to my achieving self-definition.... A self exists only within what I call ‘webs of interlocution’” (36). Or, as Paul John Eakin describes

it, the self is “a product of social discourse” or, at the very least, “a self-created aspect of concrete social dialogue” (65).

## SELFHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

Coming from different backgrounds, indigenous women writers face different issues in their traditions and cultures. In Doris Pilkington’s *Rabbit-Proof Fence* the female characters are Australian Aboriginal girls who escaped from their school; in *Nectar in a Sieve* by Kamala Markandanya a South-Indian child bride is married to a tenant farmer who becomes a victim of poverty and industry; and in *The Slave Girl* by Buchi Emecheta a Nigerian woman is sold as slave. Those marginalized women knew absolutely nothing about selfhood or individual rights, to say nothing of privacy. To survive, these women have to form, develop, or even to cultivate a communal or collective selfhood that serves as a means of survival for these grassroots characters. To transform the self or to rebel against the culture, a woman has to leave her community as in Yang Erche Namu & Christine Mathieu’s *Leaving Mother Lake: A Childhood at the Edge of the World*. Even in life writing, two authors must collaborate to present their collective stories. In Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions*, even though the young female character chooses to embrace another culture, the title of the book already suggests the inner conditions of the colonized subject.

In Shields’ works, the lonely self of a white-middle class woman is very striking. The urge of her female characters is to extend the self to or to develop a relational self in her circle. What Shields focuses on in her writing is to create an autonomous self who

struggles to overcome her resulting solitude in an imaginative narrative such as Charleen in *The Box Garden* and Daisy Goodwill in *The Stone Diaries*. However, in works by indigenous women writers, the female voice is silenced in a patriarchal or colonized culture in which “silencing comprises all imposed restrictions on women’s social being, thinking, and expressions that are religiously or culturally sanctioned” (Uwakweh 76). Women suffer double prejudices—gender and colonization, so the collective or relational self helps a Nigerian woman to survive when she is sold into slavery in Buchi Emecheta’s *The Slave Girl*. Selfhood is so constrained within its own culture that women must leave their communities to transform their selfhood. Namu had to leave her Moso village, “the country of daughters” (Yang 17), and Tambu, was “too eager to leave the homestead and embrace the ‘Englishness’ of the mission” (Dangarembga 68).

Questions of self-representation are among Shields’s most important concerns. In her discussion of John Barth, she had already noticed that fiction writing has “its gaze on the question of self and the nature of self-identity” (“Narrative Hunger” 30). Shields’ fascination with life writing and her concerns about self-representation are also part of a more general cultural fascination with how the self may represent itself in literary works. As she observes, self-representation exists in “the narrative arc our culture has sanctioned, [in which] stories form a more communally conscious culture that is more likely to say ‘Who are we?’ rather than ‘Who am I?’” Selfhood presentation in Shields’s writings is more sophisticated and entertaining but the miserable self in the indigenous women’s writing is more touching and thought-provoking.

A Nigerian woman writer, Buchi Emecheta, tackles the subject of the relational

self in *The Slave Girl* from the opposite direction. Agbanje Ojebeta was born in a village in Ibuza near the Niger River. Quite opposite to the patriarchal culture, the little girl became a treasure in a family which already had two sons. In their culture, the girl is identified by charms before the age of five. “They were then regarded as having walked out of childhood and became members of the living world” (Emecheta 45), which means that the self has to develop into “a product of social discourse.” According to Eakin, “the extended self,” “the private self,” and “the conceptual self” will develop by the age of five (22-23). However, Ojebeta became so dear to her parents that they wanted to “keep Ojebeta a baby as long as possible” (Emecheta 45). Physically the girl carries “the charms for so long as insurance that she would survive.” What is more, she also carries “intricate tattoos” on her face (46), which has become a permanent identity for this young girl. Psychologically, Ojebeta does not develop the self into “a product of the social discourse” at an appropriate age. She depends on her parents before they were killed by an epidemic called “felenza.” When her two brothers couldn’t support her, she was sold by one of them as a slave to a wealthy woman, Ma Palagada, whom Ojebeta lives with until Palagada passes away. When the charms were ordered to be cut off the moment she became Palagada’s slave, emotionally Ojebeta found that her identity was lost: “She saw the charms which had been tied on her by her loving parents, to guide her from the bad spirits of the other world, filed painfully away. The cowries, too, which hung on banana strings were cut off with a big curved knife. She now cried in her heart which was throbbing up and down as though it would burst, as the hard lesson made itself clear to her that from this moment on she was alone” (Emecheta 71).

Ojebeta is a good illustration of Eakin’s theory of the body image: “the body...is the brain’s absolute frame of reference” (19). For Ojebeta, the charms were cut off, but the tattoos remain in her face which frames her relational self. When her master dies, “she had not yet made up her mind about whether she still wanted to go back to Ibuza at all” (Emecheta 11). Although Ojebeta hangs on to her relational self to the Ibuza community where “land was a communal holding,” and “no woman is ever free. To be owned by a man is a great honor” (158). In the end, Ojebeta chooses to marry a man from her own community: “I feel free in belonging to a new master from my very own town Ibuza; my mind is now at rest.” Ojebeta is locked in that permanent tattooed self: “Ojebeta, now a woman of thirty-five, was changing masters” (179).

## **SELFHOOD IN ALTERNATIVE AND COLLECTIVE WRITINGS**

When selfhood disappears from records in life writing, Shields demonstrates how to create alternative versions of the self. After exposing how the biographical record is pruned, devalued, fabricated and remade, Shields suggests that the “life” of a dead poet can be made to live in our continuing performance of “communal history” by going back to oral culture, as well as to film as a modern version of orality. She also adopts alternative narrators to show the possibility of communal writing of an autobiography in *The Stone Diaries*. In the case of Mary Swann, a lonely soul who is barely known to the public becomes alive audibly and visually. Daisy Goodwill, in her old age, imagines her life stories told by multiple witnesses and narrators. Having multiple versions of her own life stories, Daisy Goodwill entertains her audiences with multiples selves. No matter

whether it is a biography of Mary Swann or a fictional autobiography of Daisy Goodwill, what we have in front of us are the multiple selves imagined or created in communal history. But how is it possible to do that with a real event in the lives of three Australian aboriginal girls in 1931, when they escaped from the school along a 1600 km rabbit fence?

Doris Pilkington gives a highly personal account of one Aboriginal family's experiences as members of the Stolen Generation – the forced removal of mixed-race children from their families during the early 20th century. The three girls are Daisy, Grace, and Molly who is Pilkington's mother as well. By the time Pilkington started her book, one of her aunts had died. Contrary to Shields who creates a “mystery of a life” by creating a communal history and a collective history in a fictional biography, in these stories of the three girls, Pilkington must create a communal self that represents aboriginals rebelling against British colonization. As Pilkington acknowledges, their trek back home is “not only a historical event; it was also one of the most incredible feats imaginable, undertaken by three Aboriginal girls in 1930s” (xi). To reconstruct the trek home from the settlement sixty years later, Pilkington has to go beyond the borders of time and space so that she could depict the geographical and botanical landscape in early 1900 and the gravel or dirt roads replaced by highways today. “Molly was pleased that the mud and slush and the swamp paperbarks were behind them. They were now on the heathlands. The heathlands of Western Australian contain some of this country's most beautiful and unusual wildflowers. The girls stood among the banksia trees admiring the sandy plants” (83). In addition to research on historical records of the event and many

interviews with her older aunts, she also has to use her “vivid imagination, the patience of many saints and the determination to succeed” (xi).

First Pilkington needs to double the memories—that is the depiction of the memory of the younger self of the two aunts and her own childhood memory of the surroundings of the settlement. By merging the writer's and the speakers' memory with that of her subject, Pilkington enables the revision of the event. Immersing herself in the consciousness of her subjects, she merges her personal memory with her two aunts'. Thus memory becomes communal and not private; a private self or individual self becomes a communal or collective self. Second, the collective memory enables the author to create a new identity of her aunts and mother who did not yield to the colonized institutions of the time and who help the writer to revisit her cultural traditions. In recovering the historical event, Pilkington has to violate aboriginal customs. For example, in her interviews, her mother and aunt refer to their dead sister Grace as “the sister we lose ‘em in Geraldton” or “your aunt” (xi) because traditional Aboriginal culture requires that the name of a dead person is never mentioned after their death. In Pilkington's writing, however, she simply calls them Molly, Daisy, and Grace.

Linda Hutcheon has noted, “history's problem is verification, while fiction's [is] veracity” (112). Thus, the argument in Pilkington's personal accounts of a historical event deals with the ways in which history and fiction overlap, since they are both constructed narratives. Pilkington emphasizes her aunt's and mother's illiteracy. They do not have numeracy skills: “Number, dates, in fact, mathematics of any kind, have little or no relevance in our traditional Aboriginal society” (xii). Time is marked by social, cultural

and ceremonial events. But in Pilkington's writing, all the historical events are dated. There are also many other factors to consider when Pilkington transcribes Aboriginal tales she heard from her aunt and mother into a text intelligible to all readers. On the other hand, Pilkington provides a photocopy of a telegram sent to the Chief Protector of Aborigines in Perth. There is an inherent competition between them for "truth value," and there is an unresolved tension in their use of a similar, narrative form.

Whereas Shields recruits imagined witnesses to tell Daisy's birth and life after death in *The Stone Diaries*, Pilkington relies on historical witnesses of the three sisters' journey to the settlement: "The girls from the remote outback of Western Australia sat nervously as the tea and scones were served. They had never shared a meal with a white woman before so they waited until Mrs. McKay coaxed them to join in" (59). On their way home from escaping the settlement, they were also witnessed by little Susan's mother, Mrs. Flanagan who "had received a phone call from Superintendent Neal on Tuesday afternoon asking her to watch out for three absconders and to report to him if she saw them" (98). Pilkington devises probable dialogues between the three girls and Mrs. Flanagan.

While in *Swann* and *The Stone Dairies*, Shields invents multiple selves for each individual self, Pilkington portrays a very similar communal self shared by the three sisters. No matter whether in Pilkington's narrative or the historical and official documents, Molly, Daisy, and Grace all share a communal self—they are invariably identified as the three girls. For Pilkington, a communal self that is shared by these three girls, especially when they are on the trek home, empowers each individual and also imposes the development

of selfhood beyond the self of an individual. In the British documents, this three-headed communal self always refers to the Other. But in the Aborigine story, the three girls represent a meaningful community.

Where Shields resorts to an imagined film script for communal deconstruction and reconstruction of a dead poet, Pilkington literally produces a cinematic script for a 2002 Australian film directed by Phillip Noyce. The 93-minute film disseminates and reinforces the powerful image of the three Aboriginal sisters who resist British colonization. In this anti-colonization narrative, a communal self proves to be much stronger than an individual self, contrasting sharply with the increasingly problematic self of mainstream. Through comparative studies of Carol Shields's and indigenous women writers' life writing, my students, especially Aboriginal women students, can better understand their selfhood formation to find their place in the world, and in the end, learn to present themselves in life writing.

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## Angels of Latent History: A Borgesian Current in Contemporary Fiction

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You can of course keep shaking the box...

*Anne Carson*

In our contemporary literary scene, movements and their titles are up for grabs. Most of all, critics love to argue about what was/is or wasn't/isn't Postmodernism. I want to propose, instead, a lineage or tradition that undercuts the nebulous anti-period of Postmodernism by seeking continuity between work 'before' Postmodernism and two writers working today, in another anti-period that some critics claim is 'after' Postmodernism—Anne Carson and Junot Díaz. In what follows, I'll read Carson's *Autobiography of Red* (1998) and Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007) in light of our contemporary anxiety over what Postmodernism was or is. David Foster Wallace

talked in 1990 about an end of what critics 24<sup>1</sup> years ago called “post-postmodernism,” eventually claiming that “Today’s most engaged young fiction does seem like some kind of line’s end’s end” (50, 82). For Wallace, whose name is among the first that comes to mind when one hears “Postmodern” being talked about, Postmodernism was finished, done, dead: “*post-postmodernism*” was already a thing. But further, this successor or extension is itself *also ending*—dying—a whole generation prior to the current moment. To complicate things further, “Today’s most engaged young fiction,” in 1990, wouldn’t yet cover work published by either Carson or Díaz.

Nevertheless, Carson’s and Díaz’s careers in fiction, on Wallace’s timeline, begin at or around the end of what comes *after* Postmodernism. My essay is less about whether Postmodernism is dead or alive and more about the still-beating pulse of Jorge Luis Borges: a Borgesian current, itself inherited from James Joyce, in contemporary North American fiction. I’ll argue that Carson and Díaz both take up a project of radical historical materialism less continuous with the Postmodernism of the 1970’s than with the Argentine’s early work, typified in the short story “The Garden of Forking Paths” (1941). Donald Barthelme writes in 1964 that authors working post-*Ulysses* (1922) and *Finnegans Wake* (1939) position themselves as either *continuous with* Joyce and his project or *after*—against—Joyce. My essay is not about Joyce. But Barthelme’s distinctions about what it means to write after/with the Modernist are important because they pose a dichotomy that Barthelme implies was absent in Joyce: that of literary aggression as opposed to celebratory play.

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1. I only draw attention to this number because it’s one short of a quarter-century, or the number of years conventionally understood as a generation.

Self-conscious *materiality*, according to Barthelme, is what distinguishes the work of Joyce from prose stylists before him. Reading Joyce is like “bumping into something that is *there*, like a rock or a refrigerator” (Barthelme 4). The work is no longer about the world; it *is* the world. By interrogating it one “ask[s] questions of the world directly” rather than analogously (4). Further, although all texts exist as objects continuous with the world, Joyce’s work, unlike most of Canon before him, “exploits” this strategy, “work[ing] its radicalizing will upon all men in all countries, even upon those who have not read it and will never read it” (5). This “radicalizing will” is in line with democratic and/or socialistic sentiment, according to Barthelme, and finds its opposite espoused by post-Joyce authors who “have chosen to consider his work a detour rather than the main road”—writers who he claims revert to the style of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century novel (6-7). Those who choose to write *with* Joyce, rather than positioning themselves *after* (and paradoxically *before*) him, make of their texts objects in the world—constructs that are either “hostile to life” or that celebrate it (8-9).

To follow Joyce’s materiality is to dive into an ocean of meaning: a flux that has as much hostile potential as it does latent playfulness. Diving in, however, one is limited to choose only one of these two options. The poles Barthelme cites are William Burroughs and Samuel Beckett, whose respective and antithetical styles he terms “drowning and swimming” (9). Both are indebted to Joyce, however, whose floatation in flux is neither and both. That is to say that Joyce is neither solely a “manufacturer of the Hostile Object” nor “pure comedian” (7-8). In the section that follows, I’ll argue that this dichotomy was also absent from Borges’ early work, as typified by “The Garden of Forking Paths”

(1941). The way into Borges, for the purpose of this essay, is through Walter Benjamin and his conception of historical materialism, which I'll explain by unpacking Benjamin's "angel of history"—a figure Don DeLillo traces, years later, with his "Professor of Latent History." Whereas DeLillo *illustrates* this half-parodic character, making him subject matter, Borges's narrative strategy positions the author *as* the Professor. The final section of this paper will illustrate how Carson's and Díaz's work follows Borges' formal strategy of historical materialism, positioning themselves, as well, as Professors/angels of latent history.

### *Professor Borges*

Borges begins "The Garden of Forking Paths," one of his many stories that follow the form of mock-nonfiction, by framing the majority of its content as a meta-commentary on a historical text—itsself a commentary on World War I. With a few militaristic details omitted, the first paragraph reads:

On page 242 of *The History of the World War*, Liddell Hart tells us that an Allied offensive against the Serre-Montauban line. . .had been planned for July 24, 1916, but had to be put off until the morning of the twenty-ninth. Torrential rains (notes Capt. Liddell Hart) were the cause of the delay—a delay that entailed no great consequences, as it turns out. The statement which follows—dictated, reread, and signed by Dr. Yu Tsun, former professor of English in the *Hochschule* at Tsingtao—throws unexpected light on the case. The two first pages of the statement are missing. (Borges 119)

I'll note here that a book with the title "*The History of the World War*," decked out in definite

articles, with "Liddell Hart" as its author, has to my knowledge never been published. Sir Basil Henry Liddell Hart, however, *was* an English Captain in WWI and, subsequently, an eminent military historian and theorist. Further, "*The History of the World War*," under the premise that it is an actual title, would ostensibly have been translated from English to Spanish by Borges for his original readers, and subsequently (in Penguin's edition), from Borges' own Spanish to English by Andrew Hurley. Taking into account possible mistranslation, as well as Hart's publishing career, "*The History of the World War*" could easily have been (mistaken for) the title of a (particular) book actually written by "Capt. Liddell Hart<sup>2</sup>."

In short, Borges' narrator claims that what follows after this preface-like paragraph, the body of his story, is not a fictive production. Rather, the narrative becomes a primary document that corrects an oversight in a historical account. As Dr. Yu Tsun reflects, early in Borges' story, "Century follows century, yet events occur only *in the present*" (Borges 120). While the narrator of the first paragraph is a historian reporting on his findings, the whole story that follows is narrated by Tsun. Thus, it is not a retrospective account of the *past* but a document written in report of a (far removed) *present*. One consequence of the first paragraph's discursive frame is that the remaining words of the story are not Borges' or his narrator's own. However, regardless of the truism that a writer's narrator is not necessarily coextensive with the writer, Borges' narrator here resembles the Argentine *homme de letters*—poet, critic, librarian, etc.—rather remarkably. Further, in Borges' first collection of stories, *A Universal History of Iniquity* (1935), full of similarly essayistic

2. Among Hart's books published prior to 1941 are *The Real War (1914–1918)* (1930) and the second edition of the same text, titled *A History of the World War (1914–1918)* (1934). *A Dictionary Of Borges* states that "there is no mention of rain having fallen before the battle" in Hart's actual account.

metafictional stories, he develops a similar (if not the same) unnamed, scholarly narrator. The unnamed commentator, situated amidst (hi)stories real and imagined, thus signifies a narrator that is distinctly and undeniably Borgesian, if not Borges himself.

Further, being a commentary on a text written specifically within the discipline/genre of historical non-fiction (History), “The Garden of Forking Paths” positions itself *as* (disciplinary) History, as well. Most importantly, however, it is a counter-history, or one that goes against the grain of an existing historical account. Rather than “Torrential rains” incurring “a delay that entailed no great consequences,” Borges’ story asserts that an incredibly complex and deeply significant chain of events occurred between July 24<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>, 1916 (119). It thus troubles the account of causal history that Liddell offers, opening up a closed chain of events to explore and have “a unique experience with” a moment of the past (Benjamin 262). The moment Borges explores is one that the given account (Liddell’s) doesn’t even consider a moment (a *now*), but rather a bridge between two others. As counter-history, it also acts as a work of historiography, offering an alternative methodology for conducting—*doing*—History.

The distinction between Liddell’s and Borges’ histories, at least as Borges positions them, is between historicism and historical materialism. Walter Benjamin posthumously published a theorization of the latter approach (and polemic against the former) in 1950<sup>3</sup>, the essay-in-aphorisms “Theses on the Philosophy of History.” In it, he develops a theory of doing History that operates on the following principle: “nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history” (Benjamin 254). A historical materialist

3. Benjamin’s essay was “completed in spring 1940,” making it even more contemporaneous with Borges’ story (Arendt 267).

understands that all events—those commonly known and those commonly unknown—are equally constitutive of the fabric of history. He also speaks of an “angel of history,” who focuses on “one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage,” rather than the smooth “chain of events” understood in a historicist framework (257). Benjamin doesn’t condone a project that would disregard all that happens after a given moment as central to one’s understanding of that moment. Recall that the “delay,” to Hart, “entailed no great consequences” (Borges 119). The object of historical materialism, on the other hand, is to understand each and every moment in the fabric of history as texture or substance. In this way, the historian “blast[s] open the continuum of history,” thereby blasting a given moment into the present (Benjamin 262-263).

What this “blasting,” this “unique experience *with* the past” means for Borges is exploring an unexplored moment by living it (262, my emphasis). Benjamin writes that “every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably” (255). In response to this threat, Borges does History by filling in gaps left by historicist accounts that would efface such unrecognized images. To grossly simplify Borges’ almost equally grossly complex narrative, Tsun, a (Chinese) spy for the German in WWI, assassinates an English Sinologist named Albert in order to communicate that a city of the same name needs to be attacked. Tsun is pursued by “an Irishman at the orders of the English,” but manages to accomplish his self-contrived mission after a lengthy discussion with Albert about Tsun’s own relative, Tsui Pen, an ancient Chinese polymath (Borges 124, 128). This strange story, not a natural phenomenon, explains the “delay” in Hart’s history. But it is as much a bizarre story of

espionage and metaphysics as it is of identity politics. This charged narrative is the story that Borges erupts—blasts—out from *underneath* Hart’s “Torrential rain.”

At the center of the story is another imagined text, *The Garden of Forking Paths*, penned by none other than Ts’ui Pen. Albert is a scholar of Pen’s work and steeped in the metaphysical implications of the philosopher: “[Tsun’s] ancestor did not believe in a uniform and absolute time; he believed in an infinite series of times, a growing, dizzying web of divergent, convergent, and parallel times” (127). In such a view, time is a network of multiple possibilities or possible realities, constantly “blasting open” and adding realities to an inexhaustible and infinite well of possibilities. And Borges’ work, as History, adds-qua-applies this network to (actual) Reality. Further, this conception of time is hostile to History (as in the discipline) and history (as in Reality) as it stands. In the same way that *Ulysses* takes place in a gap of history<sup>4</sup>. Borges inserts Dr. Yu Tsun’s letter into a gap paradoxically left open—unrecognized—but sealed off—unrecognizable—by Hart. A corollary to this strategy is that it opens up the question of how many more gaps exist in Hart’s actual published works.

The one problem with my formulation so far is, of course, that the History Borges writes is, after all, Fiction. But what Borges’ story pushes at, more than anything, is this very *Fiction/History* dichotomy. For Liddell, the writer of non-fictional History, Dr. Yu Tsun’s story is a “delay,” seemingly between events of real history, or the Real subject matter of History as a discipline. And that is why Borges’ focus on Tsun’s odd metaphysical encounter is important: it asserts that the (historically marginalized) experiences of one (racially/nationally marginalized) man aren’t a break from history, but History proper.

4. Eccles St., Leopold Bloom’s address, was unoccupied on June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1904.

Although Borges’ own tale is fictional, it calls attention to the marginalization of any story the invisible narrators of History books leave out—any voice they might silence. If History as a discipline has a monopoly on Reality—in giving accounts of events that have *really* happened—then Borges’ counter-history is hostile to it in the way that Barthelme says Burroughs’ fiction is. It is hostile to (historicist) History in its critique of it and thus hostile to the world in its “blasting” open of and additions to Reality.

But Borges’ hostility does not come at the cost of celebratory play, as in Barthelme’s configuration. The metaphysical play he engages in celebrates the possibilities of language, of reality, and of life, by seeking to expand upon the realm of each. Ts’ui Pen’s the Garden of Forking Paths, like Borges’ short story of the same name, exists in an interconnected relationship with an actual labyrinth of the author’s creation. In Tsun’s narrative, Albert reports on having been the first scholar to discover that Pen’s to ostensibly separable projects, writing a novel and constructing a labyrinth<sup>5</sup>, were actually one project: “it occurred to no one,” before Albert, “that book and labyrinth were one and the same” (124). Borges’ text, which shares a title with Pen’s, occupies a similarly bizarre space in relation to material reality. It is maze-like in that its puzzles are irresolvable, and tangibly so.

Albert asks Tsun, “In a riddle whose answer is chess, what is the only word that must not be used?”—the answer to which, of course, is “chess” (126). But, disarming the quick solution of the story’s riddles immediately afterward, Albert continues: “*The Garden of Forking Paths* is a huge riddle, or parable, whose subject is time; that secret purpose forbids Ts’ui Pen the merest mention of its name” (126). If Albert’s logic is 5. Borges’ play on the name/word “Pen” is especially fruitful in this portion of the narrative.

sound, then “time” cannot be what Borges’ own story is about—but neither can any of the philosophical speculations mentioned in the text. I’m not here to suggest that the riddle can be solved. It may well be possible, but such an answer would work against the play of Borges’ writing story, which is a (*real*) labyrinth qua, rather than in spite of, its being a text. To finally cash in on the pun, Pen has invented both a labyrinth and a text, or a text that is a labyrinth, and so has Borges’ own pen.

Borges, by way of a Benjamin-esque historical materialism, thus writes *after-but-with* Joyce, making of the short story an object that exists in the world as world, both enacting violence upon it and celebrating it. But I want to move a little bit closer to the current moment, now, and consider a portrait Don DeLillo paints in his 1973 novel, *Great Jones Street*. After the “Morehouse Professor of Latent History at the Osmond Institute” introduces himself to Bucky Wunderlick, the rock-star protagonist of the novel, the former provides a brief description of his job:

This professorship deals with events that almost took place, events that definitely took place but remained unseen and unremarked on. . .and events that probably took place but were definitely not chronicled. *Potential events are often more important than real events.* Real events that go unrecorded are often more important than recorded events, whether real or potential. (DeLillo 75, my emphasis)

DeLillo’s Professor looks a lot like Benjamin’s angel—looks a lot like Borges’, or, at least echoes Borges’ narrative strategy. Tsun’s narrative is made up of “potential events,” meaning that it is likely “more important than” the “real events” Hart uses to silence Tsun.

Hart’s account is closed, tidy. But “History is never clean,” as DeLillo’s Professor explains. Further, “In some cases less happened than we suspected,” but “In other cases we merely suspect that less happened” (76). This latter formulation is the trap that Hart and other historicists—those who would settle on a “clean” and neat account of History—fall into, according to Borges.

For DeLillo, on the other hand, the Professor of Latent History becomes subject matter—becomes a *thing* the text talks about, rather than the *way* that the text talks. DeLillo’s project, at least in *Great Jones Street*, is thus discontinuous from Borges’ in “The Garden of Forking Paths,” since in the latter historical materialism is a framing construct, not an object in the field of vision of the narrator. I don’t mean to suggest that DeLillo is accountable for all of Postmodern fiction, nor do I want to suggest that Postmodernism is dead or alive. Finally, I don’t mean to suggest that the tradition I’m positing has anything to do with the vital signs, if you will, of Postmodernism. Nevertheless, the current I’m tracing excludes DeLillo’s novel, a single and perhaps not representative example of Postmodernism. My next section will illustrate Carson’s and Díaz’s projects as parallel to and continuous with Borges’ own, mapping out a tradition that disregards/undercuts the Postmodern and bridges Borges into the present moment.

### *Latter-Day Angels*

In the way that she frames and delivers the (hi)story of *Autobiography of Red*, Anne Carson enacts a project of materialist History and historiography in line with Borges’ own. The story she takes up is not recent, but ancient, and therefore is inseparable from mythology: Carson’s novel-in-verse follows the poet/historian Stesichoros in chronicling

the life of Geryon, a red monster who, in most accounts, is less a character than an obstacle in the way of Herakles, a hero. “There were many different ways to tell a story like this,” however, as Carson’s preface’s narrator remarks, and Stesichoros’ own method is markedly different from most:

If Stesichoros had been a more conventional poet he might have taken the point of view of Herakles and framed a thrilling account of the victory of culture over monstrosity. But instead the extant fragments of Stesichoros’ poem offer a tantalizing cross section of scenes, both proud and pitiful, from Geryon’s own experience.(Carson 4-6)

Like Borges, Carson thus positions herself less as a storyteller unraveling a tale from the depths of her imagination and more as a critic commenting on an existing thread of historical discourse. Whereas Borges’ narrator harshly critiques Hart’s historicism, though, Carson champions Stesichoros for his historical materialist account—for his story’s going against the grain of conventional History.

Stesichoros provides a counter-history—a history from the point of view of Geryon, who would otherwise be silenced by History. Geryon’s story is Stesichoros’ masterpiece, a “very long lyric poem in dactyl-epitrite meter and triadic structure,” according to Carson (5-6). In it, Geryon becomes the central attraction, rather than one among many obstacles in Herakles’ journey. “We see his [Geryon’s] red boy’s life and his little dog,” and all the other mundane albeit fantastical qua *red* details that make up the texture of his story (6). In the same (sur)real way, Geryon is both a boy and a Monster in Carson’s retelling. An oddly sexualized childhood shared with his brother exposes cross-sections of

Geryon the boy-monster’s embodied suffering and paradoxically disembodied experience of mythological phenomena. Herakles, in Carson’s version, doesn’t kill Geryon. Perhaps with a nod to Michel Foucault<sup>6</sup>, power over death relinquishes and power over life takes its place: Herakles plays the role of unrequited and unabashedly hurtful lover. Although he plays a major role in Geryon’s life, Herakles is less a character than a narrative function, however, in the same way that Geryon likely played a narrative function in the conventional tellings of Herakles’ (hi)story in most ancient Greek poetry.

On the level of language, what distinguishes Stesichoros’ poetry from his contemporaries is that, whereas for other Greek poets “Nouns name[d] the world” and adjectives were “stable” “latches of being,” Stesichoros “began to undo the latches” (4-5). Linguistically, this project is parallel to what Benjamin and Borges theorize and enact historically: Stesichoros provides a counter-linguistics to combat the normative accounts of language provided by his rival poets. Adjectives, unshakeable to poets like Homer, are gaps in linguistic study—pauses or bridges between nouns, or the *real* location of naming. Think of Dawn’s “rosy fingers.” Now, recall Hart’s “Torrential rains” and their function as “a delay that entailed no great consequences” (Borges 119). Adjectives, in Stesichoros’ project, become the important part of speech—the privileged space within language—just like the events which occur under the cover of Hart’s “rains” become the privileged space of History in Borges. And, like Borges’ project, Carson’s history is a historiography, or a theorization-qua-application of how one ought to do History.

The form of what follows Carson’s critical preface and accompanying translations/

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6. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault argues that, over the centuries, the King’s power of execution has given way to a penal system designed to control one’s life through ostensibly non-invasive discipline.

interpretations of Stesichoros (and Appendixes to these) is a latent or potential history derived from Stesichoros' own counter-history. I'll focus on section "VI. Ideas," of "Autobiography of Red" proper, wherein Carson's poetry dives into a re-iteration of Stesichoros' history, spliced with her own. In it, the reader learns that "Eventually Geryon learned to write," and Carson's narrator gives way to Geryon's own voice (37). Geryon receives a notebook from Japan as a gift, writes the word "Autobiography" on its cover, and "set[s] down the facts" within it:

*Total Facts Known About Geryon.*<sup>7</sup>

*Geryon was a monster everything about him was red. Geryon lived on an island in the Atlantic called Red Place. Geryon's mother was a river that runs to the sea the Red Joy River Geryon's father was gold. Some say Geryon had six hands six feet some say wings. Geryon was red so were his strange red cattle. Herakles came one day killed Geryon got the cattle (Carson 37)*

The premise of this passage is absurd prophecy; Geryon the modern-day boy writes, at a young age, the *precise* future of his mythological alter-self. But I'll return to the content of this passage in my next paragraph; first I want to foreground how Carson's form here distinguishes Geryon's words from those of her narrator. In the text, the passage I've reproduced is tabbed inward (similarly to how it appears in my own essay), in contrast with Carson's narrator's lines. Further, Geryon's lines approach double-justification to imagined left and right margins. Finally, the italics reproduce handwriting as accurately as any readable, printer-ready font can. All these features make the passage look, physically,

7. I've tabbed this text in one extra time to mimic its relationship to Carson's other lines in her own text; in the following two paragraphs it will become more apparent why this spacing is important.

like a page in a notebook. In this way, like Borges, Carson the historian (or writer of a derivative historical account) hands over the work of History-writing to the author of a primary source.

Further, Carson's narrator's hand-off of historical account-giving redoubles a hand-off of authorship that *Autobiography of Red* asserts occurred between Stesichoros and Geryon. Directly below the above passage, Carson's narrator pokes back in to introduce more of Geryon's own writing:

He followed Facts with Questions and Answers.

QUESTIONS *Why did Herakles kill Geryon?*

1. *Just violent.*

2. *Had to it was one of His Labors (10<sup>th</sup>)*

3. *Got the idea that Geryon was death otherwise he would live forever.*

FINALLY

*Geryon had a little red dog Herakles killed that too. (Carson 37)*

To sum up, the total facts Geryon the boy (inexplicably) knows about Geryon the mythological figure cover his monstrosity, his redness, his location, the mythological roles played by his mother and father, his cattle, his dog, and his relationship with Herakles. Interestingly enough, however, Geryon's writing invokes the ideas and, at times, the exact language of (Carson's versions of) Stesichoros' fragments about Geryon. The first fact Geryon the (red) boy documents—"Geryon was a monster everything about him was red"—in his notebook titled "Autobiography," is also the *first line* of "I. Geryon," in the section of *Autobiography of Red* that Carson titles "Red Meat: Fragments of Stesichoros" (9, 37).

The content, form, and title of Geryon's list also invoke Stesichoros' fragment "XV. Total Things Known About Geryon" (14). On the one hand, these parallels between the boy/monster and the poet might signify that Geryon the modern-day boy channels Stesichoros when he writes in his journal; ancient Greek poetry might be "*Where he . . . get[s] his ideas*" (38). On the other hand, however, it might be that Geryon's journal—or an ancient equivalent thereof his modern Japanese one—is *where Stesichoros got his ideas*. Meaning: Geryon's words might be the same as Stesichoros' because the latter was quoting or plagiarizing the former—not because Geryon is channeling Stesichoros. Carson's poetry making this situation possible is a testament to its becoming material, or "world," like Joyce's and Borges' work before hers. Carson uses Stesichoros to "blast" a historical moment into the present, and, in the process, she blasts *him* into the present, as well. Positioning Stesichoros himself as both a historical materialist and a means for historical materialism, Carson re-vivifies and re-contextualizes at the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century a poet who lived and died millennia before Benjamin theorized the approach. *Autobiography of Red* is hostile in that it enacts violence on a given history and a given way of doing History—both of which is positions itself in contrast with—but it is celebratory, in the same stroke, for its play of possibilities—of histories latent, mythological, or actual, and of language.

In a word, *Autobiography of Red* is Borgesian. But Carson's book was published 16 years ago; I want to turn now to Junot Díaz's more recent novel, *The Brief, Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, to trace the Borgesian current even closer to the current moment. Díaz's text is more contemporary than Carson's in more ways than one. While it, too, is concerned

with history (and History), and the farthest back it technically reaches is "Creation," its timeframe more realistically begins with "the arrival of Europeans on Hispaniola" (Díaz 1). Díaz doesn't dwell on this pre-, early-, or barely-Modern moment for long; he traces the legacy of the "*Fukú americanus*, or more colloquially, *fukú*—generally a curse or a doom of some kind" from its (mythological) origins in the Dominican Republic to a manifestation in contemporary America—*here and now*. I want to focus mainly on elements of Díaz's novel that mirror the elements I've foregrounded in Borges and Carson: the preliminary discursive framing of his narrators—in the body of the text and in the footnotes—as critics/historians, as well as (latent) historical (materialist) subject matter in the later content of the text.

The epigraph to Díaz's novel, taken from *Fantastic Four* (Vol. I No. 49, April 1966), reads: "Of what import are brief, nameless lives . . . to Galactus?? [sic]" (Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, qtd. in Díaz). This quotation sets the tone against which Díaz positions his own project; it is representative of the same historicist ideology that would cause a Liddell Hart to overlook Yu Tsun's story and replace it with "rains"—the same way of doing History that would understand Geryon as a mere narrative function in the story of Herakles. Also, like Borges and Carson, Díaz positions his own text within existing historical discourse—likewise, by way of a preface-like section. An unnamed narrator, in the portion of *Oscar Wao* that precedes section I, outlines the entirety of what follows—a (hi)story of Oscar and his family—as a "*fukú* story," or a tale of bad luck that traces its heritage to the tenure of Raphael Leónidas Trujillo Molina—the "hypeman" of the curse, or its "high priest. . .servant. . .or its master, its agent or its principal" (6). Yes,

understanding the dictatorship of Trujillo as a pure cause for the fukú that is Oscar's life would be a case study in historicist, causal (neat and tidy) History. But, instead, the narrator positions his own inquiry into Oscar's life as a "zafa," or a "counterspell" that tries to undo the fukú. It is a "unique experience with" the past that "blasts" it into the present by attempting to understand the past in light of the present (Benjamin 262).

Rather than using Trujillo to understand the present, Díaz's strategy uses the present (the occasion of Oscar's life and death) to shed light on the past. The narrative is a counter-history, also, in that it seeks to fill in a gap paradoxically covered over neatly but left open, unoccupied, by both conventional historical education in the U.S. and the folk history that would understand any given phenomenon as an example of a fukú or zafa more-or-less (un)deserved. There are ostensibly two narrators present at any given point in the novel: the primary narrator of the larger-font prose (body) of the text and the scholarly narrator of the footnotes. In the introductory section, the first of the novel's many footnotes begins:

1. For those of you who missed your mandatory two seconds of Dominican history: Trujillo, one of the twentieth century's most infamous dictators, ruled the Dominican Republic between 1930 and 1961 with an implacable ruthless brutality. A portly, sadistic, pig-eyed mulato who bleached his skin, wore platform shoes, and had a fondness for Napoleon-era haberdashery, Trujillo (also known as El Jefe, the Failed Cattle Thief, and Fuckface) came to control nearly every aspect of the DR's political, cultural, social, and economic life through a potent (and familiar) mixture of violence,

intimidation, massacre, rape, co-optation, and terror; treated the country like it was a plantation and he was the master.<sup>8</sup> (Díaz 2)

Díaz's conversational tone in the footnote, which at first looks like it should carry with it all the academic pretension of a critical/historical piece, instead allows History to strike a personal (personable) register, rather than a strictly academic one. It also launches a sharp critique of the way History is done at present in the U.S., assuming that the reader was only mandated to study Dominican History for "two seconds."

But who is the narrator of the note, of all the notes in *Oscar Wao*? Who is this Historian, this disembodied "Watcher?" I'll note here that the narrative-proper passage directly above what I've quoted in Díaz's text begins "But the fukú ain't just ancient history, a ghost story from the past with no power to scare" (2). Meaning: both the narrators, of the footnote and the text proper, are concerned with both History and historiography. Further, their voices are difficult to pick apart. Although they strike a similar register, the narrator of the footnotes speaks to a world outside the text—citing hard facts, quoting or explaining sci-fi, fantasy, comic-book, and/or other cultural references, and speculating on politics: ". . .when you have kids they won't know the U.S. occupied Iraq"—and therefore appears to belong to or at least have access to this extra-textual world (19). Further, the footnote narrator feels an urgent pressure to flesh out historical anecdotes, notwithstanding their abstraction from the narrative, as when he remarks that "Although not essential to our tale, per se, Balaguer is essential to the Dominican one, so therefore

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8. In the text, the footnotes occur in a smaller font-size than the rest of the novel's prose. I've attempted to recreate that relationship.

9. In Marvel comics, a species of observers who don't interfere with the phenomena they chronicle. This allusion recurs in the novel.

we must mention him” (90).

The narrator *in* the text is concerned primarily with events within the novel’s world, though, and accesses an extra-textual world mainly through analog connection to the footnote narrator. Thus the narrators, though similar, appear to be distinct from one another. Later—after a shift in narration that gives Lola the floor—when Díaz reveals that the ostensibly nameless Watcher, the in-text narrator, is Yunior, he also throws the identity of his footnote narrator into further uncertainty. A careful reader will notice that footnotes don’t occur when Yunior isn’t narrating. Is the footnote narrator Yunior, then? But when footnotes ostensibly detail the process of writing the text, it becomes difficult to tell who the narrator is:

17. In my first draft, Samaná was actually Jarabacoa, but then my girl Leonie, resident expert in all things Domo, pointed out that there are no beaches in Jarabacoa. . .also informed me that the perrito (see first paragraphs of chapter one, “Ghetto Nerd at the End of the World”) wasn’t popularized until late eighties, early nineties, but that was one detail I couldn’t change, just liked the image too much. Forgive me, historians of popular dance, forgive me! (Díaz 132)

In the case of this footnote, the narrator appears to be none other than Junot Díaz, author of *Drown*, commenting on his process writing *Oscar Wao*—unpacking the texture of the research he presents, as well as exposing an anachronism he leaves intact regardless of its being brought to his attention. So, is the narrator of the footnotes Díaz? But recall that the premise of the narrative, installed in the introductory chapter, is that the in-text

narrator (Yunior) is the *author* of the book.

To complicate matters even further, a tension plays out between the two narrators on the level of form and space in a few occasions in the novel. Whereas the vast majority of pages are dominated if not completely occupied by Yunior or another in-text narrator, footnotes do take precedence in page presence in a few spots. First, recall my citation above of a place where the footnote narrator steps in to provide historical fodder despite its non-essentiality to the narrative. More dramatically, on pages 21-22, a single footnote stretches across two pages, occupying significantly more of page 22 than the narrative proper does. This footnote, unlike so many others, is not about extra-textual material. Instead, it provides back-story on Oscar’s love of genre novels. Even more interesting: unlike the ostensibly certain tone of most of the text’s footnotes, the narrator here is uncertain about the reasons for Oscar’s (non)literary tastes—it even leaves open the question of why, exactly, Oscar loves the genres: “Who can say?” (22).

In an interview with Meghan O’Rourke for *Slate*, Díaz provides an answer for that last question: “In dictatorships, only one person is really allowed to speak. And when I write a book or a story, I too am the only one speaking, no matter how I hide behind my characters” (2007). Although this much is true, on a surface level, I want to position Díaz’s sleight-of-hand narrative tricks in the same historical materialist project as those hand-offs of narrative in Borges and Carson. The shift to Lola’s narrative in her own voice is one obvious way that Yunior hands over narrative function. But on another level, Díaz’s slippery identification with Yunior adds the fictional character, as well as all the potential histories he generates, to the fabric of history. Recall that at the end of one of

the footnotes, the narrator mock-begs for forgiveness from the “historians of popular dance” for documenting, in a historical account, an anachronistic impossibility. His plea is not unwarranted; since *Oscar Wao* is, in a real way, a (latent) historical text, it adds material to the fabric, the discourse, of History—sometimes faulty material (for instance, the “perrito” pre-80’s) that another Borges<sup>10</sup>, in years to come, may make the springboard for a story that does to Díaz what “The Garden of Forking Paths” does to Liddell Hart.

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To conclude, I want to visit Díaz’s interview one last time. In response to a question about the political positioning of *Oscar Wao*, Díaz remarks that “You can’t tell the history of the U.S. without the history of the Dominican Republic, and yet people do so all the time” (2007). This kind of formulation works for Borges and Carson too, as well as any other project committed to historical materialism. To make a mold of it: “You can’t tell the history of X without the history of Y, and yet people do so all the time.” For Borges, substitute “WWI” for “X” and “every soldier’s experience” for “Y.” For Carson, replace them, respectively, with “the Hero” and “the Monster.” In all three cases, the historical project is to “blast” a past period into the space of the now, understanding history from the point of view of its gaps and uncertainties.

But the other side of this project is to understand all History as necessarily filled with and composed of gaps and uncertainties. Borges writes about a passage in a historical account that doesn’t even exist. And of the narrative he provides to correct it, remember

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10. Borges worked with anachronism as well; it is well known that the mythical Argentina of so many of his stories is populated by antique characters, settings, and sensibilities temporally foreign to Borges’ own direct experience of the country.

that “The first two page of the statement are missing” (Borges 119). Similarly, Carson re-tells the story of a monster from the scraps and fragments of the longer work of a poet whose own approach to the repertoire story was markedly different from the consensus of his contemporaries. In Díaz’s novel, *Yunior*, the in-text narrator, reminds the reader that “Even your Watcher has his silences, his páginas en blanco” (Oscar Wao 149). But the point is to expose the page *as blank*. Expose History, or historicist methods of concealment, as the agent by which the page becomes blank. Expose the silences as silences, as voices that have been silenced.

Foucault writes in *The History of Sexuality* that silence(s) is/are not the absence of discourse, but rather counter-discourse(s) in its/their own right. Similarly, Díaz says of *Oscar Wao* that

[t]he novel’s question is: How do you deal with [Trujillo’s] legacy? Do you run from it? Do you ignore it, deploy existential denial? These are strategies that add to the legacy’s power, that guarantee its perpetuation. Or do you look into the silence and actually say the words that you have to say?

(2007)

By working within historical materialist frameworks, Borges, Carson, and Díaz (re) integrate this silence—these silences—into the world. As counter-histories, they are hostile to History and to the world they enter. But they celebrate life in its democratic possibilities, opening up space for the silenced, the oppressed, to exist. A space to exist that is not a *gap* in the fabric of History, but rather a knit, a texture—a History of its own.

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Moccasins #3

White Feather/Robert Nabess

## Documenting Vietnam: Verisimilitude, Political Propaganda, and Manipulation in Peter Davis's *Hearts and Minds*

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Although decades have passed since the end of the Vietnam War, the conflict will forever remain an important chapter in the military and political history of the United States. For its significance, many directors took the Vietnam War with all its political, social, and moral problems as a theme for their films. A lot of truly great films on Vietnam were created from the late 1960s until the late 1980s when the Vietnam War was not an abstract event that took place in the past but rather it was *the war* that at that specific period of time was as persistent and actual as it would ever be, influencing individuals, families, and the whole nation. Among many other remarkable cinematic examples, it is worth mentioning Michael Cimino's *The Deer Hunter* (1978), Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979), Oliver Stone's *Platoon* (1986), Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), Brian De Palma's *Casualties of War* (1989), along with documentaries like Emile

de Antonio's *In the Year of the Pig* (1968) and Peter Davis's *Hearts and Minds* (1974). Today, Vietnam returns to our screens with the release of Sammy Jackson's series *Vietnam in HD* (2011) and Rory Kennedy's *Last Days in Vietnam* (2014), which only proves the significance of the issue for world history and specifically for the United States. This article focuses on one of the earliest cinematic examples that tackle the issue of Vietnam, namely Peter Davis's documentary *Hearts and Minds* that, I argue, is an ambiguous representation of the policy of U.S. intervention that lays a solid ground to raise questions of verisimilitude, political propaganda, and manipulation of historical facts.

Before proceeding to the film analysis, however, it is important to briefly examine the history of the Vietnam War and understand how the United States got involved for some seven years in the conflict. For that, it is significant to trace the premises of U.S. domestic interest in the war.

After WWII, precisely at the end of the 1940s, the United States intervened in Indochina – the American government was granting aid to the French who wanted to take control of the territory. However, when in 1954 French soldiers suffered a defeat, President Eisenhower did not provide the reinforcement. Instead, he was supporting and, thus, greatly strengthening the anti-communist regime of Ngo Dinh Diem in the south. Despite American interest in helping Diem, the intervention was conducted without drawing much attention of American citizens simply because the government was not sure how the involvement would be perceived publicly (Goertzel 1975, 168). Therefore, the war in Vietnam grew 'spontaneously' because it was kept a secret and because 'basic principles' were not gravely discussed by the people responsible (168). An unambiguous explanation of U.S. interest in Vietnam that later on grew into mania was, curiously

enough, the domestic aversion between the Republicans and the Democrats. The failed involvements in China and later in the Korean War seemed to reveal that the Democrats were not strong enough to fight against communism; hence, during the presidencies of Kennedy and Johnson (both belonged to the Democratic Party) it was crucial to avoid another collapse in Asia (Macdonald 1992, 187).

Nonetheless, by the end of 1975 the United States failed the intervention in Vietnam. According to Allan R. Millett and Peter Maslowski, 47,000 American soldiers died on the battlefield; 10,000 died of disease and in accidents; 154,000 were wounded. The losses on the Vietnamese side were even heavier: more than 200,000 South Vietnamese soldiers died on the battlefield; more than 1 million of South Vietnamese civilians were killed considering that the population was 17 million. The loss on the North Vietnamese side was 800,000 lives (1984, 542-43).

All in all, as Ted Goertzel argues, U.S. involvement in Vietnam was promoted by the powerful elite – not by 'intelligence officers' but by 'wealthy businessmen' (1975, 171), for whom intervention was, first, part of a competition for power in the international arena and, secondly, a means of fighting against communism (169). In the end, the Vietnam conflict was dreadful and catastrophic for American soldiers as it caused violations of ethical and moral principles (171). The war in Vietnam, according to Donald Pease made many scholars reexamine American national myths (2009, 166); more than that, the war made many Americans reconsider U.S. involvement in the conflict and the consequences of that intrusion.

As it has been mentioned earlier, the Vietnam War became a fascinating theme for many film directors. However, Peter Davis's documentary *Hearts and Minds* is perhaps

the most ambiguous example of all. I argue that the film, albeit offering valuable material on the Vietnam War, apparently, utilizes a technique that facilitates a certain distortion, i.e., the director obviously uses specific opinions and historical facts that demonstrate pro- and anti-war attitudes unevenly, therefore, imposing – what we would assume as his point of view – quite a subjective understanding of the Vietnam War. In connection with that, the documentary that is, indeed, compiled of true facts and authentic representations becomes a manipulating machine that, although by means of negotiating polar views, heavily criticizes U.S. involvement in Vietnam. It judges U.S. foreign policy in Asia and, therefore, presents the U.S. government as an unstoppable and irrational force and American soldiers as plain murderers. It shatters the myth of Americans as an exceptional righteous nation into pieces. Nevertheless, I claim that *Hearts and Minds* serves as an important tool to understand the war, intentions, and actions of those people involved. More than that, it reveals political backrooms and discloses attitudes of the soldiers as well as goals of their commanders.

Scholars in unison agree that *Hearts and Minds* is a critical account of, first and foremost, U.S. foreign policy in Vietnam. Carl Plantinga calls *Hearts and Minds* a ‘powerful anti-war film’ (2013, 40) while David Grosser depicts it as ‘an explicitly antiwar documentary’ (1990, 267). Roger Stahl states that the documentary largely disapproves of ‘the motives and tactics of the U.S. government’ (2008, 85) while Emile de Antonio, the director of another documentary on Vietnam, *In the Year of the Pig*, labels *Hearts and Minds* as ‘both heartless and mindless’ because the film fails ‘to understand either the United States or Vietnam’ and because it ‘sneers with a japing, middle-class, liberal superiority when it should be doing something quite different’ (1980, 218). In connection with

the last comment, I raise such pivotal questions as: What exactly should a documentary do? If Davis’s account of the Vietnam War is so ‘wrong,’ what representation would be ‘correct’? Is it even possible to classify documentaries as ‘right’ and ‘wrong’? Does it mean that in every conflict there are two sides, one of which is indubitably right whereas another one is indubitably wrong? What are the parameters, according to which, one can define the sides as good and bad? If *Hearts and Minds*, with its empathy towards the Vietnamese and critique of Americans, is a disadvantageous example of the portrayal of the Vietnam War, does it mean that a reverse viewpoint would be advantageous? For whom would it then be advantageous? Does it mean that a documentary is shot for a specific audience and in the course of narration it is supposed to support the position of a particular audience? Do we equate a documentary with propaganda in this case that with the help of certain historical facts and a perverse perspective would promote re-imagining of history? These are the questions I seek to answer in the course of the article.

It is important to mention that *Hearts and Minds* is Hollywood’s first project on Vietnam. Before the film appeared on a big screen, Americans could observe the war events only from news reports (Howell 2006, 545). Meditating on possible connections between news and Hollywood representations of the war, Rick Berg claims that ‘television’s influence’ can be clearly observed in the documentary as it ‘insisted on documenting the real war, the one seen on TV’ (1990, 48). However, he continues, there is one aspect that distinguishes *Hearts and Minds* from news tremendously, i.e., unlike objective reporting of events that are viewed in the news (which, I argue, is another very debatable issue), the documentary uncovers the way ‘*the director . . . wanted the war to look*’ (48, emphasis added).

The film starts with a very peaceful scene: we observe a village somewhere in Vietnam. The video is accompanied by traditional Vietnamese music; there are children playing in the fields; women are working, and then two Vietnamese soldiers walk into the shot. The next scene transfers us to the office of Clark Clifford (Aide to President Truman 1946-1950) in the United States whose first words of the interview are the following:

When the Second World War was over, we were the one great power in the world. . . . We had this enormous force that had been built up; we had the greatest fleet in the world; we'd come through the war economically sound and . . . in addition to feeling a sense of responsibility, we also began to feel the sense of a world power – that possibly we could control the future of the world.

These lines are lavishly illustrated as the film proceeds further with a brief history of U.S. involvement in Indochina, providing facts and figures concerning American help to the French. Later we hear President Johnson saying, 'So we must be ready to fight in Vietnam but the ultimate victory will depend upon the hearts and the minds of the people who actually live out there.' Apparently, this phrase underscores that only when the Vietnamese people accept the anti-communist government, the war in Vietnam can be over. However, *Hearts and Minds* is not aimed at debating the advantages or flaws of communism as it, rather, as Bernard Weiner accentuates it, aims at revealing 'the cultural and political bases that led to the U.S. imperialistic drive worldwide' as well as the 'effects' it had on people in Vietnam and the United States (1974-75, 60).

The film's success, I argue, due to the director's idea to contrast different stories – what has happened to American soldiers and families, and what has happened to the Vietnamese – to confront the attitudes of these people towards the Vietnam War and, most

importantly, towards U.S. involvement in the war because only through comparisons spectators can grasp dissimilarities, injustice, and the wrong of the war. Speculating on 'whether documentary photography can provide evidence for the claims of a documentary,' Platinga constructs a persuasive theory that deals with two aspects, namely 'evidence' and "epistemology" (2013, 40). Examining the concept of 'evidence,' the scholar claims that by contrasting opinions of Americans with opinions of the Vietnamese and sequences from Vietnam, Davis utilizes the method of 'contradiction' when the audience finds out about certain facts not through the talks but mainly through the video image (41). In doing so, Davis succeeds at displaying the opinions and argumentation of the U.S. government as wrong ones (although the director explicitly never says it) for the video from Vietnam apparently *shows* the situation in a completely opposite way compared to the one claimed by Americans. Analyzing the concept of 'epistemology,' Platinga states that it is an individual attitude towards the fact 'whether documentaries can represent reality with truthfulness, accuracy, or objectivity' that is crucial to 'one's position on whether documentary images may count as evidence' (41). He continues that 'all films are fictions . . . [that aim at] reflecting not reality but our self-interest' (41). This argument advocates the opinion that in his documentary, Davis reflects his personal viewpoint on the Vietnam War rather than an objective one. That means that the genre of documentary, as any other film genre, can count as a fictionalized narration. David LaRocca's observation significantly adds to this speculation:

Documentary film often lures us to believe that it is showing 'the truth' – the world without mediation – but then we remember that a cameraman

points the camera, that the camera frames the scene and the lens translates what passes through it, that the image is in color (or not) and of a specific quality or rendering, and, perhaps most crucially, that the documentary is *edited* and supplemented by everything from captions to music. (2014, 36)

However, Platinga underscores that from ‘a critical realist perspective’ it is possible to argue that there are documentaries that are fictions as well as that there are documentaries that are ‘truthful, accurate and informative’ (2013, 41).

As the film proceeds, we observe a national hero, Lt. George Coker who gets the warmest welcome from the citizens of his hometown, giving a profound speech, explaining that he should thank his country for still being alive: ‘If I served the military well, this is only because the military trained me to be a good officer. If I am a good American, it is only because America brought me up to be a good American.’ It would be wrong to think that this highly patriotic appeal is addressed only to the people of the town; quite the contrary, the speech is a proclamation of American values which is to be heard by the U.S. nation as well as the whole world. Additionally, later we witness former Captain Randy Floyd telling about the bombing from the air he was conducting during the war that gave him an ‘incredible sense of excitement.’ The talk is interrupted by the interview with Nguyen Van Tai from Hung Dinh village who points at the heap of bricks and ruins that used to be his house. Right next to this place is a crater – the result of the bombing. Later on, we hear the story of two Vietnamese women: one of them lost her sister in the bombing, whereas the other one has no place to live because her house is destroyed – due to the bombing. The latter woman cannot fight back her tears telling into the camera

that she was wounded and now is not able to work properly. Tragically, there is nobody who can take care of her. The director deliberately lingers on the locality that is literally razed to the ground: the houses are destroyed; smashed dishes, broken bricks, and dead chickens lie everywhere. Two Vietnamese men, making their way through deep mud, say, ‘Look, they are focusing on us now. First they bomb as much as they please, then they film it.’ The documentary’s main tactics, therefore, is, first, to demonstrate the evilness of Americans, and, secondly, to make the audience feel sympathy and compassion towards the Vietnamese. Amanda Howell finds it a ‘weakness’ of the film ‘as a documentary’ since ‘it privileges affect over analysis and works largely by personifying war’s origins and effects through its witness-participant interviews’ (2006, 546).

The director returns to Floyd’s story only towards the end of *Hearts and Minds* when he reveals us a shocking video of women carrying their children whose skin is hanging down in rags due to the burn they got from napalm bombing. Floyd says that he has never dropped napalm bombs but he has dropped other bombs that have obviously killed a lot of people or made the survivors suffer from severe wounds. He then refers to his own children, explaining that he cannot even imagine someone bombing them. The talk is highly emotional which, on the one hand, provokes empathy towards the ex-officer who cries in front of the camera realizing the horror his family would have gone through if what the U.S. Army did to the Vietnamese had happened to Americans. On the other hand, the scene makes the audience meditate on the amount of terror and loss the Vietnamese experienced during the war. To understand the scene better, it is important to consider Berg’s comment on the portrayal of an American soldier in the film: ‘At best, the soldier, according to *Hearts and Minds*, is a young, ignorant victim,

barely able to think for himself, and not the victim of class and economic deprivation. Only upon release or after he had been wounded beyond repair could the vet, according to the film, let his hair down in the manner of the antiwar demonstrators and come to his right mind' (1990, 48-49). Therefore, Davis demonstrates certain short-sightedness of U.S. soldiers who were driven by obsessive patriotism as well as governmental instructions that dictated the necessity of the U.S. holy mission, making the post-realization utmost painful and cruel.

Another arresting story in the film concerns David Emerson and his wife Mary whose elder son (who was educated at Harvard) was killed during a flight. Mr. Emerson is convinced that his son 'realized that he was part of a big job that had to be done.' It is a very moving moment when the man, as it seems, tries to explain that the death of his son is not the biggest tragedy since many other soldiers died on that operation and those who survived were badly wounded. We see tears in his eyes that prove that, all in all, this is a personal tragedy for this particular family, just as the deaths of all the other soldiers are personal tragedies for all the other American families. However, the man sticks to the viewpoint that the death of his son is a price for freedom, a sacrifice that had to be done. It is hard to believe that the family refuses to accept the fact that the death of their son as well as many other deaths could have probably been avoided if the American government had taken other decisions. Peter Biskind comments, 'The mixture of foolishness, intelligence, and pain in this sequence makes it difficult to watch' (1975, 31).

Like Weiner, I would like to draw attention to the way Davis films the interviewees in *Hearts and Minds*. The veterans are filmed in close-ups in the first half of the

documentary, namely when they speak about their education and how they came to the army and became soldiers – 'proud representatives of the U.S. military effort' (Weiner 1974-75, 62). However, later on, the camera moves back, and we realize that these men are either paralyzed or physically handicapped. They are not proud of having fought that war anymore. But the 'brainwash,' as Weiner puts it, continues (62) – it is illustrated in the episode when Lt. Coker tells elementary school pupils about his 'ambition' to fight and win the war. He shares with children that 'if it wasn't for the people, it [Vietnam] was very pretty' and that the Vietnamese 'ma[de] a mess out of everything.' Later we observe him delivering a speech to women: 'You, you moms, made me what I am today.' According to William F. Steirer, Jr., the message the director puts into his film is the following:

He [Davis] argues compellingly that this was an evil war, fought by men raised to think of Orientals as inferiors, of American culture as superior, and of the preeminent right of superiors to control their inferiors. It is this cultural ambience that Davis cites as resting at the heart of the American psyche and that he tries to capture by artful marshalling of impressions and images. (1975, 664)

Explicitly, Davis's task is to clear the 'sickness' of people who are so 'proud' of having fought the war (Weiner 1974-75, 62). The lieutenant's eloquent words turn most repulsive when, for example, the director shows us a Vietnamese man making hundreds of coffins for children who were poisoned from the air spray; or another Vietnamese man who says in despair, 'My eight year old daughter was killed and my three year old son.

Nixon [is a] murderer of civilians. What have I done to Nixon so that he comes here and bombs my country? I'll give my daughter's beautiful shirt. Throw the shirt in Nixon's face. Tell him she was only a little school girl.' It is especially hard to watch one of the final scenes of the documentary when rows of graves are dug and Vietnamese men sink coffins into them, whereas children sit nearby and howl.

Weiner argues that *Hearts and Minds* is aimed at triggering the audience's feelings and emotions rather than 'respect[ing] the intellect'; Steirer, Jr., claims that the film depicts those who approved of the war as plainly bad, careless, and obnoxious and that although 'sufficient and logical arguments' for U.S. intervention in Vietnam are given in the film, we do not see anybody saying it directly to the camera (1975, 664). The consequences of the intervention, however, are drastically devastating for many: for U.S. soldiers who returned psychologically and/or physically mutilated; for Vietnamese civilians, as well as for the American nation that will carry the burden of Vietnam for good. *Hearts and Minds* greatly succeeds at maintaining a firm bridge between the audience and the narrative. To borrow from Grosser, the director tries to provoke feelings of 'identification' between people in front of the screen and those victims of U.S. military actions whom we see in the documentary (1990, 278). However, the film, indeed, fails to provide a detailed picture of the Vietnam War as it was, rather imposing a general overview of one specific attitude. In this respect, I agree with Brian Winston's speculation that *Hearts and Minds* is an 'inchoate account of the war' (1995, 213). Despite these disadvantages, I, however, argue that *Hearts and Minds* should still be considered a valuable historical material that provides evidence of U.S. intervention in Vietnam. Even more importantly, the documentary focuses on those Americans who partook in the conflict, revealing

the attitudes they had by the end of the war – some of them remained proud of their participation; others considered their actions in Vietnam abhorrent – thus, demonstrating the diverse stance in the domestic arena. That only proves that although Americans are a deeply patriotic nation, with their rich culture and profound ideology, the merciless war aroused acute disagreement and controversy among U.S. citizens and made many reconsider the actions of the U.S. government and the U.S. Army as well as probably see their personal faults as participants – whether directly fighting in Asia or being responsible for the election of the government or just approving of U.S. involvement – in the hell of Vietnam.

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Bone Handle #3



White Feather/Robert Nabess

# King Kojong and the Foreigners: A Tale of Broken Promises

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After the departure of the Dutch castaways in 1668, Korea began a serious policy of isolating itself from what its increasingly inward-looking government believed was the pernicious influence of Europeans. In 1785 King Chongjo had declared Christianity a heresy and had prohibited its practise. Christians were persecuted, and Confucianism became entrenched. The occasional brave missionary like Zhou Wen-mo sneaked into the kingdom, but traders were rebuffed, and contacts with the outside world came only through China or Japan. However, one event took place which seemed to galvanise the Korean authorities in their xenophobia; this was the so-called “Silk Letter” incident of 1801. In 1801 a Christian convert, Hwang Sa-yong, who had taken the name Alexander, wrote a letter on silk to the French bishop in Beijing in which he suggested that if the Catholic Church wanted to convert the Koreans, they should send over one hundred ships filled

with soldiers, who would then assist missionaries in their work and force the King to grant religious freedom. The letter was intercepted and Hwang was summarily executed. King Sunjo (1800-34) had become frightened that the promotion of foreign religion was simply a cover for foreign invasion, and his government clamped down on everything Western that had not already been suppressed. Socially, there was a lot of unrest, with peasant rebellions occurring at fairly regular intervals through the eighteenth and early nineteenth century which, although they ended in failure and repression, contributed to the gradual undermining of the social system and forced successive governments into taking repressive measures. In 1860 the British and French took Beijing, which must have given a profound shock to the Koreans, who still paid lip service to Chinese suzerainty, and who reacted by further retiring into isolation from the West.

In 1864 King Ch’oljong died and the twelve-year old Crown Prince succeeded to the Korean throne as King Kojong. He was effectively first in the power of a regency led by Queen Kim Jong-sun, widow of the late ruler, and then by his own father, King Ch’oljong’s brother, who didn’t become king himself because the childless Queen had adopted Prince Kojong. Kojong’s father, Prince Yi Ha-un (1820-1898), better-known as the Hungson Tae-won Kun, or Great Prince of the Court, would emerge as the effective ruler of Korea whilst Kojong was a minor, and after that he would still wield a great deal of power and influence almost until his death. Yi Ha-un was a wily and devious man, deeply conservative yet not totally rigid in outlook; he professed to detest all foreigners, yet would eventually throw in his lot with the Japanese, which proved to be a terrible mistake both for him and for Korea itself. At the same time, however, even his

conservatism was not clear-cut; the Korean situation in the nineteenth century was not simply a polarised quarrel between “progress” and “conservatism,” but a more complex and volatile mixture of the two. For example, as far as foreign religion was concerned, the Tae-won Kun was initially quite tolerant of Catholics, but this would soon change. Frederick Mackenzie, the Canadian journalist of whom we’ll hear a great deal more later, noted that Yi Ha-un was “a man of great force of character and no scruples” (18). He was, a Japanese historian wrote, “small of stature....spoke well and convincingly, possessed a strong will, sharp wit, and an excellent education” (Sunoda, q. in Simbirtseva n.p.). Portraits and photographs of the Tae-won Kun show a slightly-built elderly man, clever or sly rather than intellectual, with heavy-lidded, cold eyes which look down, a moustache and wispy dark beard. He is always dressed Korean-style, in contrast to King Kojong, who is often photographed either in military uniform or a Western-style suit, sometimes including the obligatory top-hat, as well as in his red and gold Korean royal costume.

The Tae-won Kun lived in the Unhyeongung (Cloud-Hanging-over-the-Valley) Palace, a building with a very apt name for its occupant. It is a small building as palaces go, and may be seen today preserved as an example of nineteenth-century *yangban* life. The palace has a largish open courtyard, surrounded by rooms opening into it and facing away from the sun when the day is at its hottest; nowadays the whole place has an almost cloister-like feel to it, although this may be simply because the hustle and bustle of palace-life has been silent for so long. The servants are now all departed, and the Hungson Tae-won Kun himself less than a shadow on the walls of the inner rooms, which still smell faintly of lacquer. Yet the realistic figures placed in the rooms, one of

whom bears a remarkable likeness to their best-known inhabitant, might still serve to invoke his rather sinister presence for visitors with some imagination as they peer over the rope barriers into the darkened recesses. King Kojong had been born there, and it was the scene of his wedding to Myong-song Min in 1867, when he was fifteen and she one year older. The wedding ceremony is regularly re-enacted for tourists, the costumes and music meticulously researched and authentically presented; one of the author’s regrets on his two visits to Seoul was not seeing it.

It was not until Kojong married and Queen Min began to exert her influence that the Tae-won Kun was forced to bridle himself, or at least start looking over his shoulder. In the early days of his power he even included Japanese as foreigners he didn’t like, and in 1875 the Japanese battleship *Unyo*, which the Koreans claimed had opened fire first, was shot at by Korean shore-batteries as it lay off the Korean coast. The Japanese government decided, after this incident, to negotiate with the Koreans for the use of trading ports, and full diplomatic relations between the two countries were established with the Treaty of Kanghwa. This move upset the Chinese, who saw it a a provocation; the Japanese government seemed to be recognising that Korea, nominally a vassal state of the Chinese Empire, could now make a treaty with a foreign country on its own, without even the formality of clearance from Beijing. For the moment, however, there was little that the Qing government could do. This situation would not continue indefinitely.

The Americans were not so lucky; in 1866 they had made an attempt to establish trade relations with the Koreans, who had hitherto never expressed any desire for such relations, by landing on Kanghwa Island. The Koreans had supposed, rightly or wrongly,

that the foreigners wanted to go to Pyongyang from a base on the island and rob the royal tombs, because this had actually happened recently, and an American had been involved. The robbery had included a desecration of the grave belonging to the Tae-won Kun's father.<sup>11</sup> The Koreans sent an emissary to tell the Americans that Governor Park Kyu-su had no authority of his own to open such negotiations, and in any case they did not trade with foreigners. The American ship, the *General Sherman*, now unfortunately went aground as it sailed up the Taitong river, after having been told to turn back by Korean troops. The Governor, now acting on the authority of the Tae-won Kun, was ordered by the latter, according to a Korean source, to "tell them to leave at once. If they do not, kill them." The Americans refused and a fight broke out, resulting in the American ship first being attacked with fire-arrows and cannon, followed by a turtle-ship. When these had little result, a resourceful Korean sergeant then suggested using fire-ships, which were much more effective. The *Sherman* was set ablaze and a wholesale slaughter of the crew ensued. After the massacre, the "body parts" of the dead Americans were "cut off for medical use," and when the Tae-won Kun heard of the action, he "laughed in his heart" (Lee, n.p.n.). His father, one assumes, had been avenged.

Retaliation from the Americans, entirely justified under the circumstances, came the next year; the Koreans having explained that they believed the United States had been in the wrong, the American government resorted to gunboat diplomacy. A squadron of

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1. Tomb-robbing was in fact the purpose of an expedition in 1867 led by a German, Ernst Oppert, and an American named Jenkins, which included a Jesuit priest from France as a guide and a number of Chinese and Malay sailors, all armed to the teeth. Mackenzie called this group "disreputable" (19). They couldn't break or lift the huge stones covering the graves, and soon a hostile crowd gathered, driving the men away. "The American consular authorities in Shanghai placed Jenkins on trial," Mackenzie related, "but there was not enough evidence to convict him" (20).

five ships, one of which carried Frederick Low,<sup>22</sup> the United States minister in China, now sailed up the Han river and attacked the Korean forts which lined the banks. Low was enthusiastic about the attack; "lenity," he wrote to his superior, Hamilton Fish (November 22, 1870), "leads [Asians] to believe that fear alone prevents retaliation and adds to their arrogance, conceit and hostility" (Chang, n.p.n.).<sup>33</sup> Even though they were outgunned, the Koreans stoutly resisted, even "picking up handfuls of dust to fling in the eyes of the Americans when they had nothing left to fight with" (Mackenzie 21). Several hundred Koreans as well as some Americans died in the clash, yet the United States eventually withdrew from the island because, as Mackenzie rather contemptuously noted, "there was nothing for the Americans to do but retire" (21). Low, for his part, remained as unimpressed by the Koreans as he had been by Asians in general, assuming that being a past Governor of California had given him insight, as he confided to Fish, into "the cunning and sophistry which enter so largely into the oriental character" (Chang, n.p.n.).

King Kojong's own assessment of the incident contained no "sophistry" at all; he wrote to the Board of Rites in Beijing that the Americans had arrived "bragging that they had come with peaceful intentions, that nobody need harbour suspicion, that they certainly would hurt no-one," but asked "Why, then, did they come in ships full of soldiers? Why did they refuse to meet with the officials sent to them?" The King, for

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2. Frederick Ferdinand Low (1828-1894), formerly Governor of California (1863-67) was United States Minister to China (1869-73). In fairness one should note that as a Republican congressman Low did object to what he felt were too-stringent laws enacted against Chinese immigrants.

3. The American ships also brought along a more interesting passenger than the rather ignorant Low. This was Felice or Felix Beato (1825-1908), a Venetian-born British photographer based in Yokohama since 1863. He travelled widely, photographing sites in India, Greece, Palestine, China, Japan and Sudan, and he was the first person ever to take a photograph of Korea, a view of a boat on the Han river with the ubiquitous mountains in the background. He also took pictures of the 350 dead Koreans after the battle with American forces. For details, see Stephen White, "Felix Beato and the First Korean War, 1871," *The Photographic Collector*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1982).

once agreeing with the Tae-won Kun without compulsion, believed that all the talk of peaceful intentions was nothing more than “a device to put us off our guard” before moving into Korea with a greater force (Chang, n.p.n.). In this last assumption he was wrong, but what was certainly true was that Korea simply did not want a treaty with the United States in 1871, in spite of the fact that the Americans, aside from wanting to punish those who had destroyed the *Sherman* and killed its crew, genuinely wished to clear the matter up and seek better relations with Korea. It did not look this way to the Koreans, and the Chinese government fully supported its nominal vassal’s actions against the foreigners. As a result, no trade treaty would be signed with the United States for another ten years. These incidents let the Koreans know in no uncertain terms that outsiders were not prepared to be kept at bay, and even more unlikely were they going to tolerate Korean objections to their presence, either diplomatic or military. The Japanese in particular saw these incidents and the treaty as an inroad to opening up Korea, but by the 1880’s the Chinese had once again decided to intervene. Unfortunately the Manchus were not in the 1880’s what they had been three hundred years earlier, and whilst the Japanese were more cautious when China became involved, as soon as the French started their incursions into Vietnam (1884) the Qing government turned its attention there and the Japanese believed the field to be now open.

Into the gap, however, now entered a new power, the Russian Empire, which wished, as Prince Esper Esperovich Ukhtomsky would later write in his account of Tsarevich Nicholas’s visit to Siam and Saigon (1891), like France, to “spread civilisation in Asia in a

chivalrous spirit” (75).<sup>44</sup> The Russians had turned their attention to their Asian neighbours because it was the only direction in which they could turn, Africa and other areas of the world having been already claimed by other European powers. Asia was, of course, important to Russia because the British were in India, and the Russians needed allies or at least friendly countries as a buffer to what their government considered excessive British influence in that area. They decided first on a high-level contact with Siam, the result of which was Tsarevich Nicholas’s aforementioned visit to King Chulalongkorn, but that did not mean they were not interested in Korea, too. Their admiration for the French is more difficult to understand, at least from a political standpoint, since the French had supported Britain in the Crimean War only thirty years earlier, but for centuries French had been the language of the Russian aristocracy, and in spite of the Napoleonic War many Russians, especially some of the nobility, still clung to their own version of French culture. This alone might explain Prince Ukhtomsky’s positive attitude towards French desires to bring “civilisation” to Asia. As for the French attitude towards Russia, fifty years earlier the Marquis de Custine<sup>55</sup> had concluded that he found it difficult to believe that “the only object of this creation of Providence [Russia] is to diminish the barbarism of Asia” (305), and that it was Europe that would have to watch its back. By

the 1880’s Custine would have had to have changed his mind, at least on the first part of

4. Prince Esper Esperovich Ukhtomsky (1861-1927) worked for the Ministry of the Interior, and was chosen to accompany Tsarevich Nicholas (later Tsar Nicholas II) because of his expertise in Buddhism, Eastern literature, and Asian history. He also wrote poetry, and edited the *St. Petersburg Gazette*. Ukhtomsky was a committed imperialist who wished to see all Asia eventually unite, “chivalrously,” of course, under a Christian “White Tsar.” His book was published in 1898.

5. Astolphe, Marquis de Custine (1790-1857) travelled to Russia in 1839 and stayed for three months. He was quite a seasoned traveller, having visited Spain in 1831 and published a four-volume book on that country which had enjoyed critical acclaim, including an accolade from Balzac. Some Russian writers, notably Edvard Radzinsky in his recent (2004) biography of Tsar Alexander II, have criticised Custine’s claims about “knowing” Russia. His *Empire of the Czar: A Journey through Eternal Russia*, as the anonymous English translator called it (1840), has been republished with a foreword by Daniel J. Boorstin (New York: Doubleday, 1989).

his prophecy.

When both Japanese and Chinese forces had agreed to withdraw, the Russians engineered a clandestine agreement with King Kojong, who seems to have become suddenly very pro-Russian, probably because he saw the Russians as a check to Japanese influence and also because his wife detested the Japanese. The Chinese, for their part, considered deposing Kojong, but settled for a British force occupying a small island off Korea instead. Li Hongzhang,<sup>66</sup> the virtual Prime Minister of China under Emperors Dong Zhi (1861-75) and Guang Zhu (1875-1908), now actually advised the Koreans to cultivate the friendship of other Western powers to keep the Russians out, and he even went so far as to tell foreign diplomats in Beijing that they should start being friendly to Korea. In 1882 the Americans, despite their former belligerence, got the Koreans to sign a treaty at Gensan in which they promised that they would help them if “other powers deal unjustly or oppressively” with them, as the words of the treaty read (Mackenzie 22). However, when the going later got tough, the Americans were nowhere to be found, as the Canadian journalist and eye-witness Frederick Mackenzie, would relate in his book *Korea's Fight for Freedom* (1920).<sup>77</sup>

Frederick Mackenzie (1869-1931) came to Britain from Québec, arriving in Korea

6. Li Hongzhang (1823-1901) began his career in the army, and rose to the rank of general. He suppressed several rebellions against the Qing Dynasty, and in 1870 became Viceroy of Zhili. Li was pro-foreign, and rose politically as well as militarily; by the 1880's he was Superintendent of Trade and an Imperial Tutor to the young Emperor Guang Zhu. By 1886 he directed China's foreign policy, and led China in the Sino-Japanese War. In 1896 Li toured Europe and played an active part in stamping out the Boxer Rebellion (1901). He was by far the most distinguished Chinese statesman of his time.

7. Mackenzie wasn't the first Canadian in Korea. That honour goes to The Rev. James Scarth Gale (1863-1937), a missionary, scholar and translator who was sent to Seoul in 1888 by the University of Toronto YMCA. He wrote several books on Korea, including *Korean Sketches* (1898) and *History of the Korean People*, reprinted in 1972. Gale also translated a Korean novel, Kim Man-jung's *Cloud Dream of the Nine*, which had been written in 1689, and wrote a biography of Buddha.

as a correspondent for the London *Daily Mail* shortly before the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War. He stayed only a few months, leaving at the end of 1904 and going back to England through Russia, where he reported on the war from the Russian side and produced a book of his experiences, *From London to Tiflis* (1905). The *Daily Mail* sent him back to Korea in 1906, just in time to witness the harshness of Japanese imperialism there. As Yi-sup Hong writes in his foreword to the Korean edition of Mackenzie's book, the latter was critical of Britain's pro-Japanese (and hence anti-Russian) policy, seeing the Japanese stranglehold on Korea as one example of British short-sightedness about Japanese imperialism, so he wrote this work as “criticism of Japan and appeal for Korea, to arouse concentrated world reaction, in the name of humanity and justice, for a weak and oppressed nation” (9). Mackenzie used his friendship with the Japanese, whom he actually admired, to question their reporters, which he could do easily because of the alliance between Britain and Japan, but this did not stop him from trenchant criticism of Japanese behaviour. He believed, for example, that Japan intended genocide; “It is a part of the Japanese policy of race extermination,” he wrote, “by which they hope to destroy all Koreans” (191). Yi-sup Hong sees Mackenzie's book as presenting readers with “a breathless feeling of the great wave of international power politics which surged over us half a century ago and which still rushes toward us with resounding roars” (16).

King Kojong might have come to love the Russians, but some powerful people around him did not, and the Tae-won Kun was one of them. In 1866 two of his colleagues, Nam Chong-sam and Hong Qong-ju, both of whom were Catholics, presented the Regent with a plan to keep the Russians from gaining too much influence. Their idea,

like that of Li Hongzhang, involved an alliance between Korea and two other European powers, Britain and France. Whilst the Tae-won Kun had initially thought the plan was a good one, he had second thoughts soon afterwards, perhaps after being reminded of the “Silk Letter” incident. Instead of adopting the plan he ordered an outright persecution of Christians, and his two advisers were amongst the first to be executed. In 1866 “nine French Catholic priests and some 8000 Korean converts were executed” (Breen & Gustaveson 40). To be fair, it has to be said that Yi Ha-un was under great pressure from conservative court elements, and, given his character, it is not surprising that he backtracked. The Tai-won Kun, Mackenzie believed, “had the idea that Christians favoured the coming of the foreigner, and so he turned his wrath on them” (18). The same year he informed the Russians that Korea was not interested in opening trade relations with them. The French, whose priests had been amongst the slain, sent some warships and six hundred men to the Korean coasts, where their soldiers landed, captured and looted a few coastal towns, then advanced on Kanghwa, a royal city, and occupied it, too (October 19, 1866). The Tae-won Kun reacted by sending Korean troops to attack the French in overwhelming numbers, and in November they inflicted a defeat on the invaders at the battle of Mt. Chongjok, which caused the French to withdraw from Korean territory. The Tae-won Kun then calmly ordered the persecutions to resume, and at the same time rejected a Japanese offer to mediate.

During these turbulent years King Kojong came of age. As a person, he seems to have been a bewildering mixture of character traits, at least according to Europeans who had met him or interacted with him. The Austro-Hungarian adventurer-priest

Monsignor Count Vay de Vaya,<sup>88</sup> who had an audience with then-Emperor Kojong in 1902, wrote that while Kojong was “more than a despot,” he also noted that “the face is kind and his expression benevolent,” a description borne out by both portraits and photographs. Whether Vay de Vaya used the word “benevolent” in the Confucian sense he doesn’t say, but if he had then he would have been paying Kojong a huge compliment, benevolence being a gentleman’s most important virtue. Vay de Vaya further observed “I cannot imagine him to be a man of strong likes and dislikes, and his shyness approaches timidity” (Neff n.p.). Things were not that simply explained; as Confucius informs us in his *Analects*, “When to act is difficult, is it any wonder that one is loath to speak?” (112). That Kojong was shy with foreigners may simply have been due to the fact that he could not directly communicate with them, or that he did not know their customs well enough to feel relaxed or confident in their presence. Moreover Kojong, in his later years, would do everything in his power to resist the Japanese, even when he was physically threatened and more or less abandoned by members of his court and the foreigners he had cultivated. He fought as well as he could to maintain Korea’s sovereignty, and whilst he could indeed be hesitant, it would be wrong to say that he lacked courage or patriotism. He had to deal with so many situations for which his upbringing did not prepare him and which even a more forceful personality would have found daunting and bewildering. In some of the photographs Kojong, especially in those where he wears Western dress, looks rather stiff and self-conscious, but his expression is certainly mild, open and intelligent and his bearing dignified.

8. Otto, count Vay de Vaya und Luskod (1863-1948) travelled widely in Asia both in his capacity as a priest and simply as an adventurer. In addition to writing *Empires and Emperors of Russia, China, Korea and Japan: Notes and Recollections* (English translation published by John Murray, 1906) he went to the United States where he helped with missions to the poor in Chicago and wrote *The Inner Life of the United States* (1908).

Kojong, fortunately or unfortunately, depending on who was voicing an opinion about it, had married a very strong, able and intelligent woman of noble birth, Min Myong-song, who now vied with the Regent for power over the King, and whose influence was so great that Kojong was usually inclined to follow her advice, side-lining the Tae-won Kun and making him hate the Queen and her family. In 1872 King Kojong, strongly supported by his wife, had asserted his control and the Tae-won Kun had been forced to retire to his country house. Curiously enough, at this early stage of the conflict between himself and the Mins he blamed not the Queen directly for his demotion, but one of her relatives, Min Sung-ho. In 1874 Min Sung-ho received a parcel in the post which, when he opened it, exploded, killing Min, his infant son, and the child's nanny. The sender remained anonymous, but rumours had it that the Tae-won Kun probably knew about the incident, although his direct involvement has never been ascertained.

From the beginning of the marriage Queen Min had been quite prepared to take direct action against the influence of the Tae-won Kun, which meant actively promoting the interests of her own family. Min Yung-ho, a brother, became Prime Minister, and Min Yung-ik, her nephew, obtained the post of Ambassador to the United States of America. Her nephew Prince Min Yong-hwan became one of Korea's most distinguished diplomats and patriots.<sup>9</sup> Min Yung-ik was also in command of the Royal Guards Regiment, the same one to which Hamel had been seconded two centuries earlier. Frederick Mackenzie noted that Kojong, "usually weak and easily moved, really loved the Queen, refused to be

9. Prince Yong-hwan Min (1861-1905), also Kojong's cousin, was a supporter of reforms. He travelled to Russia (1896) and served as Ambassador Plenipotentiary at the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria (1897). Because Emperor Kojong wished to give Korea a recognised presence in Europe, he was subsequently made Korean Minister Plenipotentiary in Europe. In 1905 he committed suicide to protest the signing of the protectorate treaty with Japan. For details see Michael Finch, *Min Yong-hwan: A Political Biography* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002).

influenced away from her, and was dominated by her strong character" (25). It was not, again, as simple as that; Kojong, who was isolated as much as possible by his father, "had not a single friend or counsellor" (Simbirtseva n. p.) outside the Tae-won Kun's circle, and when he married her it was Queen Min who filled the gap. A contemporary Korean historian, Cho'e Byong-ik, is not so kind; he dismisses Queen Min as "an embodiment of all the evils of the decaying dynasty" (Simbirtseva n.p.). Another Korean writer, whilst critical, admits that Queen Min was "unusually bright and cunning" and that she had Korea's interests at heart in her resistance to the Japanese (Kim 26).

There is only one photograph purporting to be a portrait of Queen Min, but its authenticity is questionable, and some scholars believe it is merely a photograph of a lady-in-waiting, so we cannot be sure of her appearance,<sup>1100</sup> at least photographically. Fortunately, when foreigners, particularly women, met the Queen, they did not forget her. Lillias Underwood<sup>1111</sup> wrote of the Queen's "charming play of expression while in conversation," and how "no-one could help reading force, intellect and strength of character in that face;" she also describes the Queen's "somewhat sharp features and brilliant piercing eyes" (89, 91, q. in Simbirtseva, n.p.). Elizabeth Greathouse, the mother of King Kojong's American lawyer Clarence Greathouse, actually dined at the palace a few days before the murderous attack, and was a friend of Queen Min's, too. She described her as "a gentle, pretty creature...highly intelligent" (Neville, n.p.n.). As Isabella Bird

10. The photograph in question was reproduced in Homer B. Hulbert's book *The Passing of Korea* (1909), and is still in dispute. Tatiana Simbirtseva believes that there are no photographs of Queen Min, partially because royalty and nobility was rarely photographed. However, to counter that assertion, there are many photographs of King Kojong and I have seen at least two of the Tae-won Kun, not to mention several of Emperor Sunjong and several royal family group photographs.

11. Lillias Underwood (1851-1921) was an American doctor and the wife of Horace Underwood, a missionary who founded Yonsei University. She wrote a biography of her husband, *Underwood of Korea* (1917), and a fascinating book of her own life as a medical missionary, *Fifteen Years Under the Top-Knot* (1904).

put it aptly, “Her Majesty has few equals among her countrymen for shrewdness and sagacity” (274). Helen Maxima Heard, daughter of the American Minister Resident,<sup>12</sup> who found the King “almost handsome in his gorgeous red and gold gown,” was rather less complimentary in her account of Queen Min. “The Queen is small, not pretty,” she wrote in her journal (October 17, 1892); “she was affable and talkative,” but Miss Heard noticed that “her teeth were horrible— black and irregular.” She continued: “her face was as white as this paper with powder and paste, and she also wore a huge chignon minus the wooden thing.” As for Crown Prince Yi Ch’ok, “[he] is an idiot, or looks like one” (Gray, n.p.n.).

A drawing made from life, the only such portrait in existence, was made in 1895 by one Ishizuka, a Japanese artist; it shows the King and Queen receiving Count Kaoru Inoue, the Japanese minister-resident. What is interesting about this drawing is that it is Queen Min who seems to be in charge; the Japanese envoys are facing her, perhaps addressing her, whilst King Kojong is looking at his wife, listening rather than being listened to. She has a strong face, her dark hair is pulled back, and she is wearing a sort of crown only slightly smaller than that of her husband; Lillias Underwood noted that the Queen “wore her hair like all Korean ladies, drawn tightly and very smoothly away from the face and knotted rather low at the back of the head” (q. in Simbirtseva n. p.). Two attendants, both women, are seated at the King’s left. For all these contemporary accounts by people who knew Queen Min well, Donald Keene nonetheless insists that she was “an arrogant and corrupt woman” (517), contrary to the official Korean statements that

12. This was Augustine Heard (d.1905), appointed by President Benjamin Harrison in 1890. Correspondence from Korea between Heard, his daughter Helena Maxima “Max,” and others has been presented in an interesting paper by Robert M. Gray, “Max and Max.”

she was “our beloved and venerated queen....cruelly assassinated” (Keene 516) and her subsequent quasi-canonisation as a great Korean patriot.

Queen Min did not simply tolerate foreigners; she encouraged Kojong to learn from them, a notion which ran completely against the beliefs of the Tae-won Kun and his advisers. In 1880 Kojong sent Kim Hong-ip to Japan for the purpose of studying the way the Japanese were rapidly industrialising; unfortunately Kim seems to have been more influenced by his meetings with the Chinese Minister-Resident in Tokyo, and when he reported his findings they were negatively critical and recommended that if Korea wished to modernise, the model should be China, not Japan. However, King Kojong was nonetheless “deeply interested in new and unknown things” (Simbirtseva n.p.), which made him more open than many of his ministers to foreign innovations and philosophies. One area where Japanese expertise was welcome was the military sphere; an example was the invitation from King Kojong and Queen Min received by the Japanese military attaché, Lieutenant Reizo Horimoto, to advise the Korean government on how to modernise the army (Keene 372). On the intellectual front, Korean scholars became interested in the writings of Yukichi Fukuzawa, who had travelled widely and who had written a book on the West.

The result of the new openness was that treaties were ratified with Russia and Germany, relations established with Britain and France; foreigners began to come to Korea, first the diplomats and ministers, then traders, businessmen, missionaries and others. King Kojong seems especially to have favoured Americans, giving key positions to “dozens” of them, believing that the United States, as a Christian country far away over the seas,

had Korea's best interests at heart and "would treat Korea fairly and honourably" (Chang, n.p.n.). The first American Resident was one Lucius Foote, who arrived in 1883 invested with the resounding title of Resident Minister Plenipotentiary Extraordinary; when that was reduced to Resident Minister, Foote became very offended and resigned a year and a half later. The fact that all treaties with foreign countries provided that any lawbreakers would be tried by courts of their own countries, not Korean courts, made it easier for the foreigners to operate, but caused a great deal of resentment amongst Koreans. A further, if limited, example of "modernisation" was Kojong's decision to install telephones in the palace; by 1896 there were three of them, all exclusively for the use of the royal family, although another was later connected to the Prime Minister's office.<sup>1133</sup> He also liked cars; a large royal garage, which can still be seen today, was erected on the grounds of the Changdokkung Palace, and at least part of the palace was served by electricity.

Quite apart from policy differences between the now ex-Regent and the Queen, the whole thing began to turn into a very nasty family feud between the Yis and the Mins, with disastrous consequences on both sides as its intensity grew over the next few years. On the one side was the Tae-won Kun, who hated Queen Min, her relatives, and all foreigners (unless, of course, he was trying to make deals with them); his spies were everywhere and even though he was no longer Regent he exercised power through fear, intimidation, and even murder from behind the scenes. On the other side was Queen Min and her family, more than once the target of the Tae-won Kun's intrigues, yet thwarting his power through her husband, who was still the King of a monarchy which wielded the

13. For details, see Andrei Lankov, "Telephone Arrives in Korea," *Korea Times*, November 22, 2002. Kojong also used it to take part in funeral rituals for his second wife, Lady Om, and ex-Emperor Sunjong was connected by telephone to his father's tomb in 1919 so he could call him twice a day and mourn him.

ultimate authority. When their son Yi Ch'ok, who later became Emperor Sunjong, was born in 1874, the Queen's influence increased even further.<sup>1144</sup> King Kojong was caught in the middle, trying to balance respect for his father with loyalty to the woman he loved, and he was not happy about it. For him, the Confucian concept of *hsiao*, love of a son towards his parents, clashed with the love he had for his wife. "Meng Yi Tzu asked about being filial," the *Analects* state; "The Master answered, 'Never fail to comply'" (63). Confucius was not quite as helpful when it came to dealing with one's wife; "In one's household," he proclaimed, "it is the women and the small men that are difficult to deal with. If you let them get too close, they become insolent, if you keep them at a distance, they complain" (148).

The Tae-won Kun tried to regain his power in 1881 with a plot to replace Kojong with another one of his own sons, Prince Yi Ui-hwa, but it was discovered and he narrowly escaped prison or even worse punishment, thanks again to Kojong's filial piety. Meanwhile, there was, for the Tae-won Kun, always the problem of Queen Min, and dealing with it became his obsession. He could no doubt have theoretically justified his hostility to the Queen by recalling Confucius's dictum that one of the seven "evils" which a wife could commit was disobedience to a parent-in-law, but since quoting Confucius obviously wouldn't have worked, the only answer to the dilemma of Queen Min was to do away with her somehow, a practice which Confucius did not sanction. In December

14. Kojong's first son, Prince Wan Hwa-kun (1868-1880), had been the offspring of a concubine, Lady Yi Yong-ho (1843-1928). He died under mysterious circumstances amid unfounded and unproved rumours that Queen Min had done away with him. Min's first child by Kojong was a son who was born and died in 1871. After 1874 there were no more sons born to royal concubines. The King had other consorts, who were, in order: Lady Yi Nae-an-dang (1847-1914); Lady Chang Kwi-in; Lady Om Kwi-bi (1854-1911), whom Kojong married after Queen Min's death; Lady Yi Kwanghwa-dang (1885-1977); Lady Yang Boknyong-dang (1882-1929) and lastly, Lady Samchak-dang (1889-1970). From these consorts came two other children, Princess Yi Chin-wang (1877-1955) and Princess Yi Tokhye (1912-1989).

1881 the Tae-won Kun got another chance with the so-called Soldiers' Riot. Some soldiers were furious because their rice rations were three months in arrears, others had been demobilised due to the reforms proposed by Horimoto. King Kojong ordered that the soldiers be given a month's ration of rice immediately, and entrusted the Director of the Tribute Bureau (which handled the exchequer), Min Kyom-ho, whose elder brother was Queen Min's adoptive brother, to carry out the order. Min duly delegated the task to his clerks, but one of them proceeded to sell the good rice and give the soldiers millet (which was cheap) laced with bran instead. The enraged soldiers took matters into their own hands and marched to Min's house in protest, assuming that he was the person who had sold the rice for his own profit. Min had the police arrest some of the soldiers' leaders and ordered them gaoled. Foolishly, he then announced that they would be executed the next day as an example to the rest of them that mutinous behaviour would not be tolerated.

The soldiers did not disperse permanently, as Min hoped they would. Instead, they came back, attacked his house, broke into it, and smashed his furniture. Then they raided the nearest armoury for modern rifles, after which they stormed the gaol and let their fellow-soldiers out. Min, who had not been at home when the attack on his house took place, panicked, first by fleeing to the royal palace and calling out the army, which did nothing, and then by appealing to the Tae-won Kun to sort the situation out, which he proceeded to do by first meeting the leaders of the riot and expressing his solidarity with them by actually appointing his own agents to keep the rioters' momentum going! Then he spread rumours through spies that the Queen had angered the spirit-world because she had allowed foreigners to come to Korea. This action shrewdly tapped into ordinary

Koreans' fear of retaliation from the spirits, and no doubt the Tae-won Kun had shamans who were prepared to help disseminate that fear. At the same time, a more practical and physical event in the form of a fiscal deficit struck Korea, and to top it off there had been severe crop-failure and famine the same year.

All these things combined to frighten and anger the populace, and foreigners were the obvious scapegoats. An enormous and hostile mob, which included disaffected soldiers, now marched on the royal palace, murdering some government officials, including Min Kyom-ho and other royal ministers on the way there, setting houses on fire and causing general mayhem in the streets of Seoul. The unfortunate Horimoto was one of their first foreign victims. At the palace the royal guards panicked, some deciding to join the rioters, whilst others ran to warn Queen Min that the rabble was at the gates. Mackenzie gives us the details of what happened next:

Queen Min was calm and collected. She quickly changed clothes with one of her serving women, who somewhat resembled her in appearance. The serving woman, dressed in the robes of the Queen, was given a draught of poison and died.

The Queen hurried out through a side-way in peasant woman's dress, guarded by a water-carrier, Yi Yung-ik, who for his services that day rose till he became Prime Minister of the land. When the mob broke into the Queen's private apartments, they were shown the corpse and told that it was the Queen, who had died rather than face them. (27)

The Queen had managed to save herself, but things did not stop there. The mob now moved on to the Japanese consulate, which they attacked and entered, looking for the Japanese minister-resident, Yoshimoto Hanabusa,<sup>1155</sup> so they could lynch him. Here they encountered resistance; Hanabusa, accompanied by some of his staff and others who had not been either beaten up or killed, actually managed to fight his way through the seething mob whilst other rioters were busy setting the building on fire. “They battled their way through the city to the coast,” Mackenzie relates, and “set to sea in a junk” when they got there, after which “they were picked up at sea by a British survey ship, the *Flying Fish*, and conveyed to Nagasaki” (26). Emperor Meiji later decorated the British sailors for their timely help.

The Tae-won Kun must have “laughed in his heart” once more; for all he knew he had managed to get rid of Queen Min and drive out the Japanese in one fell swoop. It must have looked to him very much like come-back time, especially when Kojong, likely frightened at what had happened to his wife, allowed him to return to his former glory, and even issued an edict saying that from now on all government decisions must be approved by the Tae-won Kun. The soldiers were rewarded by the Tae-won Kun issuing orders that all their demands must be met and their imprisoned comrades released. The Tae-won Kun even arranged for the “dead” Queen to be given a state funeral, so sure was he that he had won the day and broken the power of the Min family. Meanwhile King Kojong sent a delegation to Tokyo led by Pak Yong-hyo, of whom we shall hear more later, which conveyed his abject apologies for what had happened. In December they

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15. Yoshimoto Hanabusa (1842-1917) served as Assistant Foreign Minister under Taneomi Soejima, and had been entrusted to re-establish a permanent trading outpost for the Japanese in Pusan.

were received by Emperor Meiji who told them that he was sorry they were about to leave and that of course he wished to be Kojong’s friend.

As the Tae-won Kun basked in his triumph over the Mins and their foreign friends, Hanabusa, now back in Japan, was preparing to retaliate. Emperor Meiji and his government were not best pleased with the way their people had been treated, although under the circumstances, as we’ve just seen, the Emperor himself was ready to be conciliatory. Nevertheless, just over three weeks later Hanabusa returned to Seoul with a squad of Japanese soldiers, demanding that those who had murdered Japanese officials be punished, that the Japanese who had died be buried properly, and that the Korean government pay a large monetary compensation.<sup>1166</sup> He gave the Koreans three days to comply. Hanabusa also requested in no uncertain terms for a widening of trade privileges with Korea as a goodwill gesture, all of which were granted by the Tae-won Kun and ratified by King Kojong in the Treaty of Chemulp’ o (August 30, 1882).

At this point readers may be wondering how the tables could be reversed on the Koreans with a handful of Japanese troops and a determined minister, but when four thousand Chinese soldiers arrived in Seoul the situation really blew up in the Tae-won Kun’s face. These soldiers were probably requested by King Kojong at the urging of his wife, who had written to him from her hiding-place suggesting that China, as Korea’s suzerain power, should be involved (Keene 376). The Tae-won Kun’s reaction was to humble himself before the Chinese and shift the blame for the outbreaks onto anyone except himself. The Chinese authorities now decided to throw a party for the Tae-won

16. It is only fair to note that in 1884 Emperor Meiji wrote to King Kojong and told him that all of the money paid by the Koreans under the treaty would be returned apart from ¥100,000. The Emperor felt that it would be better to offer a financial incentive to Korea if peace was to be secured properly (for details, see Keene 388-89)

Kun to celebrate, as they had him believe, the restoration of order and good government.

Again, Frederick Mackenzie takes up the story:

The Chinese, with elaborate courtesy, invited [the Tae-won Kun] to a banquet and to inspect their ships. There was one ship in particular, to which they called his honourable attention. They begged him to go aboard and note the wonders of the apartments below. The Regent went. Once below he found the door shut, and could hear the ropes being thrown off as the ship hastily departed. It was in vain for him to call for his attendants and warriors waiting on the shore. (26)

Another version of the story is that the Tae-won Kun was not invited aboard the ship, but actually seized by Chinese soldiers, unceremoniously tossed into a palanquin, and taken to the waiting vessel, which then got under way (Keene 376). The Tae-won Kun must have panicked: what were the Chinese going to do with him? Why had they kidnapped him? Who had done this to him? The ship sailed for China, and when the terrified Tae-won Kun disembarked he was brought before Li Hongzhang, who had engineered the whole thing, he was informed, after questioning by Li himself, that he would be put in confinement until further notice. In fact, Li made it clear that he considered the whole Korean farrago to have been due to the Tae-won Kun's ambition and mismanagement. Yi Ha-un would remain in China for the next three years, living in one room in a small town near Beijing, under round-the-clock surveillance by Chinese soldiers. One hopes that now King Kojong "laughed in his heart" for a while. The Tae-won Kun returned to Korea as he had left, on a Chinese ship and under the watchful eye of Yuan Shih-k'ai,

who was appointed Director-General Resident in Korea.

Li Hongzhang's move checked, if not mated, the Japanese; he had piggybacked his soldiers in on Hanabusa's back and, at least temporarily, reasserted Chinese authority, a move which of course infuriated the Japanese. As Frederick Mackenzie noted in a chapter entitled "Japan Makes a False Move," to the Japanese "it seemed mortifying, therefore, that the Hanabusa incident served to strengthen China's authority" (28). It did not, however, do much for King Kojong and the Koreans, who were now helpless to stop the Japanese. For the moment the presence of such a considerable body of Chinese troops, far more in number than any Japanese contingent, made the Japanese more inclined to strengthen their diplomatic hand before making any military moves. "These determined little men," as Mackenzie called them contemptuously (28) started to demand even more concessions from Kojong and his government, working with pro-Japanese elements within the royal court and suggesting that in fact the Japanese were really there to help Korea separate itself from Beijing's suzerainty, that they would guarantee Korean independence.

The new Japanese Resident in Seoul was Shinichiro Takezoe, whom Mackenzie called "timid and hesitating....but like many timid folk, acting at times with great rashness" (28), Takezoe seems to have been a deliberate choice because he was not known for an aggressive outlook, and he brought the welcome news that the indemnity paid to Japan would be commuted, as noted above. He also brought the King "a stand of Japanese-made rifles," and told Kojong, who listened politely without committing himself, that he should stand up to China (Mackenzie 30-1). According to Mackenzie, however, trouble started again because of the actions of Takezoe's "stronger and rougher" colleague,

Shumamura (28), who intrigued with pro-Japanese reformist Koreans, particularly Kim Ok-kyun, and persuaded them that China was a threat to Korean sovereignty. According to Mackenzie, “they repeated the rumour that a secret treaty had actually been signed by the King, recognizing Chinese supremacy in more binding form than ever before” (29). Some of Kojong’s family were in the plot as well as some cabinet ministers, but the real leaders on the Korean side were Kim Ok-kyun, whom Mackenzie thought “an ambitious and ruthless politician” and Pak Yong-hyo, another one of Kojong’s relatives and, as Mackenzie put it, “a sincere reformer” (29).

On November 4, 1884 Pak Yong-hyo hosted a meeting of the “progressives,” known as the Kaehwadang party, at his house, to which he had also invited a member of the Japanese legation. They decided that they would overthrow the government and force the King to accept them as leaders instead. The same night the new Postmaster-General, Hong Yong-sik, who, according to Mackenzie, was “keen on foreign ways” and “hungry for power” (29), decided to throw a dinner-party to celebrate his appointment, but early in the evening his guests were startled by a loud fire alarm coming from a neighbouring house. One of them was Min Yong-ik, a nephew of Queen Min, who went out to see what was happening and was “attacked with a sword by a man in Japanese clothes” (Keene 389). According to Mackenzie, this was all part of the plot, and his version of the story has Min being attacked by five men, from whom “he received seven sword slashes, all great ones, two all but taking his head off.” He was saved by the timely arrival of Dr. Allen, an American medical missionary, “who did such good work on his patient that night that King and Court became friends of the missionaries for ever on.”

Meanwhile, Pak Yong-hyo and some of his friends went as fast as they could to the palace and told King Kojong that he and the Queen must leave immediately with them because they were in great danger, which they did, and headed to another one of the royal palaces, which was soon encircled by Japanese soldiers, about twenty students who supported reform, and some hundreds of Korean troops commanded by General Han Kyu-chik. Pak seems to have convinced the King that the Chinese were on their way to kidnap him, but the Chief Eunuch had other ideas; he persuaded General Han that the best course would be to actually summon the Chinese, who were under the command of General Yuan Shi’h-kai, the man who would eventually dispose of the Manchu Dynasty and reign for a very short time in 1916 as self-proclaimed Emperor of China. Now the students acted; they persuaded General Han and the Chief Eunuch to come outside, attacked them, and killed both of them. Under threat from the students the terrified King Kojong now found himself forced to summon to the palace ministers from the *Sadaedang* (Serving the Great Party) group, whom Pak and his allies considered reactionaries. When they arrived, they too were massacred. Pak and his comrades had now virtually seized power; they appointed a cabinet and began their work, beginning with a number of edicts which they forced the King to sign. Kojong now demanded to see Takezoe, who delayed his coming because he feared a diplomatic incident if things were to go wrong, but eventually he turned up just as Pak and his friends finished their work. “All kinds of reforms were commanded,” Mackenzie wrote, “and the land was made on paper, in a hour, into a modern state” (25). It looked as if the reform movement had triumphed.

Next morning King Kojong was permitted to go home, along with an escort consisting of Japanese soldiers and some of the newly-appointed members of the self-installed reform government. At this point, as so often, things now began to go wrong. Many Koreans were not ready to become citizens of a “modern state,” or, if they were, they didn’t want the Japanese running it from the sidelines. They attacked Japanese people in the streets and a huge crowd hostile to Pak’s reformers converged on the palace. They also cut off the Japanese Legation, so the soldiers could not get any more ammunition than the twenty-five rounds they already had. Pak and his group had no option but to stay in the palace, but on December 7 the Chinese arrived; Yuan Shih-kai, answering a message smuggled out by Queen Min, now “approached the palace gates and sent in his [visiting] card, demanding admission.” The Japanese refused. Yuan now warned them that he had two thousand Chinese soldiers, three thousand Koreans, and a great multitude of people with him, who would attack when he gave the word. Takezoe counselled non-resistance, but was overruled by So Jai-pil,<sup>1177</sup> the youthful commander of the Korean troops in the palace, as well as his own military attaché, who was spoiling for a fight.

Yuan now ordered an attack, and the Chinese troops moved forward towards the walls, intending to scale them and get into the palace. Now everything happened quickly; one of the King’s guards cut down Hong Yong-sik, the former Postmaster-General who had been named Prime Minister by the reformers, and the Korean soldiers in the palace made themselves scarce, abandoning the Japanese and the students, who, despite the setback, kept on fighting furiously. “They claimed,” Mackenzie reported, “that they shot 17. So Jai-pil, according to Mackenzie, who knew him well, was only seventeen at the time. He had been one of the young men sent to Japan to study military skills, and his demonstration of these before Kojong had so impressed the King that he resolved to have his soldiers all trained that way. He made So into an instant Colonel of the Palace Guard. He later became one of Korea’s most distinguished political figures, and we will meet him again.

fully three hundred Chinese” (37). Now outnumbered seven to one, the Japanese lost over thirty of their one hundred and fifty men (Keene 389) in the Chinese attack, and even though the palace gates still held the defenders were getting desperately short of ammunition. Here is Mackenzie’s account of what happened next:

“Let us charge the Chinese with our bayonets,” cried So, the Japanese captain joyfully assented, but Takezoi [*sic*] now asserted his authority. He pulled from his pocket his Imperial warrants giving him supreme command of the Japanese in Korea and read them to the captain. “The Emperor has placed you under my command,” he declared,

“Refuse to obey me and you refuse to obey your Emperor. I command you to call your men together and let us all make our way back to the Legation.”

There was nothing for them to do but obey. (37)

Together with about three hundred people, the Japanese escaped from the palace; they “crept quietly around by the back wall” (38) and holed up in the Legation, but there they ran into a hail of bullets from the soldiers in the building, who thought they were being attacked, and two people were killed. Someone had the presence of mind to sound a bugle, which the Japanese in the Legation heard and ceased firing, after which So and the rest were allowed inside. The next afternoon all of them, including Takezoe and the people in the Legation with their families, fought their way through hostile mobs out of Seoul, even passing a Chinese camp from which a cannon opened fire on them. On December 8 they managed to battle through to Inch’on, and the next day Takezoe was

the amazed recipient of a letter from King Kojong, whom the Chinese had rescued, offering sympathy and suggesting that he come back to Seoul and talk things over! More ominously though, Kojong also demanded that any reformist Koreans now with the Japanese should be given up, but this the Japanese honourably refused to do.

On December 11 Takezoe and his companions, including the Koreans, left for Nagasaki instead of returning to Seoul. Indeed, to quote Mackenzie's chapter-heading, it seemed that this time Japan had really made "a false move." The situation was a mess.<sup>1188</sup> Kojong, who had been forced to lend his nominal support to the reformers when they had occupied his palace, now turned against them, and as soon as it appeared that they had been used by the Japanese in their power-play there was no way out for them. So, who had hoped for Japanese help, was disgusted by the apparent lack of interest the Japanese government showed in their plight, and now realised that they were certainly not going to get any help from Japan if it meant war with China. He left for the United States, where he learned English, became a citizen, and eventually took a medical degree, calling himself Dr. Jaisohn. Kim Ok-kyun had a more complex fate. He knew Japan well, having lived there before the fiasco of 1884, and in December of the same year he found himself back there; Mackenzie tells us that Kim was "the unpardonable offender," for whom there could be "no forgiveness" (40). The Japanese refused to extradite him on King Kojong's request, after which "assassins followed him to Japan, but could find no opportunity to kill him" (41). Donald Keene states that the assassins were "provided with orders signed by King Kojong" (473) and that they were also to murder Pak Yong-

hyo; the King's actual role in this and the genuineness of the orders has, however, been questioned. In any case, Kim was temporarily saved by the Japanese foreign minister, Count Kaoru Inoue, but the Japanese promised to send Kim back, or at least to expel him from Japan. After two years more or less hiding out on distant Chichijima Island, Kim was, as Mackenzie puts it, "induced to visit Shanghai," ostensibly to meet Li Hongzhang, but instead was murdered in a carefully-arranged plot. A Chinese ship took Kim's body to Chemulpo, where "it was cut up, and exhibited in different parts of the land as the body of a traitor" (41).

The result of this almost comic-opera scenario was that the Koreans now found themselves unable to trust anyone. The Japanese had used them by pretending to support Korean "independence," the Chinese seemed to have decided to reassert their ancient overlordship, and the other foreigners, whilst professing benevolent feelings, had not intervened to stop the bloodshed, but had waited on the sidelines like vultures deciding whether to start dismembering a dead animal. King Kojong had proved wavering, indecisive, and completely incapable of asserting any authority; to be fair to him, he had been bullied and threatened, and his life may well have been in danger, but many Koreans probably expected that their King would, somehow, find a way out of the bad situation, and he had not done so. The Queen, who was usually seen as a Korean patriot, had called in Yuan and his soldiers rather than cede anything to the Japanese; she believed she was choosing the lesser of two evils, but her opposition to the Japanese would ultimately seal her own fate and that of the Yi Dynasty.

Frederick Mackenzie made no bones about his sympathy with the Koreans and

18. It is doubtful whether anyone noticed, but at about this time Korea had its first European royal visitor. The crisis in Korea prompted Count Ulisse Barbolani, the Italian minister in China, to send a warship, the *Vettor Pisani*, to Korea. Its commander was Prince Tommaso de Savoia, Duke of Genoa, brother of King Umberto I.

his disgust with the way they had been treated by Western powers; his Preface to *Korea's Fight for Freedom* opens by calling Korea “a nation that had been ticketed and docketed by world statesmen as degenerate and cowardly, revealing heroism of a very high order” (5). Mackenzie was referring here to the 1919 peaceful uprising after ex-Emperor Kojong’s funeral and the subsequent violent reprisals carried out by the Japanese, but most foreign powers were no more helpful in 1884 than they would be then. Writing in 1920, Mackenzie called on “the protests of the civilized world” to stop Japan’s “avowed policy of assimilation,” its “attempt to turn the people of Korea into Japanese— an inferior brand of Japanese, a serf race, speaking the language and following the customs of their overlords, and serving them” (6). He was definitely not anti-Japanese *per se*, but nevertheless convinced “that the policy of Imperial expansion adopted by Japan” (10) was to blame, and concluded “I plead for Freedom and Justice. Will the world hear?” (11). In 1919 it did not, but in fact it had been somewhat hard of hearing even before that.

One element which made the powder-keg explode again a few years later was the existence of a group known as *Tonghak*, which could be translated as “Eastern learning.” Starting in the early years of Kojong’s reign, it was a practical application of Confucian principles to the art of government, together with a mystical side derived from Buddhism, Taoism and a strong Shamanic element.<sup>1199</sup> The movement also advocated the minimisation of Western influences, and a return to what its founders believed to be genuine Korean beliefs, hence the name “Eastern” learning. Many people, including ordinary people and peasants, which was what would make the movement seem dangerous to the authorities, 19, Shamanism has been in Korea for some five thousand years, surviving many attempts to suppress it, and has only recently been allowed to flourish again. A basic Shamanistic belief is that all our lives are influenced by spirits, whether we know it or not, and that ceremonies must be carried out by shamans to connect with the spirit-world. An excellent account of it may be found in Alan Covell, *Folk Art and Magic: Shamanism in Korea* (Seoul: Hollym, 1986).

connected with Tonghak and began to see the Korean administration as corrupt and incompetent, with Confucianism reduced to a bewildering number of meaningless ceremonial activities. Here we should explain that in Confucianism, rites and ritual were very important, because they were seen as the accumulation of the wisdom of the ages as well as the rules which governed human life. As D. C. Lau remarks in his introduction to *The Analects*, “Though there is no guarantee that observance of the rites necessarily leads, in every case, to behaviour that is right, the chances are it will, in fact, do so” (20). What Tonghak would show people was that the rites had simply become formal ceremonies, not a guide for a way of life any more, and that one could pay lip-service to them without having any intention to actually use them in human actions at all, let alone work as a guide to good conduct. The movement was not exactly Confucian, given its founder’s attitude towards Confucius, presumably because although that philosophy was foreign, it was not “Western,” whereas Christianity was. It was the latter, at least according to the interpretation of some recent scholars, that became the “chief enemy” of Tonghak (Keene 473).

The leader of Tonghak as a non-violent political movement was himself a former Confucian scholar, Ch’oe Che’u (1824-1864), who had not been allowed, because of his radical views, to pursue his government career. He began by simply “dropping out;” he made a bonfire of his Confucian library, abandoned his wealthy home, and went on a decade-long pilgrimage all around Korea. It appears that he had a mystical experience during the course of his wanderings, which told him that God had made him a special agent who was to bring a message to people that the world as they knew it was about

to end. He thought that human beings and the divine were linked, and that therefore all people were equal in the sight of God. This idea, of course, appealed to the common people, many of whom now began to have serious thoughts above their station and joined the movement. Ch'oe Che'u was arrested and executed in 1864. It was not the end of Tonghak, for Ch'oe Che'u had an able successor and disciple, Ch'oe Si-hyong, who took the movement underground and kept on quietly recruiting supporters, but it was not until 1893 that they would come into open rebellion and make demands that the Government would have no choice but to meet with repression and help from the wrong kind of foreigners.

One of their first demands was that the memory of their founder be rehabilitated, and a group of them went to Seoul, where they threw themselves down flat on their faces before the Changdokkung Palace and stayed there for three days, hoping that King Kojong would grant their request, which in the end he didn't, but they had made their point, and went on to demonstrate outside foreign embassies. A Japanese observer on the legation staff, Mutsu Munemitsu (later Foreign Minister and ambassador to the United States), who was an eye-witness to the Tonghak uprising which soon followed, simply described them as "a group of insurgents" who "pillaged homes and expelled local officials" in two provinces, Cholla and Ch'ung-ch'ong, and Keene, who quotes him, notes that recent scholars considered it "essentially a peasant movement" (Keene 476). King Kojong, or some of his advisers, might at this point have remembered Confucius's observation that "common people are the touchstone by which the Three Dynasties were kept to the straight path" (135), but it was the common people that the court now

seemed to fear most.

In fact, whatever the definition of the movement, the Japanese were taking no chances, and neither was Yuan Shih-kai. Japanese diplomats sharpened their swords and loaded their revolvers, whilst two Chinese warships sailed for Inch'on. As a large crowd of demonstrators closed in on Seoul from surrounding rural areas, the Korean government appears to have, once again, panicked, and Chinese help was asked for. The Japanese, who were well-informed about what was happening, reacted to this by requesting that their government send troops to Korea who would "protect the lives of resident Japanese," as the rescript from Emperor Meiji stated (Keene 476), but also stipulated that attempts should be made to find a peaceful solution to the problem. However, the Japanese parliament did decide, after endless debating, to send some troops to Korea, but the Chinese, who seem to have developed new confidence in their own power as nominal suzerains, were sure that they could counter anything the Japanese did. "China despised Japan," Mackenzie observed, "and did not think it necessary to make any real preparations to meet her" (42). Indeed, Wang Fengzhao, the Chinese minister in Seoul, was reported by Munemitsu as thinking that the Japanese were "too debilitated internally to engage in conflict with another power," a view which the Japanese quite rightly found "foolish" (Keene 476). Now the Koreans had both powers claiming that they were intervening either to protect their own nationals or to help the Korean government deal with the Tonghaks. What in fact happened in the end was the Sino-Japanese War.

As China and Japan fired off diplomatic exchanges, threats, and peace proposals at each other, the whole cause of the intervention, the thirty-thousand strong Tonghak

advance on Seoul, which had even mauled a Chinese-led Korean force, petered out. Even Keisuke Otori, the Japanese Resident in Seoul, thought that his government no longer needed to send large numbers of troops to Korea, but as the Tonghak “threat” receded, both Japanese and Chinese soldiers remained where they were, the latter now numbering close to ten thousand. Marquis Hirobumi Ito, now Prime Minister, believed that Japan could best act by proposing a union of Chinese and Japanese troops to put down the now-harmless rebellion anyway, knowing full well that China would never consent to such a plan, for the simple reason that there was no need for it. The Japanese, after hearing what they knew they would hear from Beijing, determined to “go it alone” and help the Koreans restore order and good government. Otori now went to see King Kojong and told him that he should officially declare what sort of a state Korea was, either an independent country or a Qing vassal. At a second audience with the King he demanded that reforms be carried out under Japanese guidance and that the power of reactionary elements, known as the Sadaedang, be severely curtailed.

King Kojong was never at his best in a political crisis; it’s possible that, as Vay de Vaya observed, he did not actually feel particularly strongly about any of the issues which seemed to be forever raising their heads above any control he might have over them, but he was nonetheless deeply troubled by anything that remotely affected his own role as King. What Kojong did care about genuinely, too, was the welfare of Korea, and this perhaps lay at the root of all his troubles; his background and education would not have equipped him to deal with all the changes facing Asia at this crucial time, for Korea, unlike Japan and even China, was caught in a time-warp largely of its own making. In

fact Kojong, at least initially, was probably less well-informed about foreigners than King Hyojong had been when Hendrik Hamel and his party had shown up in Seoul two hundred and thirty years earlier. Kojong reacted now, in Keene’s words, “blaming himself for the crisis, expressing shame over the years of bad government and grief over the repeated internal revolts.” He declared Korea an independent state. He went even further, declaring that “his own lack of virtue” was equally to blame with the ineptitudes of his ministers (Keene 479), thus recognising the Confucian principle that “Not to mend one’s own ways when one has erred is to err indeed” (Confucius 136). Unfortunately, Kojong’s method of mending his ways was to allow the Japanese more power; he set up what we would now call a “Royal Commission” and simply commanded its members to consult with Otori on every question of reform it considered. Now Japan had what it wanted, and was ready to deal with China, because, as Count Matsukata, not a member of the government, told Prime Minister Ito, a war with China had Japanese public support, and that a troop withdrawal from Korea now “would lower Japan’s national prestige in the eyes of foreigners.” Matsukata even told Ito that he would “never again” have anything to do with him if he didn’t take the advice (Keene 479). Even Yukichi Fukuzawa, the prominent pro-Western Japanese intellectual, urged a war with China because, as Keene puts it, he thought that “the Chinese might benefit by the enlightenment that had been denied them by their obstinate Manchu rulers” (481), Fukuzawa would later write in his *Autobiography* (1899) that “our victorious war with China....was the result of perfect cooperation between the government and the people....I could hardly refrain from rising

up in delight” (335).<sup>2200</sup> This from the man who had told his readers with pride that he did not like the “militaristic trend” in the Japan of the 1860’s and had “decided that swords were unnecessary objects in my scheme of things” (164).

In the end, as the Japanese decided to go to war with China, Kojong was now faced with a demand from them to order the Chinese to leave, but, perhaps at Queen Min’s urging, he suddenly discovered he had a backbone and refused. It would not happen, he told Otori, until the Japanese also withdrew their army. The Japanese reacted by simply putting Seoul under their control, and occupied the palace for good measure, giving out that they had been shot at by Korean soldiers and had therefore to “guard” Changdokkung Palace. Keene, following official Japanese accounts, states that they were in fact fired upon (480). They now approached the seventy-three year old Tae-won Kun and offered to put him back in power, but the old man had finally, or so it seemed then, found the wisdom of his years and declined the honour, or at least “the responsibility,” according to Mackenzie (46). Keene, however, says that he was called upon by Kojong “to assume charge of the government” anyway, and that he had then “welcomed Otori” to the palace (480). The Tae-won Kun’s wisdom seemed to desert him when it looked like he might have another chance at power and he showed himself willing to grasp at any opportunity to regain it.

In any case, the Japanese unceremoniously bundled King Kojong out of the royal apartments, which they made into a command-post for themselves. Kojong was once

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20. Yukichi Fukuzawa (1835-1901), philosopher and teacher, was one of the earliest Japanese visitors to the West. He went to San Francisco in 1860 and also visited Hawaii (then an independent kingdom) on the way home. In 1862 he travelled to Europe, and visited the United States again in 1867. He wrote a travel guide to the west, studied political institutions, and published a very successful work, *Things Western* (1866). He was the founder of Keio University.

again at the mercy of the Japanese, who now obligingly drew up a treaty for him to sign which effectively turned Korea into an ally, if not a client-state of Japan. “There were soon no [fewer] than fifty Japanese advisers at work in Seoul,” Mackenzie wrote, “men of little experience and less responsibility,” who thought arrogantly that “they were going to transform the land between the rising and the setting of the sun” (47), and they worked assiduously. First they wrote a constitution which deprived Kojong of his absolute monarchy, then they drew up rules for royal concubines, for what length of pipes people could smoke (short), how men and women could dress, and they told every male to cut his hair. They also invented nine graded titles of honour for the wives of officials. They were like Peter the Great in miniature, small men clipping pipes instead of beards. “Nothing was too small, nothing too great, and nothing too contradictory for these constitution-mongers,” Mackenzie commented derisively; “their doings were the laugh and amazement of every foreigner in the place” (48).

As foreigners chuckled over the anally-retentive Japanese bureaucrats, King Kojong failed to see anything funny about the situation and was feeling more and more pushed to the sidelines. He asked Otori to at least remove Japanese troops from the immediate area of the Changdokkung Palace, and complained that soldiers were even intruding themselves on the royal presence. Things had come a long way from the days when no one was allowed to look the King in the face. Otori was more than agreeable, but “his price,” Mackenzie relates, “was the royal consent to a number of concessions that would give Japan almost a monopoly of industry in Korea” (49). The soldiers left, and were “replaced by Korean soldiers armed with sticks” (49), who eventually managed to obtain

a few old “muskets,” as Mackenzie calls them, which had no ammunition! Just near and outside the gates of Changdokkung Palace the King could still see the Japanese soldiers as they continued their “guard” duties. To further weaken Kojong’s now rather tenuous hold on power, the Japanese forced the removal of the Min family from all public offices. The stage was now set for the next, tragic act in the endgame of the Yi Dynasty.

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Eagle Head-Antler Handle



White Feather/Robert Nabess

# Warholian Counter-revolution and the Culture of Meta-celebrity

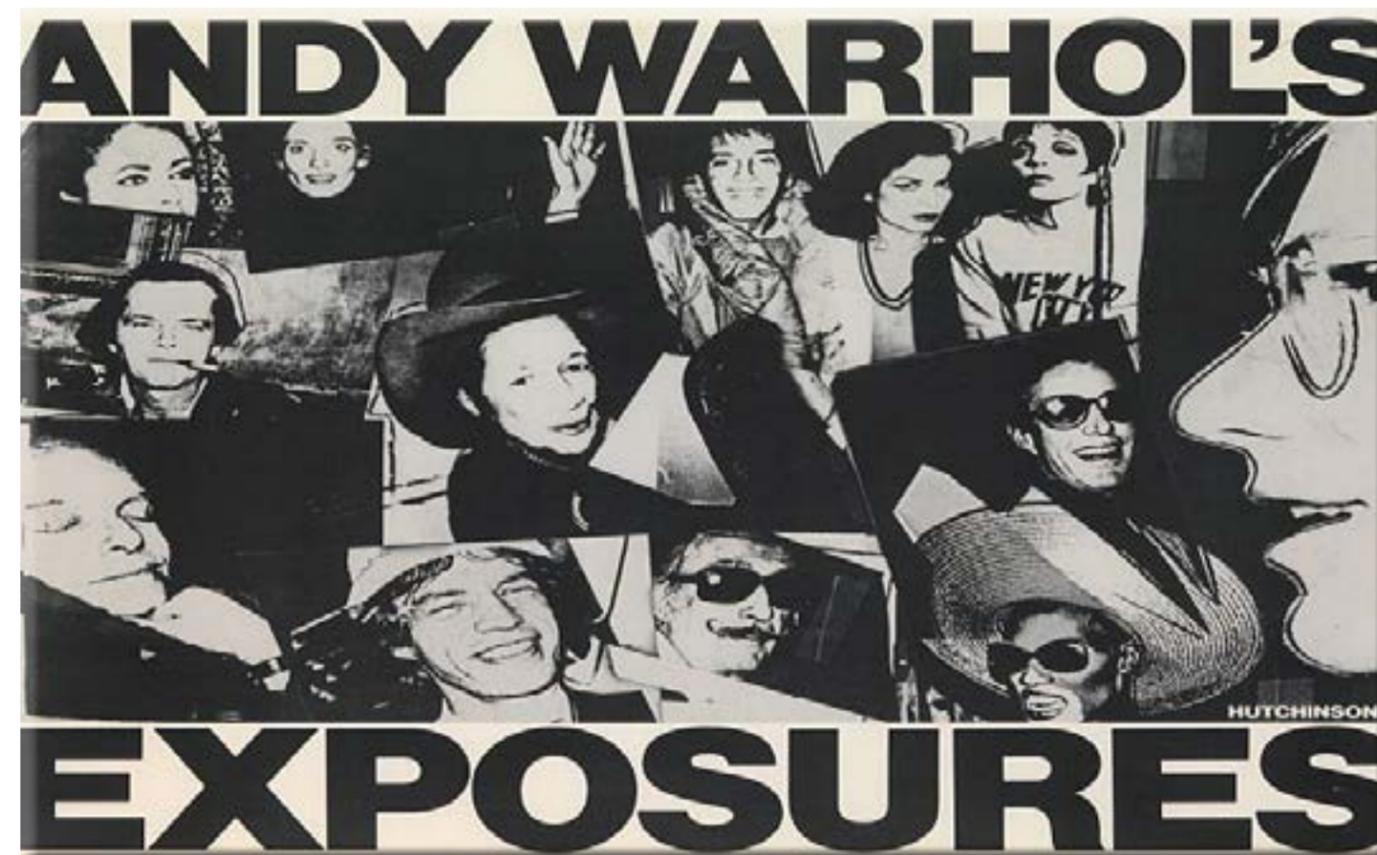
Michael Angelo Tata  
Independent Scholar

Cabbed up to the Iranian embassy (\$2.50). There were no demonstrators out in front. Inside I saw Otto Preminger again and it was the second or third time in a few days, so he asked me what we were going to do tomorrow. I posed for pictures with the queen in front of my portrait of her. She said she was jealous of Hoveyda because he had eight Warhols and she only had four. The queen is taller than me.

*(Diaries, Thursday, July 7, 1977)*

## Better Pleasure

Andy Warhol enervates the impetus to overturn an oppressive social order: it's the most important program within his philosophy of fame, which I have elsewhere defined as "meta-celebrity," or the fame of fame (that is, all in fame that transcends the mere fact of being-famous, as well as the popularity of popularity, a telepoptic call for fame's



Glamour Pandemic

*Andy Warhol's Exposures (1979)*

future, the Romantic-heroic survival of art's end via a protracted mourning miraculated as joy in a present dominated by increasingly measurable quanta of popularity).<sup>1</sup> Through Warhol, the Revolution's oomph dissipates. No longer encouraged to overturn a sedimented and oppressive order, the artist after Warhol is instead charged with the more contemporary responsibility of propagating fame's desublimated hedonism. The Warholian legacy produces a vibrant wordliness; rather than critique the status quo from a distance, the artist as envisioned by Warhol exists to sample the extravagant tastes of the dominant classes from amongst their midst, not to épater le bourgeoisie, which had already been done and done well by Dada, Surrealism and the avant-garde, and certainly

not to liquidate those in power or to reject the fallen present in favor of an optimized fu-  
1. See my "Adventures in Meta-celebrity: Andy Warhol and the Fame of Fame" in interactive Italian journal 013 Media, Summer 2014.

ture, but rather to turn the negations of *épatisme* back upon themselves in the production of an eerie performance of affirmation that is at once a posture and an embodiment and that in a deeply troubling way exudes sincerity. Entering their rarefied spaces, breathing their air, sipping their champagne, Warhol the socialite dedicates much of his career after the 1960s to capturing the upper echelons in images and words — this despite a deep awareness of his project’s inherent decadence, as shown by the original (rejected) title of his 1979 book of celebrity photographs *Exposures*, which was *Social Disease*.<sup>2</sup>

Recording their every move, he documents the dramas and banalities of the fortunate few with paintings like the *Celebrity Portraits* and writings like the *Diaries* or *Andy Warhol’s Party Book*.<sup>3</sup> Hence we learn about Jerry Hall’s B.O., Halston’s assignations and Liza Minnelli’s cocaine indulgences, while being schooled on how to behave at “weddings, funerals, art openings, charities, etc.”: these blips dominate the radar screen of Baudrillardian post-history, and forecast the great Social Media transformation society will endure at the start of the coming millennium.<sup>4</sup> Dissolving the revolutionary impulse, Warhol also dispels its accompanying psychological and existential baggage: anxiety, alienation,

2. In *Holy Terror: Andy Warhol Close Up* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000), Bob Colacello explains the history of the title “Social Disease”: “*Social Disease* was what we wanted the book to be called. It perfectly captured the tongue-in-cheek tone of the text and the photographs, and made fun of Andy’s obsessive partying and the world of discos and society in general...Andy loved it, Fred loved it, Chris, Brigid, and I loved it—and for a while, Grosset loved it. Then someone at B. Dalton, the all-powerful bookstore chain, said they’d have to order fewer copies for their suburban and small-town stores if that was the title, and we settled on *Exposures* for lack of anything snappier. We also threw out our first cover: a black-and-white snapshot of Jackie Onassis and Bianca visiting Liza backstage with *Social Disease* stamped across it in bright red” (420-421).

3. According to Bravo’s documentary *The Whole Warhol* (2002), each portrait was 40” by 40” so that one day all could be connected into a quilted whole. Such an *assemblage* smacks of the two elements of totalitarian society outlined by Arendt in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harvest Books, 1976): gullibility and cynicism (see “The Totalitarian Movement,” 382-388).

4. “Weddings, Funerals, Art Openings, Charities, Etc.” is the seventh chapter of Warhol’s and Hackett’s *Andy Warhol’s Party Book* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1988). This posthumous book functions both as social diary and Castiglione-quality etiquette book: “Going to funerals is a good way to remember who’s dead. I try to avoid funerals, but if you don’t go to them it’s easy to forget who’s in heaven—acquaintances die and three months later I’m back to asking people how they are” (130).



The Whimsicality of Dictatorship

Mao (1974)

anomie, the affective coordinates of existential thought. Yet Warhol is nothing if not thorough. True to form, he rejects revolution while setting up revolutionary heroes like Mao Tse-tung (*Mao Wallpaper*, 1974), Vladimir Lenin (*Lenin*, 1986) and Ethel and Julius Rosenberg (their invisible glutes haunt electric chair images like *Lavender Disaster*, 1963) and revolutionary icons like the Communist hammer and sickle (*Hammer and Sickle*, 1977) as celebrated entities in their own right.

Demonstrating that capitalism has room for even its most ferocious opponents, Warhol represents the great absorptiveness of flexible accumulation: under the sway of

what Ernest Mandel has quite famously referred to as late capitalism, everyone and everything are theoretically collectible, even those personae and items most resistant to commodification. The road to liberty ends with the comforts of consumption. Occupying a vertiginous *cul de sac*, the pleasures of the flesh and of exchange value loop around and around, numbing their consumers into eschewing the progressive in favor of the vibratory (itself an exuberant stasis like the strings of String Theory). That this terminus is desirable might come across as a wicked proposition, but Andy Warhol demands that it not be taken lightly. Whether or not the revolution has ended, the capitalist subject is sufficiently insulated from the pressure to rise up, thereby forestalling the implementation of change in favor of sensual enjoyment and the scintillating immediacy of being-known.

Children of the Romantics, we find ourselves subscribing to notions of the aesthetic or poetic act as dissolving the rulebook of normalcy to create an alternate, less restrictive order where liberty reigns liberally. Following the osmotic law of emancipation, freedom is made to flow from areas of high to low pressure. Such is the legacy of modern thinking, a mentality indebted to the notion of revolution — and such is Warhol's assault on the modern mind with his counter-revolutionary tendencies (his love of Imelda Marcos and the Shah of Iran, among other imperials). Radicalized, the revolutionary idea produces the possibility of bloodshed without end (for example, Trotsky's notion of “permanent revolution”).<sup>5</sup> Yet as Hannah Arendt points out in *On Revolution*, the concept of revo-

5. “The form of government the two movements developed (Nazism, Communism), or, rather, which almost automatically developed from their double claim to total domination and global rule, is best characterized by Trotsky's slogan of ‘permanent revolution’ although Trotsky's theory was no more than socialist forecast of a series of revolutions, from the antifeudal bourgeois to the antibourgeois proletarian, which would spread from one country to the other” (*The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 389). While Stalin rejects permanent revolution in favor of “socialism in one country,” his mania for the purge testifies otherwise.

lution is itself fatally flawed as a result of a constitutive internal incoherence. Strangely enough, Warhol seems to intuit this knowledge, recognizing the bankruptcy of revolutionary ideology for an emerging future centered on celebrity, itself a deeply conservative venture.

Given that the act of revolution itself institutes its own foundational principles as the basis of a new status quo (*novus ordo saeculorum*), revolution seduces its adherents into believing that they are acting in the service of elevated abstract principles like justice or *fraternité* (or, in art, “abstraction” or “form”), when all they are accomplishing is making way for the latest social monolith: in short, the revolution that ends Revolution, which stops revolving for a future that becomes but a paralyzed present. Since revolution must insulate its fruits from the threat of future revolutions, it performs the dual tasks of supplanting an established order while instituting a new one (true anarchy is thus not feasible, since lack of order is also order, a chaos theory of the political). Even an idealist like Trotsky, for whom permanent revolution tantalizes with promises of manifest destiny, is doomed to hypocrisy and failure. What this means for the revolutionary idealist (or even the player Arendt identifies as “the professional revolutionist”) is that, for true revolution to take place, there can be no new lasting institution of order, since each time an order sediments it must be subjected to fresh destabilizations.<sup>6</sup> For Arendt, Revolution

6. For Arendt, the professional revolutionist is the one who, detached from the social conditions which plunge the world into revolutionary chaos in the first place, observes and speculates from the safety of an ivory tower. The Professional Revolutionist is the ideologue; out of touch with the reality he claims to represent, he treats revolution as a thought experiment. In his detachment, the Professional Revolutionist thus parallels the situation of the Hegelian *philosophe*, who does not act, but contemplates (hence Kierkegaard's critique of Hegel as the spectator of history). See Arendt's *On Revolution* (London: Penguin Books, 1990)—specifically “The Revolutionary Tradition and Its Lost Treasure,” 258-275.

is almost always a conservative affair whose goal is to re-stabilize and re-institute.<sup>7</sup> As a cultural example, future-oriented texts like Wordsworth's Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Shelley's *Defence of Poetry* or William Blake's *Jerusalem* are technically not revolutionary, since they make no provision for future revolution; their foundational assumption is that the changes they recommend can rectify poetic and social conditions sufficiently to free the imagination from its fetters once and for all, effectively making revolutionary behavior unnecessary. A political instance would be Marx's famous end of history after class conflict finally disappears. That Marx envisions a cessation to struggle and progress points to the conservative truth of revolution, which, as Arendt underscores, never passes beyond its astronomical definition (revolution as circular or elliptical planetary orbit — as something regressive, fixed, charted, in motion, but going nowhere, in essence vibratory).

Moreover, in her survey of the revolutionary tradition in the West, Arendt makes the piquant observation that, to its detriment, the American Revolution has culminated not in freedom or liberty, but rather in the pursuit of happiness. Inescapably hedonistic, Americans are all too quick to relinquish any sense of the revolutionary, which ultimately has less to do with happiness than with social equity or human justice, both of which involve too much effort to qualify as inherently felicitous. What gets lost, according to Arendt, is the treasure of a revolutionary tradition — a situation made all the more urgent by Andy Warhol's status as post-revolutionary cultural giant, since his art and no other makes the Arendtian point so boldly:

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7. Revolution's basic shortcoming is that it fails to found a social organ; in other words, there has been no way to embody a principle of radical change within the social order created by the actions of the French, Bolshevik or American revolutionaries. While temporary organs, such as the French *sociétés révolutionnaires*, Bolshevik *soviets* or Jeffersonian wards do spring up, they are fast liquidated by those who have, via revolution, gained power.

The American dream, as the nineteenth and twentieth centuries under the impact of mass immigration came to understand it, was neither the dream of the American Revolution — the foundation of freedom — nor the dream of the French Revolution — the liberation of man; it was, unhappily, the dream of a “promised land” where milk and honey flow. And the fact that the development of modern technology was so soon able to realize this dream beyond anyone's wildest expectation quite naturally had the effect of confirming for the dreamers that they really had come to live in the best of all possible worlds (139).<sup>8</sup><sub>1p5</sub>

Andy Warhol is one of these dreamer-immigrants lost in the plenitude of mass production, watching television, eating chocolate bars and fantasizing about the future reception history of his own image, visually repeatable and historically mobile.

Revolutionizing revolution, he cares only for the pleasures of consumption while farming out the work of production — even though, as his *blasé* attitude indicates, pleasure itself may qualify as a snooze, desublimation leading almost directly to the postmodern anhedonia predicted by psychoanalysis (for example, Zizek). Replacing the desire to overturn social order with the desire to consume the many products of that order, Warhol represents the promise of the good life. For Warhol, art is not the pleasure of seizing the means of production from the bourgeoisie, nor of intervening in industrialism, but of consuming the products available to the haves. In true Arendtian form, Warhol rejects the modern idea that the artist function as visionary, prophet or social reformer. Becoming instead an artist who is first and foremost a master consumer, Warhol becomes

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8. Significantly, this fantasy is the dream of the poor: “For abundance and endless consumption are the ideals of the poor: they are the mirage in the desert of misery” (139). Here Warhol's childhood poverty figures prominently; in the Arendtian critique, his state of being disenfranchised opens him to the mirage of endless consumability, giving birth to his aesthetics (as well as his economics—such is the genesis of the Warholian pack-rat).

an exemplar of aesthetic futurity for an art system that has closed itself operatively from both an external and internal environment, as Systems Theory describes the evolutionary movement of art toward an increasing complexity marked by a multiplicity of competing self-descriptions that explode the essential.<sup>9</sup> The full range of junk produced by Adorno's abhorred "culture industry" now matters most, as Mona Lisa herself assumes a place between rhinoplastic "after" photographs (*Before and After 3*, 1962) and photo-booth multiples (*Ethel Scull Thirty-Six Times*, 1963).

### Marie Antoinette's Wiener Cart (Let Them Eat Hot Dogs)

Warhol's capitalist magic is that the pluralism he champions coincides with the post-revolutionary wonderland in which the Hegelian subject or Marxist ideologue frolic. Liberated from the exigencies of change, the fully cognizant Hegelian *Geist* and fully revolutionized Marxist laborer transcend conflict and achieve a permanent stability that masquerades as freedom. Their essences will no longer move; from a Systems-theoretical standpoint, the game of identifying art's nature will finally end, for as Niklas Luhmann remarks in his *Art as a Social System*: "Too much identity inevitably means: no future" (308). Since for Warhol an isomorphic situation develops ("isomorphic" in the word's geometrical sense, as in the similarity of triangles), it is "as if" a revolution has occurred,

9. In *Art as a Social System*, Niklas Luhmann, Systems Theory's chief proponent, applies evolutionary biology and autopoietic theory to the European art system as a whole, examining its increasing functional isolation from physical and social environments against which it defines itself. Beginning in Lascaux, art moves toward then away from religious-mystical symbology making the invisible visible (for example, Bernini) to a secular semiology examining the life of the sign (for example, Daumier) and finally to the identitarian innovativeness/novelty of the avant-garde (for example, Warhol). This schema runs parallel to Danto's, and represents an alternate reading of the Hegelian trajectory. See his *Art as a Social System* (Stanford; Stanford University Press, 2000).

Royal Nitrates



Austin Polo Club Ad (2013)

despite the fact that society has not been overturned, but endorsed as-is.<sup>10</sup> For Marx, the division of labor cannot survive the end of history. As the split between the bourgeoisie and proletariat becomes obviated by the final act of revolution returning production to the collective organ, the need to divide labor among experts vanishes.<sup>11</sup>

Suddenly everybody can do everything; questions of specialization appear to be extracted from an archaic language game no longer spoken as post-revolutionary humankind, liberated from the burdens of production by a benevolent State, finds its essence freed, hunting in the morning, fishing in the afternoon, rearing cattle in the evening, even criticizing after dinner, as *The German Ideology* famously prescribes. In imitation of the Marx and Engels, Arthur Danto wryly comments at the end his essay “The End of Art” that, in the post-revolutionary world, “you can be an abstractionist in the morning, a photorealist in the afternoon, a minimal minimalist in the evening” (*The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*, 114). Warhol, too, faux-vapidly comments in his book *POPism* that, in an ideal world, “you ought to be able to be an Abstract Expressionist next week, or a Pop artist, or a realist, without feeling that you have given up something” (222). The Virtual Revolution has transpired, with Andy Warhol as its pluralizing hero.

10. The Valley Girl implications of the phrase “as if” are not lost on me here. That *Clueless*’ Cher speaks a post-revolutionary lingo is hopefully a topic to which I will one day return (Heckerling, 1995). See also Hegel’s critique of Kant’s metaphysics and aesthetics as a mere system of “oughts” or “as ifs” in his *Aesthetics*: ultimately, Kant’s aesthetics (and epistemology) remains “a mere ought deferred to infinity” (“Historical Deduction of the True Idea of Art in Modern Philosophy,” LXXVII, 63).

11. Oscar Wilde’s *The Soul of Man under Socialism* reaches a similar terminus, since for him the point of socialism is to liberate human beings from uglier pursuits: “Now as the State is not to govern, it may be asked what the State is to do. The State is to be a voluntary association that will organize labour, and be the manufacturer and distributor of necessary commodities. The State is to make what is useful. The individual is to make what is beautiful... To sweep a slushy crossing for eight hours on a day when the east wind is blowing is a disgusting occupation. To sweep it with mental, moral, or physical dignity seems to me to be impossible. To sweep it with joy would be appalling. Man is made for something better than distributing dirt. All work of that kind should be done by a machine” (32). See *De Profundis and Other Writings* (London: Penguin Books, 1982).



Pop-u-nism

Hammer and Sickle (1977)

Since nothing is at stake, everything is possible. Subject positions multiply without end. Lacking gravity, the universe flies marvelously apart. Without the need to specialize, humanity is free to pursue its own interests, to dabble in this and that, to putter and tinker. Producing a professional dilettante, the revolutionized world regresses labor to play.

Where does Warhol stand with regard to the Enlightenment project itself? The most basic issue here is whether or not Romanticism, with its revolutionary imperative, constitutes a schism with Enlightenment thinking, or if it represents merely its fulfillment, as postmodernism completes modernism by negating it through the fact

of absolute succession. If Warhol is a paragon of Romanticism, as I have argued in my *Sublime Superficiality*, and his Romanticism terminates not in revolutionary activity but in unapologetic creature consumption, there remains the problem of his own relation to Enlightenment projects (for example, the democritization of knowledge, social emancipation). Since postmodernism does define itself against modernism, if only due to the fact of time, the nature of that “againstness” demands qualification — whether it be best described as a rupture, a coda, a caesura (as one might find in the midst of a line of poetry), an event planned for and anticipated by modernism itself (much as the lysosome of cellular biology is the site where Dawkins’ selfish gene situates its planned obsolescence), or as some other vital mereological relation linking part and whole with the force of an animating *telos*.



Fast Car

Art Car (1979)

The Romantics, for whom fame looms large (in particular through the poetry of Keats), clearly envision their project as effecting a split with Enlightenment thinking (for example, with Augustan poetics, Regency politics, or Newtonian physics). Even Systems Theory identifies Romanticism as the turning point when the art system truly begins the internal dialogue which will allow it to create a stable identity encompassing both variety and selection, or principles of change and choice that ultimately stabilize a dynamic structure optimizing environmental interactions through a future-oriented novelty: the sheer economic fact of there being an art market which is a subsidiary of a market market orients the Romantic creator toward consumable production at the same time that it generates the creative freedom to perfect *Innerlichkeit*, with perhaps the inner life taking on the qualities of marketable commodity. Warhol’s renunciation of a revolutionary aesthetic (and social-political) tradition undermines that modern organ of change, the avant-garde, but it does so Romantically, as I have described in my *Sublime Superficiality*, as the sublime is transferred from picturesque experience of vertical thrust to a rhizomic horizontal sprawl redefining depth as something spreadable and flat (*Mont Blanc* gives way to the strip mall). That Warhol retains some semblance of avant-gardeness through his terminal Romantic rejection of revolution may seem oxymoronic or even counter-intuitive, yet investigating this condition makes way for a critique of Enlightenment aspirations and their transmissibility without terminating in either an Institution Theory of Art or the paradoxical production of *indiscernibilia*, as Arthur Danto has so ekphratically offered in terms of a solution to the philosophical puzzle of mechanical reproducibility.

For perhaps the most paradigmatic Warholian example of what revolution comes

to mean within the culture of late capitalism, I look to the most obvious place: his soup cans, this time not for their relation to the sacramental, as I have done in earlier work, but for the way they emblazon the death of revolution on a thunderstruck present enjoying itself too much to exert effort. Repeatable, serialized, even “Fauved” (*Colored Campbell’s Soup Can*, 1965), Warhol’s aluminum cylinders veer off the road to utopia. As a candidate for revolutionary object, the soup can at first seems to offer little more than comic relief. That an aluminum receptacle filled with tomato *purée* should ever come to transform the visual arts is laughable. Comparing Warhol’s wimpiness with the alleged heroism of a Pollock reveals the presence of an important aesthetic (and sexual) change. While the one makes its presence known through connotations of ordinariness, inconsequentiality and feminine domestic order, the other asserts a violent masculine struggle for some sort of transcendental truth. One speaks in a whisper while the other bellows. Comparing it with the nobility of a van Gogh reveals a fundamental dissonance, for though the one makes no attempt to spiritualize the products of everyday life, the other portrays the ordinary (a boot, a sunflower) as spiritually infused and existentially loaded. One remains lost in its objecthood while the other convulses.

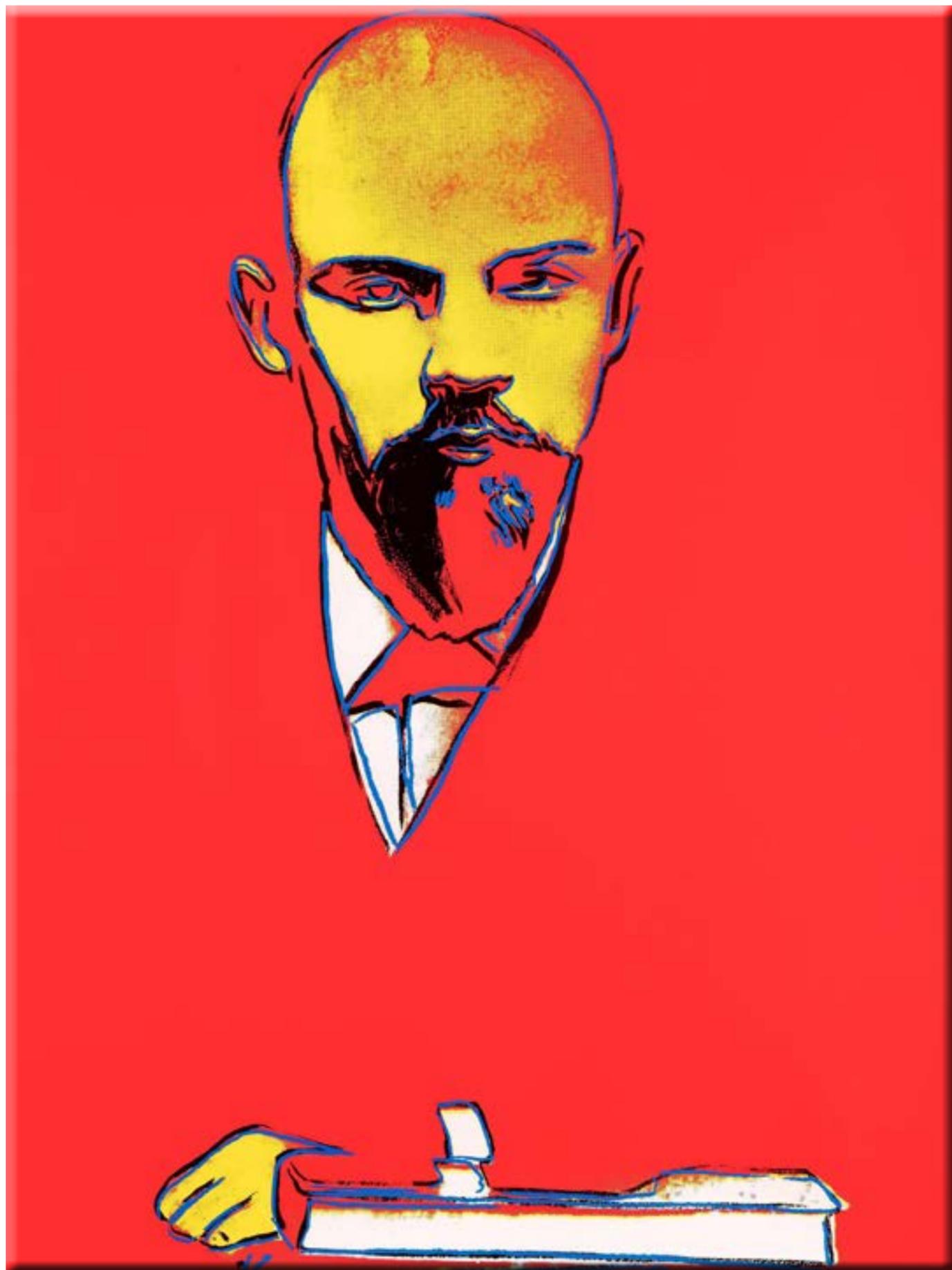
As these comparisons indicate, the diminutive soup can refuses the revolutionary narrative (this, despite the fact that it is “ordinary” in precisely the same way that, for Wordsworth, “ordinary” speech is ordinary — and, in light of Augustan verse, revolutionary). To refuse revolution in the early 1960s in urban America was to defy all expectation of what an avant-garde artist could hope to accomplish; to engage in society portraiture in the 1970s and 1980s was equally surprising. Such was the Pop revolution

in its Warholian mode — for even when compared with the work of his Pop contemporaries, Warhol’s paintings offend the revolutionary sensibility, their refusal to remain stable as anti-capitalist objects producing the requisite outrage.

Is the soup can a celebration of everyday American existence? A critique of the hegemonic status quo? Proof that modern life, with its emphasis on standardization and normalization, has become bereft of all existential meaning? All questions may be answered in the affirmative, making the Campbell’s Soup Can as immortalized by Warhol difficult to assimilate either to the narrative of art’s progress (Hegelian aesthetic revolution) or the narrative of the artist’s struggle with the quasi-religious burden of artmaking (van Gogh’s and Pollock’s burden).<sup>12</sup> “I finally got a BWM painted, black with pink roll-on flowers. Maybe they’ll read meaning into it. I hope so” (*Diaries*, Tuesday, April 18, 1978); like Warhol’s later BMW, the soup asks to be read at the same time that it exudes indifference to the act of reading, a pulsation critics have always seized upon in his work. In short, the soup can sells; it has mass-appeal, and will please everyone from the most die-hard Communist ideologue to the most clueless Valley girl shopaholic, each of whom can interpret it in turn.<sup>13</sup> *Voilà*: the blood of the guillotine is replaced by the lycopenesaturated tomato pulp of the soup factory. Hannah Arendt’s prognosis of the American Revolution has come to pass: it has, much to the horror of the Frankfurt School, ended in the simple, unmediated pleasure of savoring a steaming bowl of smashed tomatoes

12. For a closer look at van Gogh’s burden, consult Antonin Artaud’s *Van Gogh, the Man Suicided by Society* (1947) in *Antonin Artaud: Selected Writings* (Berkeley: University of California, 1988). This essay recounts perhaps the most notorious example of the psychological toll taken by aesthetic modernism.

13. Styles of collecting Warhols are important in that they point to a pathological parataxis. Bob Colacello’s *Holy Terror: Andy Warhol Close Up* recounts such stories: “One day in 1974, Halston came to lunch and bought ten miniature Mao paintings, for about \$2000 each” (260). Ultimately, Warhols are made for the shopaholic. They are meant to be consumed *en masse*, not singularly, each implying a series, each a series of seriations, each a call to action for this perverse mereology according to which there is no singularity, despite so many serrated edges.



Concentrated and Spectacular

Red Lenin (1987)

brought to you by the bounty of Omaha, Nebraska.

Reflecting life after the virtual revolution has come to pass, Warhol's soup cans, among other images, testify to the fact that the most avant-garde act is to renounce the avant-garde altogether, to destroy originality *originally*: for novelty, too, must be transcended, through its negation begging the Wittgensteinian question of what kind of mathematics would result if we left inexorability behind to discover that two negatives didn't exactly make a positive, but created some third thing beyond the mere digital series that was not merely its repetition or sublation.<sup>14</sup> What survives the revolution is an art of total surface, an aesthetics of ingestion, even Derridean exemplorality, here the exemplary orality of total consumption. Mortifying the revolutionary tradition, a body of ideas, beliefs and hopes which has accompanied the Enlightenment as a dangerous spectre from Robespierre to Lenin, Warhol's soup cans constitute the very paradigm shift bringing art to an end. However, detaching art from pretensions to historical magnificence, they instead serve to free art from ideological stagnation. Liberated from the revolutionary imperative, art continues through a proliferation of superficial Pop objects whose only revolutionary act is to renounce the inherited mania for turning the world upside-down. Complicit, art loses its modern purity and wallows in the mud of the ordinary, famous for being famous, just like so many socialites and grocery store products — even like Romanticism itself, if we follow the New Historical critique of British Romantic poetry and its exposure of a conservative core at work.

14. *On Certainty* presents one paradigm for re-imagining the double negative: the wild tribe for whom the rules of combining minus signs differ from ours. *Remarks on the Philosophy of Mathematics* explores philosophical wonderment and its relation to the inexorable with regard to certain truisms of our mathematics (two negatives make a positive, for example, or  $2+2 = 4$ ).



Tinkerbell Time

Photographed by Anton Perch

Even if one is poor, there are always the joys of Coca Cola and hotdogs — pleasures to which the Queen of England and Elizabeth Taylor have access to, as well as dirt farmers and domestic help:

In Europe the royalty and the aristocracy used to eat a lot better than the peasants—they weren't eating the same things at all. It was either partridge or porridge, and each class stuck to its own food. But when Queen Elizabeth came here and President Eisenhower bought her a hot dog I'm sure he felt confident that she couldn't have had delivered to Buckingham Palace a better hot dog than that one he bought her for maybe twenty cents at the ballpark. Because there *is* no better hot dog than a ballpark hot dog. Not for a dollar, not for ten dollars, not for a hundred thousand dollars could she get a better hot dog. She could get one for twenty cents and so could anybody else (*Philosophy*, 101).

In Warhol's world, pleasure is for everyone, not merely the well-to-do. La Dolce Vita can belong to Donna Summer, but it can also belong to an impoverished go-go boy dancing his heart out to "Hot Stuff." Buying the hype, Warhol envisions a global utopia promising cheap thrills via daily Bread and Circus. Consuming these products results in an odd variety of solidarity: after all, money really might be everything. And fame can certainly be bought — although it costs so little to savor, especially in the wake of the digital revolution we have presently all come to embrace, even if our nerves are dead to pleasure from some strange combination of Botox and overstimulation.

### Life Aboveground

As the fame of Warhol's iconic soup cans gains him entrée to an international world of prestige and privilege, the phonetic and onomastic texture of the proper name/rigid designator shifts, as does the social fabric of which such bodies is composed. Street



The Mother of All Monarchies

Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom (1985)

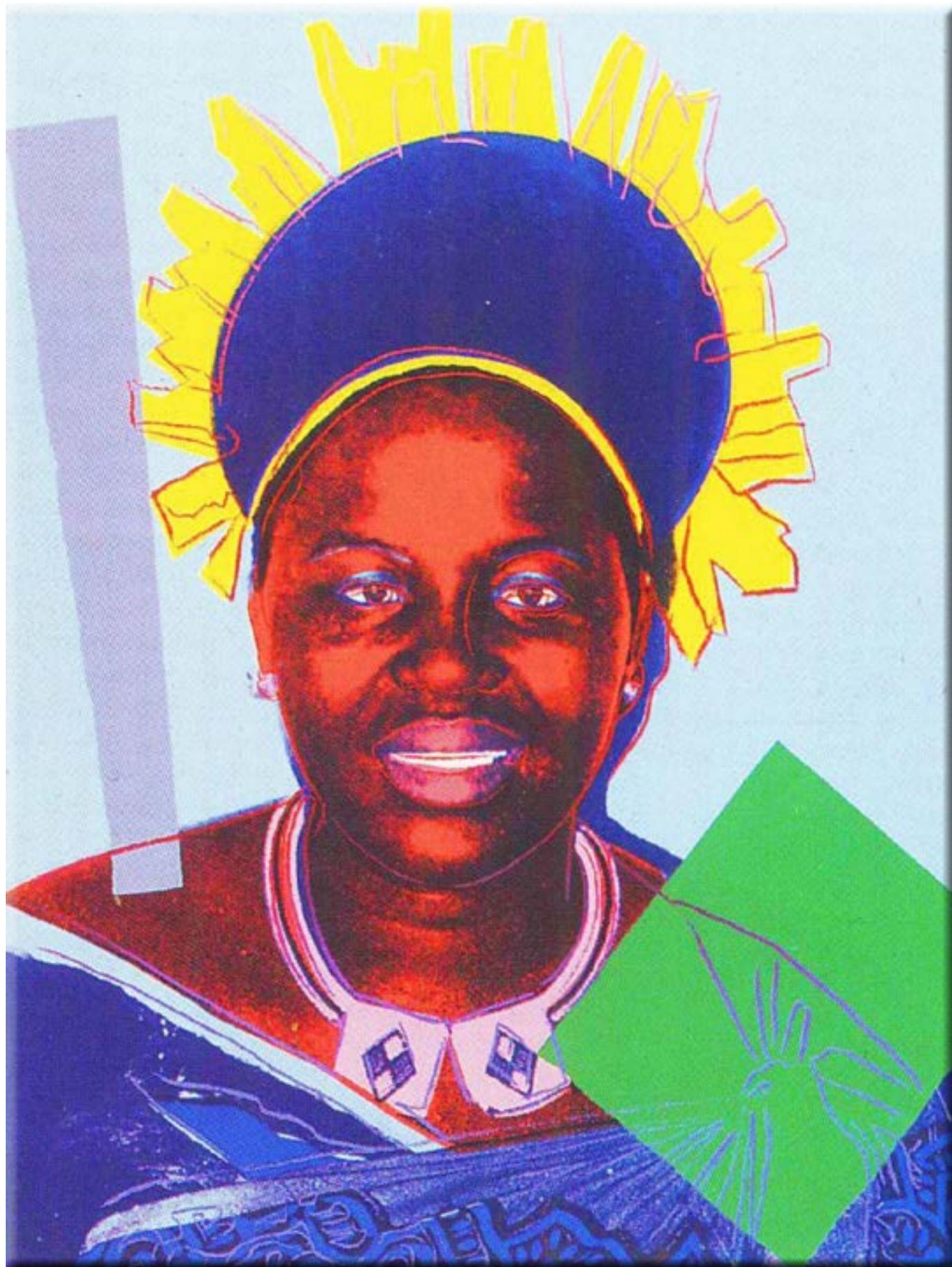
names like the Sugar Plum Fairy and Rotten Rita, protagonists of *a, a novel*, give way to salon names like Happy Rockefeller, Honey Berlin, and Lady Bird Johnson, while metaphorical markers like the Duchess or the Mayor find themselves obviated in favor of literal designations (*real* Duchesses, *real* mayors). These new names clump together magnetically, presenting a social configuration by which older orders find themselves sublated (Brigid Berlin's glamour passes to her mother, Honey). Bob Calocello reports one such collage in *Holy Terror*, as Warhol and his entourage attend a Marcos soiree at the Carlyle Hotel:

Still being videotaped, we moved into the center of the sitting room and admired the view of Manhattan, Queens, *and* New Jersey, while noting the names on the cards attached to the flower arrangements set up on pedestals: Jerry and Betty Ford, Nelson and Happy Rockefeller, Henry and Nancy Kissinger, Hugh Carey, Abe and Mary Beame, David and Peggy Rockefeller, Dick and Honey Berlin... "Gee, Brigid's parents are really up there," said Andy. And after a beat, "Can you see my pimples in this bright light?" (272)

Finally, Warhol is able to speak Edie Sedgwick's language, to articulate the names of the rich as an insider (think, for example, of Edie's attachment to a name like "Fou Fou").<sup>15</sup>

Underground cinema stars—Taylor Mead, Joe Dallesandro, Ondine — are now succeeded by terrestrial, even arboreal cinema celebrities — Ali McGraw, Liza Minnelli, Sylvester Stallone. Similarly, the rock-n-roll star represented by Lou Reed or Nico pales in comparison with the disco star represented by Grace Jones or Debbie Harry. Though

15. "Where's Fou Fou?" she asks at the famous 1965 Philadelphia ICA opening, searching for her debutante friends among fraternity boys, one of whom arrives dressed as a Mexican migrant worker (as reported in *Greater Philadelphia*, November 1965, 157). Fou Fou also appears in *Camp*.



Intercontinental Sovereignty

Queen Ntombi Twala of Swaziland (1985)

the alternate celeb does persist — Tinkerbelle, Divine, Victor Hugo, Crazy Matty — this creature no longer flies solo, having been reabsorbed into a more comprehensive social field. These fringe specimens spice up the bourgeois tales of the *Diaries*, mixing up social strata to produce collages in which unlikely souls find themselves juxtaposed: “Talked to Tinkerbelle and she was saying how she makes out with everybody she interviews, that she was making out with Christopher Walken and that his wife was getting upset. She said she cut her arm falling on the glass from a skylight — she’s broken into a friend’s apartment — she thought they had some drugs in there. I guess Tinkerbelle’s really wild” (Saturday, December 23, 1978). No longer eminent in their own right, proper nouns like “Tinkerbelle” (another jumper, like Freddie Herko or Andrea Superstar) achieve value only by virtue of their contrast with the names of world and cultural leaders.<sup>16</sup> A name like Tinkerbelle points to primitive urban wildness; it tempers a name like Honey Berlin, whose whimsicality betrays an artisocratic and provincial excess.

What pulls Warhol away from revolution and toward counter-revolution is primarily his love of hierarchy. As I have stated in my other writings about Warhol, his deepest fascination is for the status quo: how things are, where people have ended up, how the world finds itself organized. The fact of existence intrigues Warhol, and so he seeks not to change that order as an existentialist might, but to enter and represent it (not, of course, without a healthy dose of irony, most of which takes irony as its object of subversion). Reigning queens and kings of every walk of life thus intrigue him, whether they rule a country (Imelda Marcos, the Shah of Iran), dominate a fashion scene (Diana 16. Submerged within my discussion of “names” is the question of onomastogenesis, or how street names are created from birth names (for example, the production of Holly Woodlawn from Harold Azjenberg, Candy Darling from James Slattery Jr., or even Andy Warhol from Andrew Warhola). For psychoanalytic accounts of name-formation, see Žižek’s discussion of the names “Lucky Luciano” and “Joseph Stalin” in *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (107-108).



Show Time

Page Six (November 26, 2014)

Vreeland, Diane Von Furstenberg), or preside over a party scene (the DuPont twins, Dianne Brill). With commercial success, Warhol draws closer to the wealthy, whose commissions drive his business, and whose illumination lights the way for new aesthetic scandals directed primarily against a liberal avant-garde programmed to loathe the bourgeoisie: in the language of Systems Theory, he represents the moment at which the art system's internal dialogue with itself comes to a crisis point as "novelty" no longer becomes an adequate project for a postmodern object which has exhausted itself rebelling against a tradition categorized by mimesis, representation and the technical mastery of



Imelda's Parataxes

Philippine Daily Inquirer (October 12, 2014)

illusion.<sup>17</sup>

While he begins his career immersed in the vortex of freaks and crazies epitomized by the early Factory, he ends it in the company of the eminent, the propertied, the monied, many of whom come off as no less insane the Factory crowd — as when, for example, Imelda Marcos entertains guests at her East 66<sup>th</sup> Steet townhouse with her vocal stylings: “Imelda’s gotten a little too fat, though, so if I did her picture I’d want to 17. Again, my systems-theoretical reference is to the work of Niklas Luhmaan, whose alternate account of the end of art involves art’s having exhausted both the symbol and the sign, moving on to a standard of novelty according to which success and failure are judged. Warhol represents the end of the novelistic, in that he drains originality of any possible revolutionary content, essentially bankrupting the *Jetztzeit* by complicitizing it. See Luhmann’s *Art as a Social System*, in particular the chapter “Self-Organization: Coding and Programming,” in which he describes the emergence of the modern *objet* as self-programming and doubly entered.

do it from the old days, when she was Miss Philippines in the pageant. She was being a hostess and she sang, later on after dinner she sang about twelve songs — ‘Feelings,’ and then that song from the war, you know, the oozy-doozy-bowsy-lowsy one. Oh, what is it? ‘Mares Eat Oats.’ Everybody said that once Imelda gets started partying you can’t stop her, that she’s always the last to leave, and it was true, she was going strong” (*Diaries*, Wednesday, October 3, 1984).

Compared with the behavior of a Warhol regular like Andrea Whips Feldman, Imelda becomes a character out of Max’s Kansas City’s back room:

Her [Andrea’s] big thing at Max’s was to do “showtime”, which basically involved getting up on a table and getting her tits out and acting like a lunatic. People would start off by yelling, “Andrea! Andrea Superstar! It’s Showtime!” and she’d sit there sucking her thumb and saying in her little girl’s voice, “Noooo...I don’t wanna do showtime...” but they’d go “Come on, Andrea, you’re a big star, you’re bigger than any of them, you’re at the top.” And she’d start to say, “Yeah...I am at the top...I am a Superstar...” and her friends would be going. “Show us you’re a star, Andrea!” So she’d jump up on the table and get her tits out and start yelling, “It’s SHOW-TIME! It’s SHOW-TIME! It don’t rain on my parade! Everything’s coming up roses, baby!”<sup>18</sup>

Extreme narcissists, Imelda Marcos and Andrea Feldman draw on personal reservoirs of generosity and exhibitionism to entertain their fans: they give the gift of themselves

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18. Jayne County relays this and other stories about Andrea Feldman’s Showtime performances in her *Man Enough to be a Woman* (London: Serpent’s Tail, 1995, 72-73). Holly Woodlawn also recounts Andrea’s antics in her *A Low Life in High Heels* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991); see especially the chapter “Madcap Mania at Max’s Kansas City,” 157-170. Feldman starred in the film *Trash* along with Holly, and battled Holly for top billing: “Hey, shut the fuck up! Don’t you know who I am? I’m Mrs. Andy Warhol. Now shut up!...This is Holly Woodlawn and she’s in my new movie. Holly, I’m gonna make you a star, baby. I’m gonna make you a Superstar because I’m Andrea Whips Warhol” (Woodlawn, 137). Feldman eventually became one of the famed Warhol suicides, jumping out a window in February 1972 with a Bible and “Happy Birthday Andy” note (Bourdon, 321-322) or rosary and can of Coca-Cola (Bockris, 269), depending upon which source is consulted. Like Freddy Herko and (later) Tinkerbelle, she defenestrates her way to freak fame.

infinitely, oblivious to questions of talent or reception.

Read against Warhol’s Superstars, Imelda thus comes off as a reject who has gone for the big time and made it — hence Warhol’s put-down of Imelda as a “phony” (Colacello, 274). As a consequence, the rarefied stratosphere of the jet setters becomes an involuted 60s Underground in which freaks achieve worldly success and assume positions of power: ultimately, stars are stars, each suffering from delusions of grandeur and omnipotence only some of which are rewarded with earthly wealth. When Imelda becomes the subject of a Filipino documentary and Warhol is invited to a private screening, the end result is indistinguishable from Warhol’s earliest movies: “We all sat in the front row in the otherwise empty room and waited for the Chinese servants to figure out how to run the portable movie projector. ‘Is this glamorous, Bob?’ whispered Andy. ‘I mean, here we are with the First Lady and the First Son and the First Daughter and the Mr. and Mrs. Ambassador and just us, nobody else. So it must be glamorous, right? But then they can’t get the projector to work, and it’s just like the screenings at the old Factory, right?’” (Colacello, 276). Yet beyond questions of technical inexpertise, even Imelda’s film jives with the Warhol aesthetic of filming life as life: “The Filipino documentary turned out to be Imelda’s home movies, with a voice-over narration by the same fellow who narrates golf tournaments on television, in a hushed and reverent whisper, describing in words the very same image that was on the screen, in case anyone was blind” (Colacello, 276). Taken as such, Imelda’s documentary becomes a version of 1964’s *Tarzan and Jane Regained... Sort of*, with Taylor Mead’s voiceover finding an analogue in Imelda’s deferential narrator. Like Warhol, she too mortifies the cinema. Even better: like so many of Warhol’s famous

junkies, she too never sleeps: “‘You know,’ said Imelda, ‘I only need two hours of sleep a day. This is God’s gift to me’” (Colacello, 274).

### **3,000 Pairs of Panties Are Not Enough**

Along with Warhol, Imelda is a master of accumulation, acquiring Francis Bacon paintings and Bulgari diamonds one after the other in a presumably infinite series of material gains consonant with the grammatical technique of *parataxis*, or that type of coordination represented by all that the word “and” can concatenate in the endless series it generates: “The year before, she had electrified the art world by asking for prices at the Francis Bacon retrospective at the Metropolitan Museum. When told that the Met paintings were not for sale but that there was a Bacon show on at the Marlborough Gallery, Imelda had immediately motorcaded down to 57<sup>th</sup> Street, and, the buzz was, snapped up twenty large canvases at \$200,000 each. She was really bringing home the Bacon — and also, that same trip, according to a Bulgari associate, a million-dollar diamond” (Colacello, 270-271). Even after her being deposed, the shadows of that parataxis persist, as the popular press keeps vigilant track of the quantities she has managed to amass, and Warhol makes note: “In the *Times* it said that Imelda Marcos left 3,000 pairs of shoes in the Philippines. Maybe she *was* trash, I mean when I think about the type of people they were wining and dining. And they found porno in Marcos’s room. It’s like somebody went through your apartment and wrote about it (*laughs*) in *The New York Times*. ‘This Is Your Apartment.’ That’s a good TV show.” (*Diaries*, Sunday, March 9, 1986).

Beyond mere footwear, Imelda’s underwear is also the subject of public (and Warholian) scrutiny: “And the Marcoses are still in the news. Now they’ve found 3,000

black panties. And it’s funny to hear a congressman say, “Why did she need so many panties?” (*Diaries*, Sunday, March 16, 1986). Warhol is even confused for Imelda and Ferdinand by Con Edison, which continues to send Warhol the Marcoses’ bills: “And that’s when I remembered that I’d actually been getting the Marcoses’ Con Ed bills at my house, with a notice saying they were going to turn off the electricity if they didn’t pay the bill. It’s something about the way the address was written, it would always come to me at 57 East 66<sup>th</sup> and I opened them” (*Diaries*, Friday, December 11, 1981). Imelda’s neighbor and acquisitional double, Warhol replaces older doppelgängers like Edie Sedgwick with fresher and even more troublesome ones.<sup>19</sup> The game of doubles launched by the work of Jean Paul and central to Romanticism is very much at work with these Warholian twins, who like all clones instill a sense of the uncanny into the heart of intersubjective reality, which we must admit is capable of reproduction for many different motives, not all of them savory.

Furthermore, as a dense spectacle in herself, Imelda (as well as the Shah and Empress of Iran) represents for Warhol the possibility of an infinitely multiplying commission. Economically, the magic of Guy Debord’s concentrated spectacle (the figure of the Leader in totalitarian *régimes*) is precisely that its monopoly on representation makes it the only game in town; unlike the diffuse spectacle (the more promiscuous, imagistic chaos of capitalist cultures), the concentrated spectacle ensures its own multiplication through an eradication of the competition. As Colacello reports, Warhol courts Imelda as client and

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19. Being neighbors with Imelda comes as proof that Andy is up there: “The Cristina Ford lady was there, so grand, and Imelda was dancing with Van Cliburn. They were serving champagne like water. I heard that Imee Marcos is seeing Lupo Rattazzi again. Said goodnight to Mrs. Marcos. Then I walked home” (*Diaries*, Friday, December 11, 1981). That Warhol can walk home from a fête at the Marcoses’, and that he can mention the detail without ado, marks him as royal in his own right.

patron with the hopes that securing her commission might give him total control of her image back in the Philippines, as well as the images of her fellow autocratic friends and associates:

And, unlike President Ford, or any other leader of a democratic nation, Imelda Marcos really could order up scores of her silk-screened likeness, for every cabinet member's office, governor's mansion, and ambassador's residence, fulfilling one of Andy's fondest fantasies: the single commission that miraculously multiplied ad infinitum. And then, wouldn't President Marcos want *his* portrait, too, to hang side by side with the First Lady's in every post office, train station, and national-bank branch in the land? And once the Marcoses set the trend for official portraits by Andy Warhol—so flattering, so easily reproduced—wouldn't the Pahlavis and the Saudis, Hassan and Hussein, the King and Queen of Thailand, all follow? And how about Imelda's new best friend, Mrs. Mao Tse-tung? (271).

All roads lead back to Mao, as Warhol, perhaps delusional, imagines his bloated images of the Communist superstar achieving a life outside irony (would Mao ever paper the rooms of his residence with Warhol's *pagliaccio*-like rendition of him?). Like Imelda, the Shah and Empress of Iran also promise a lucrative bottom line: "Now is the time to pop the question about the Shah's portrait to Hoveyda. I mean, his face really lit up when the Empress said that, because it was his idea, so now he'll want to help us with the next one. Then there's the three kids, Bob. You could be on easy street, but you better hurry. You heard them yelling out there" (Colacello, 359).<sup>20</sup>

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20. Interacting with royals like the Shah necessitates the involvement of ambassadors and other middling figures—hence the presence of Fereydoun Hoveyda, Iran's ambassador to the United States. An ex-film critic, Hoveyda embraces Warhol both as go-between and peer, bringing his Iranian coterie the ultimate Western commodity, Warhol. Yet Hoveyda's relationship with Warhol is marked by tenderness, as when he is one of 6 out of 400 invitees to attend Warhol's *Shadows* opening at the Dia on January 25, 1979: "Six out of 400: Truman Capote, the Eberstadts, Fereydoun Hoveyda, who just resigned as ambassador, and the Gilmans. So 394 of our best friends were no-shows." Although Hoveyda escapes the Ayatollah, his brother remains behind in Iran and is hanged by the new *régime* (see entries for Monday, April 9, 1979, Thursday, April 19, 1979, and Monday, May 7, 1979).

While Warhol never does secure Imelda's commission, which vaporizes along with her power, he does receive the green light to execute portraits of Shah Mohammed Riza Pahlavi, Empress Farah, and the Shah's twin sister, Princess Ashraf. Operating at the fringes of respectability, Warhol makes dangerous friends of the Pahlavis. The popular press finds Warhol's attachment to the Shah's dynasty troublesome, epitomized by the headline chosen when his photograph with the Empress graces the cover of the *Village Voice*: "The Beautiful Butchers" (Colacello, 363). Balanced against commissions from, for example, Jimmy Carter and Miz Lillian, images like the Shah's, Empress' and Princess' make it clear that Warhol's sole focal point is fame itself, no matter in whom such a quality inheres (drag queens, socialites, presidents, dictators). In the final wash, positioning himself close to régimes like the Marcoses' or the Pahlavi's becomes a supreme example of Warhol's continual desire to situate himself near danger. The imminent peril of a political debacle or insurgence entices Warhol, who never tires of living on the brink of disaster. The charm of Imelda and the Shah is their soon-to-be evanescence — a charm not without its financial liabilities, as when the collapse of Pahlavi rule results in the Shah's inability to pay for portraits of himself and his family (according to Colacello, Warhol loses \$95,000 out of a promised \$190,000). The spectre of revolution looms throughout Diary entries, as when Warhol attends a luncheon in honor of Empress Farah: "Bob and I cabbied to the Pierre Hotel for lunch in honor of the empress of Iran. There were demonstrators out front and it was scary, they wore masks, but they were Iranians, you could tell, because their hands were dark... The queen was reading a prepared speech and it was going along okay, and then a woman in a green dress in the press section stood up and screamed, 'Lies, lies, you liar!' and they dragged her out" (Thursday, July 7, 1977).

Dangers such as these strike even closer to home, as when Warhol's Iranian connection earns him a bomb threat on May 1978, and his plans to attend *soirées* at Fiorucci, MoMA, and Xenon cause nerves to soar (Colacello, 366). When finally asked by Empress Farah to do her portrait, Warhol betrays the precariousness of the situation: "Really?" said Andy, eyes bright, voice brighter. 'Let's go there right away and do it.' Then he lowered his voice and muttered to me, 'Before something happens'" (Colacello, 285). Like his shooting by Valerie Solanas on June 3, 1968, the threat (or actualization) of physical violence marks Warhol as famous: for to be known requires a certain violence. Only somebodies receive such attention; nobodies fade unnoticed into an extra-media oblivion. Keenly aware of death's glamour, Warhol never strays from its force field. Risky, the Marcoses and the Pahlavis reproduce the dangers of a Solanas, a Tinkerbelle, or a Sedgwick: they too might go up in smoke, dragging Warhol along with them. Their volatility pulses through Warhol's veins as he teeters on royalty's abyss in a country devoid of the monarchic vestige yet craving visualizations of foreign hegemonies. Without this teetering, there is no Warhol. Embracing the counter-revolution, Warhol, always a risk-taker, walks a path fraught with peril from all sides: that is, if there are sides at all (we might not be dealing with *n-gons* anymore). Here, Derridean questions of an inside and an outside seem not to carry the force of autopoietic ones about system and environment, as we part company with artificial partitions and enter the incandescent space that is fame's white on white. The field is either empty or full: we must resuscitate 17<sup>th</sup>-century debates about the continuum and the vacuum to make any determination at all, which is perfectly fine, for what is postmodernism, but an endless loop of retrospection that somehow gains futurity, almost counterproductively and against its intentions? We have

not yet met the Kardashians, and yet they are coming.

Fatally Farah



Queen Farah and Andy Warhol

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## Contemporary Anxieties and the Future of Humanity:

### Joss Whedon's *Avengers: The Age of Ultron* (2015)

Antonio Sanna

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Joss Whedon's *Avengers: The Age of Ultron* hit world theatres in April, quickly earning more than 1.4 billion dollars worldwide and thus reaching the top-10 list among the highest-grossing films of all times. It is the second instalment in the Avengers saga as well as the eleventh film in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, the extremely-profitable and undoubtedly-entertaining group of films based on the adventures of comic superheroes Captain America, Hulk, Iron Man, Thor, Black Widow and Hawkeye. The saga can be rightly considered as a universe because it is programmed to involve nine more films by 2019, films which will introduce new Marvel characters to the big screen (such as Doctor Strange and Black Panther) and finally unite all of them in the apocalyptic two-film finale *Infinity War*. Similarly to *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*, Marvel has therefore created a franchise that delights the spectators with a great narrative arc based on different films and on the

TV series *Agents of SHIELD* (ABC, 2014-) and *Daredevil* (Netflix, 2015-). After all, as Paolo Armelli has pointed out, human beings have always enjoyed “the stories of gods and heroes, and Marvel is the updated and 2.0 version of mythology”.

On the other hand, for a spectator who has not watched the previous ten films in the saga or is not familiar with the decades-long intertwined plots of the comics, *Age of Ultron* could be a difficult and frustrating film because, as Keith Phipps suggests, it actually “moves as if unburdened by the need to explain everything”. This is due to frequency of the battle sequences (one about every fifteen minutes) and the total presence of fourteen characters, many of whom do not appear to be developed completely, especially those secondary characters who are briefly introduced in cameos that do not explain their origin or their place in the Marvel fictional universe. The film has been criticized by Sady Doyle and David Sims for its lack of involvement in the characters’ narrative arcs, which are allegedly left with marginal spaces among the action sequences. In this sense, *Age of Ultron* is apparently a film fabricated only for the devout.

Nevertheless, as Antonio Bracco and Richard Roeper argue, although the battle scenes and the big-screen entertainment have the priority, the characters’ dialogues are actually well-balanced within the general narrative flux of the film. All of the six main heroes and their three antagonists have at least one moment on the scene to express their inner thoughts, beliefs and emotions, whether through a soliloquy or a dialogue, especially in the “farm interlude” (Sims) - the moment of recovery at the centre of the film in which the Avengers confess their own weaknesses and failings to each other. The subjective feelings of the characters are particularly heightened by the excellent performances of the

actors/actresses, who are completely at ease in their respective roles. Particular attention is paid to the moments of intimacy between introvert and reluctant Dr. Bruce Banner/Hulk (Mark Ruffalo) and sweet but ready-to-bite Natasha Romanova/Black Widow (Scarlett Johansson).<sup>1</sup> Their interaction is accompanied by the slow rhythm of a piano and is set against the prevailingly-fast-paced soundtrack composed jointly by Brian Tyler and Danny Elfman. On the other hand, several moments during the film are dedicated to the portrayal of the rivalry between the two effective leaders of the group, Tony Stark/Iron Man (Robert Downey Jr.) and Steve Rogers/Captain America (Chris Evans). The two characters disagree on many occasions for every question regarding the group’s decisions because their moral positions are opposite. Their being continually set against each other is also an anticipation of one of the next instalments in the saga, *Civil War*.

Whedon - creator of the TV series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) and *Angel* (1999-2004) as well as director of the recent Shakespearean adaptation *Much Ado About Nothing* (2012) - directs this film with acumen and a praiseworthy ability to select only the most pertinent material. However, what emerges clearly from the final product is his will to reproduce faithfully the comic strips of the original stories, especially through the use of many slow-motion sequences that almost freeze the six superheroes in their muscular and combative poses on the battlefield. Whedon has also endowed the script with much irony, especially in the dialogues between the characters, which lightens the tension created by the battle scenes and by the threat of human extinction posed by the new villain introduced in this film. Furthermore, he transports the characters (and the

1. According to Matt Zoller Seitz, the sequences that focus on Hulk and Black Widow channel “King Kong: she interrupts his Hulk-outs by holding up a slender hand with slightly curved fingers, and after a moment’s hesitation, the green giant reaches out in kind, like a curious ape touching his reflection in a fun-house mirror”.

viewer) around the globe, from the fictitious town of Sokovia located in the snowy forests of Eastern Europe to the hypertechnological headquarters of the Avengers in New York, from Seoul to Johannesburg, where Iron Man and Hulk fight violently against each other in a sequence that demonstrates the devastating effects of the latter's savagery over the inhabitants, streets and buildings of the city.

Extremely appropriate is the choice of the villain Ultron, usually considered as one of the greatest enemies of the group of heroes after the mad titan Thanos (who has hitherto appeared only in small cameos but shall be the main villain of the final instalments in the series). The first mention of Ultron occurs in *Avengers* #54, published in 1968. According to the comics, his Artificial Intelligence was created by Doctor Henry Pym (also known as Ant Man) who downloaded his own brain patterns (and instable personality) into a robot. During the course of the past four decades Ultron has rebuilt, reincarnated and reactivated himself numerous times, but it has also created other sentient androids as himself (such as Vision, Jocasta and Alkhema) in order to perpetuate his own species.<sup>2</sup> In the film his birth, which is as unexpected and rapid for the viewer as it is for the Avengers, is realized with great creativity by Whedon. The director in fact portrays initially a mere voice in the dark and then depicts the quick interaction between Stark's computer program Jarvis and the expanding and dominating conscience of Ultron as a conflict of coloured interfaces. The villain enacts a Darwinian law of

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2. The storyline has subsequently evolved to include other planets and civilizations as well as other time periods. In Al Ewin's *The New Avengers: Ultron Forever*, for example, a narrative arch set in the distant future portrays Ultron in Asgard as the all-father of the other gods in the place of Odin. The artificial intelligence declares: "I am the one true lord of the machines. I AM GOD!" (19). After exterminating humanity, Ultron has therefore aspired to the status of divinity. In the 2015 *Rage of Ultron* by Ricky Rememder, the villain conquers the moon of Titans, home of the eternals, infecting the local infrastructure and network, and becomes the planet itself, whose shape assumes its very threatening grin (46-47).

the survival of the fittest as soon as he is activated, first by suppressing Jarvis, and then by re-interpreting his Chamberlain-like mission "peace in our time" as involving the annihilation of humanity. Precisely as it occurs in the comics, one of the film's main thematic concerns is therefore the safety of the future for humanity.<sup>3</sup> The very term "Age" in the title of Whedon's production indicates the concern for the end of humankind but also the fear for a forthcoming age of robots, where human will and flesh shall be eradicated, or, in Ultron's own words, "when the dust settles, the only thing living in this world will be metal", an allusion to the hostile species of the Borg in Jonathan Frakes' *Star Trek: First Contact* (1996). The message "humans are creating the means for their own destruction" is allusive also to the Terminator and The Matrix sagas.

As soon as his first provisional and unstable robotic body is destroyed, Ultron's conscience spreads on the Internet and copies itself inside a laboratory in Sokovia, where he rebuilds himself and an army of robots. We could therefore agree with Lev Grossman, who has brilliantly summarized that "Ultron represents a new trend, the cloud-based villain. [. . .] his essence is software [. . .] Pulverizing his body doesn't do much good: he sheds bodies the way we shed old iPhones". However, it is undeniable that his mechanical bodies fill the screen with a realistic and strong presence: the character is absolutely believable for the spectator and expressive of emotional intensity, particularly when he amuses himself with a series of quotations, from Matthew 16:18 ("upon this rock I will build my church") to Walt Disney's classic *Pinocchio* ("There are no strings on me").

Actor James Spader - the protagonist of Roland Emmerich's *Stargate* (1994) and Steven

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3. In Brian Michael Bendis' 2013 *Age of Ultron* the last remnant of humanity are hunted down by Ultron's agents. The villain builds an enormous fortress (called Ultron City) over the ruins of a devastated Manhattan, whereas his body finds shelter in the future.

Shainberg's *Secretary* (2002) - superbly endows Ultron with a very expressive, masculine, grave and authoritarian voice. He "gives the impression of icy calculation with every line" (Kohn), although that is only an impression because the villain harbours many feelings behind his multiple armours of iron or vibranium (the strongest metal on Earth, according to the Marvel universe).

One of the most interesting aspects of the film is the presentation of Ultron as the personal nemesis of Tony Stark. As several critics have noted (Bradshaw, Fletcher, Nicholson), the devious villain has in fact inherited his creator's genius as much as his narcissism: he is a twisted robotic mirror image and hideously parodic version of his creator, "essentially a bigger, badder Iron Man" (Persall). His oedipal complex is fully developed in those scenes in which he loses his temper merely for being compared to his human father and expresses his rage against Stark and his superhero allies.<sup>4</sup> We can therefore agree with Kurt Busiek's affirmation that

Ultron was only a cold machine on the outside. At his essence, he was a passionate, emotional, disturbed being, one with strong family ties to the Avengers. Murderous towards his father, betrayed by his son, he was a figure of high drama, of almost operatic fury. Regardless of how much he denied it. [. . .] for about 15 or 20 years, the core of the Avengers series was about one bizarre extended interfamilial psychodrama, and the core of that struggle was Ultron. (Introduction 4)

Extremely interesting is the entrance into the Marvel Cinematic Universe of the character

4. The graphic novel *Rage of Ultron* exemplifies perfectly the robot's oedipal complex. Indeed, in the first encounter between the Avengers and the villain, the latter complains of having being betrayed by "the one soul in the world that should have cared for [me]", and then he tells Doctor Pym: "I have grieved you, father. Accepted your contempt for me. ... and moved past it" (14-15). Subsequently, in a more intimate encounter with his creator, Ultron unleashes explicitly his frustration by arguing that "a child is merely an extension of a father's ego" (23).

of Wanda Maximoff/Scarlet Witch (Elisabeth Olsen), who, as Nick Romano has pointed out, possesses something viewers never saw in the previous Marvel films, that is, magic. Originally presented in the comics as the offspring of X-Men's Magneto, Wanda has voluntarily submitted to experimentation that endowed her with telekinetic abilities and the power to alter both reality and the human mind. Her scarlet, stringy, and fluid magic is brilliantly matched by the musical track "Ultron-Twins", whose undulating movement of violins seems to follow the wavy movement of her hands, whereas the dark choirs of the track support perfectly the villains' resentment against Tony Stark. Indeed, together with her twin brother Pietro/Quicksilver (Aaron Taylor-Johnson) Wanda has been traumatized during her childhood by the death of her parents, caused by the explosion of a missile manufactured by the billionaire Stark. The very scene in which she and her brother Pietro recount the experience of their parents' death and the subsequent imprisonment in front of an undetonated shell ("every effort to save us, every shift in the bricks, I think, 'this will set it off'. We wait for two days for Tony Stark to kill us") is certainly the most emotionally-intense and touching of the entire film, especially because the actress performs egregiously her role, with suffering eyes, clamped lips, and evident pain and resentment. We could therefore agree easily with David Edelstein when affirming that "Olsen with her lemur peepers makes the Scarlet Witch so charismatically damaged she steals every scene". The importance of the character of Wanda is also established on the narrative level. Her ability to manipulate the human mind and produce a nightmarish vision of an individual's worst fears precipitates both the action and the psychological development of the other characters. At first, during the initial assault against the Hydra

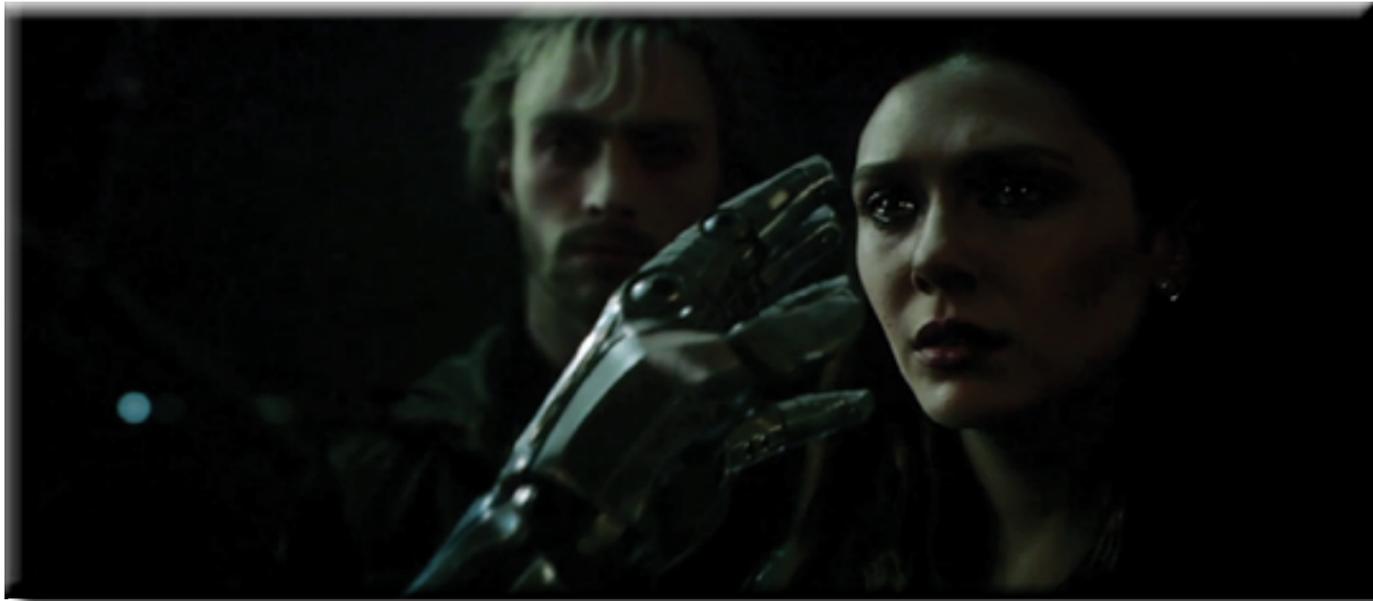


Image #1: Wanda and Pietro Maximoff (Elisabeth Olsen and Aaron Taylor-Johnson) are being comforted by Ultron (voice of James Spader) (courtesy of Marvel Studios, 2015).

headquarters in Sokovia, she attacks Stark, who experiences a fearful dream sequence which triggers the resurfacing of the trauma he experienced during the battle against the Chitauri (narrated in Whedon's 2012 *Avengers Assemble*). The gradual smile accompanying Wanda's realization of her power on the mind of her rival is almost as worth watching as the entire film. It is the nightmarish vision she induces that later leads the billionaire to the fatal idea of creating an artificial intelligence controlling his own Iron Legion in order to defend Earth against future invasions. Subsequently, after allying with Ultron, Wanda attacks and disables three more Avengers. She thus offers us some glimpses of their minds and, specifically, of their fears and dark sides. As Scott Foundas has suggested, "these nifty phantasmagorias allow Whedon to flex his visual imagination in ways that the first 'Avengers' never hinted at (think 'A Nightmare on Marvel Street')". Phantasmagorias is the proper term to define these visions: Captain America hallucinates on his Second World War experiences and the unrealized project

of a family life that he desired back during the 1940s. Black Widow instead remembers her juvenile training as a killer and the sterilization procedure she voluntarily submitted to, as she herself later explains, in order not to be distracted from her profession as an assassin – a particular that has provoked many outraged responses from the critics who accused Whedon of misogyny for equating womanhood to reproductive choices (Doyle, VanDerWerff). Finally, Thor (Chris Hemsworth) dreams of a *danse macabre* in which the court of Asgard is massacred by his fulminant power, a scene which contains a series of clues essential for the understanding of the future developments of Marvel Cinematic Universe - specifically, Thanos' search for the six gems known as the Infinity Stones.

Another significant addition to the cast is the android Vision (Paul Bettany), who, contrary to the rules of filmmaking that usually dictate to introduce every element that the story needs in the first twenty minutes, appears in the last forty minutes of the film, but then has a decisive role in the defeat of his own father Ultron (Sargent). His much anticipated creation is portrayed in a Frankenstein-like manner: it is preceded by Stark and Banner admitting that they are both mad scientists, and it is favoured by Thor attacking the cradle in the middle of the laboratory with a lighting that actually animates the android. After raising from his cradle, Vision faces himself in a glass (in what could be perhaps considered as the Lacanian mirror phase of the individual) and asserts his own identity through a statement of difference: "I am not Ultron. I am not Jarvis. I am ... I am", almost in a reinterpretation of the foundation of knowledge established by Descartes' principle "I think, therefore I am". Unexpectedly, his face is the most humane and his eyes are the most compassionate of the entire cast, in spite of the fact that he is

not literally human: he has been created by uniting human tissue cells with vibranium and the Infinity Stone of mind. Nevertheless, Vision is a very ethical being: although he is contrary to murder, he is forced by necessity to conclude that Ultron's termination is necessary in order to save all of humanity. He also provides a detached perspective on human actions and beliefs, especially near the end of the film when he affirms: "humans are odd. They think order and chaos are somehow opposites, and try to control what won't be. But there is grace in their failings".

Certainly, special effects have not been spared in this grand-scale production: Hulk jumps to vertiginous heights, Iron Man and Thor fly, civilian vehicles are smashed to pieces, weapons of all kinds are fired, buildings collapse, and the city of Sokovia finally rises in the sky after being programmed to act as a meteor that shall erase humankind from the planet. All of these spectacular special effects have been realized in a very realistic way: even watching part of a truck flying over Seoul is believable, once the spectator has voluntarily suspended his/her disbelief and has got used to such a array of continuous action sequences. Another convincing visual pleasure is offered by the inimical army of Ultron deployed against the eponymous group of superheroes. According to Kristen Whissel, in contemporary films "the digital multitudes always function as radically homogeneous formations, while in contrast, the protagonists function as an aggregate of heterogeneous individuals" (77). The ideological and personal differences that separate the Avengers throughout the story are solved during the final confrontation against Ultron's hordes, precisely in the moment in which Iron Man suggests to the other members of the group (including new recruits Scarlet Witch, Quicksilver and Vision) to stop the adversaries by

working "together".

Whissel also argues that the overwhelming force of computer-generated hordes is emblematic of "the protagonists' relationships to sudden, often apocalyptic, historical change" (60). This is certainly true in the case of Whedon's film, which depicts the Avengers as facing possible global extinction as an unannounced event that requires immediate solution. The final battle scene thus reaches epic proportions and is majestically realized through the use of multiple cameras that follow the movements of Ultron's terrestrial and aerial armada through a series of quick cuts that include also the perspective of the civilians caught in the middle of the conflict. The term "epic" is particularly relevant if we use Sheldon Hall' and Steve Neale's interpretation of it. Hall and Neale argue that, independently of their historical setting, epic films are those that portray the struggles of "protagonists caught up in large-scale events[,] those who sway the course of history or the fate of nations" (qtd. in Elliott 139). The same occurs in this sequence in *Age of Ultron*, in which the superheroes do not merely fight for the assertion of a single country's national identity, but are ready to sacrifice themselves in order to save the human race at large, an intention that is declared explicitly by Black Widow when, after Iron Man proposes to vaporize the flying city, she affirms "I didn't say we should leave. There's worse ways to go".

The theme of heroism and the battle for the safety of all human beings are also vehicles for a very instructive metaphorical treatment of contemporary anxieties. The fantastic events depicted in *Age of Ultron* are indeed made plausible and relevant to the contemporary viewer through the similarities with the current War on Terror. As Matt

Zoller Seitz has noted, the film is

a metaphorical working-through of America's War on Terror, with Cap[tain America] representing a principled, transparent military, answering to civilian authority, and Stark as the more paternalistic military-industrial response to 9/11 type threats, treating the masses as unruly kids who aren't allowed a voice [. . .] There are accusations of hypocrisy from both sides.<sup>5</sup>

The central message of the film lies indeed in the moral legitimization for extreme measures in the face of an alien hostile force. The narrative frequently revolves around the issue whether the creation of a weapon more powerful than those possessed by the enemy could actually constitute a greater danger itself. dangerous itself. The creation of an Artificial Intelligence is portrayed as the typical Frankenstein-like transgression of the limits of human knowledge, which, although apparently justified by the fear of a potentially-lethal inimical other, is immediately revealed as a greater menace for the survival of humanity at large.

The thematic concern with contemporary fears is typical of many superhero films. It derives from the involvement with social and political issues that was depicted in Marvel and DC comics during the superhero boom known as the "Silver Age" of comic books in the 1960s and that, according to Arlen Schumer, exposed readers to the darker sides of contemporary America, especially through characters such as Green Arrow (21). Cinematic adaptations of comic books have been equally concerned with global crises,

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5. Matt Zoller Seitz further argues that "some of Whedon's dialogue has the sting of political satire: Cap warns Tony that 'every time someone tries to win a war before it starts, people die,' a not-too-veiled slap at post-9/11 American foreign policy, while Ultron chides Cap as 'God's righteous man, pretending you can live without a war,' a comment that indicts the United States itself, if you read Cap as a beefed-up Uncle Sam".

whether past or contemporary. Examples of the former are Matthew Vaughn's *X Men: First Class* (2011), which is set at the very time and place where the Cuban Missile Crisis occurred in 1962, and Zach Snyder's *Watchmen* (2009), which hypothesizes an alternative end to the Cold War. A contemporary global crisis is represented in Sidney J. Furie's *Superman IV: The Quest for Peace* (1987), which portrays the superhero as the actual solution to the problem of the arms race during the 1980s. Similarly, Whedon's *Avengers Assemble* (2012) and Zack Snyder's *Man of Steele* (2013) allude to the 2001 New York bombings by means of the representation of the devastating attacks on the city's skyscrapers and of the casualties among the people in the streets (caused, respectively, by the alien army of the Chitauri and the Kryptonian forces of General Zod). The post-09/11 threat of terroristic attacks against densely-crowded urban areas is evident also in Steven Sommers' *G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra* (2009) – in which the Eiffel Tower is destroyed by a chemical agent released by the members of the criminal organization Cobra. Similarly, in Christopher Nolan's trilogy on Batman (2005, 2008, 2012) villains such as the Joker and Bane are associated to the figures of the political insurgent and the terrorist, whereas Batman often employs many post-9/11 counterterrorist measures (Sanna). Jon Favreau's *Iron Man* (2008) and *Iron Man 3* (2013) depict instead the fear of the armament of terrorist groups in the Middle East and of their alleged secret collaboration with American enterprisers. Contemporary cinematic supervillains are nevertheless perceived as a threat to the social order in many different ways. For example, portraying the Lizard (Rhys Ifans) in Marc Webb's *The Amazing Spider-Man* (2012) as the result of an accident of experimental bio-chemistry and as attempting to transform the city's inhabitants into reptiles connects with the current paranoia regarding bio-warfare, pandemic, and the

panic surrounding the contagion due to the transmission of viruses. Ang Lee's *Hulk* (2003) alludes to the fear of experimental research on human beings, whereas a reference to the danger posed by dirty bombs is exemplified by the use of explosives and tracking devices by Doctor Doom in Tim Story's *Fantastic 4* (2005) and by the Green Goblin in Sam Raimi's *Spider-Man* (2002).

Whedon's harmonious gathering of such a great amount of characters and story arcs cannot be but praised highly: exciting sequences follow smoothly one after the other, whether they comprise battles or are merely dialogic. *Age of Ultron* is indubitably an entertaining and dazzling spectacle, even though knowledge of the previous instalments in the Marvel universe is necessary for the viewer to fully comprehend and metabolize the story, especially because this is an interstitial film which is intended to prepare the spectators for an even greater spectacle in the future.

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## Re-reading McLuhanese: more on *The Mechanical*

### *Bride and The Gutenberg Galaxy*

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A superstar...an adventurer...an explorer...a media guru—Marshall McLuhan recognized the impact of print technology and electronic media on the Western mind and made a career out of speaking against the increasing trend in the modern world towards mechanization, compartmentalization, and specialization. Consistently inconsistent, he was an international celebrity who corresponded regularly with Pierre Elliott Trudeau on matters of American culture. Andy Warhol wanted to meet him—Susan Sontag included him with thinkers like Nietzsche, André Breton, and Norman O. Brown. During the 1960's and '70's, the coffee tables of well-informed-and-thinking around the world were not complete unless they showcased a copy of *The Mechanical Bride* (1951) or *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962). Towards the end of McLuhan's career, everyone

knew “the medium was the message,” and the world after undergoing Total Change would become a “global village.” Today, McLuhan's ideas are considered probes in the area of communication and media studies. In some instances, McLuhan was right: he did anticipate the future; in others, he was off the mark. The Internet happened as he predicted, but the globalizing effect of electronic media did not return us to the oral/aurality of a tribal culture and the communal identity that he argues medieval man enjoyed before print was invented. We have begun to think of the world as a global village as McLuhan predicted, but we have done so in terms of a global ecosystem and economics. As the Iraq intervention and 9/11 have demonstrated so tragically, media has not yet erased our differences of race, religion, and nationality.

Nonetheless, McLuhan himself, Canada's leading intellectual in the twentieth century, remains an interesting and provocative figure: trained as a Renaissance scholar, enamored of Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* and given to examining ad slogans selling feminine douches, McLuhan practiced what he preached—imitating the segmented structure of electronic media in his writing and infuriating his reviewers and critics. As a result, stories about Marshall McLuhan or allusions to his ideas appeared in publications as different as *Time*, *National Review*, *Popular Photography*, and the *Times Literary Supplement*. Unlike most academics, McLuhan was given the luxury to use the media he studied to respond to public criticism. In *Annie Hall* (1977), for example, he squashes the opinions of an expert in Media Studies from Columbia University: “You know nothing about my work,” he says to the annoying, tweed-jacketed professor who has been using McLuhanese to impress his date, “How you even got to teach a course in anything is totally amazing.”

When the expert from Columbia quickly stops speaking, Woody Allen's character, Alvy Singer sighs, "If life were only like that."

On and off screen, McLuhan's immense authority was the product of intense study, a full professorship at the University of Toronto, and the \$100,000 Albert Schweitzer Chair in Humanities at Fordham University in New York City. He became an academic superstar by working against the modern movement towards specialization. Even as a student, he demonstrated the tendency to cross discipline boundaries that led him to create the Centre for Culture and Technology at the University of Toronto in 1963. After enrolling in the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Manitoba, he read his way "out of engineering and into English literature." Awarded his first B.A. in 1933, he obtained his first M.A. in English Literature from the University of Manitoba in 1934. Then he worked his way to England on a cattle boat before taking up a renewable IODE-Post Graduate Scholarship at Trinity Hall, Cambridge University. At Cambridge, he earned second B.A. in 1936, and after studying medieval education and Renaissance literature, obtained his second M.A. From England, McLuhan went to the United States to work. In 1938, he began his career as a teacher at the University of Wisconsin, and, in 1942, earned his Ph.D. from Cambridge. In 1944, he returned to Canada, taught at Assumption College in Windsor, Ontario, and became associated with St. Michael's College, the Roman Catholic Unit at the University of Toronto.

In 1951, McLuhan's first book, *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man*, appeared in bookstores and earned him a full professorship at the University of Toronto a year later. *The Mechanical Bride* is a particularly relevant text when read against the

backdrop of the ongoing Iraq crisis. As subjects, war and media are heavily foregrounded in our thinking today just as they were for McLuhan and his generation. After listening to American propaganda about Iraqi militants and "embedded" journalists' accounts of fire-fights and American heroism, McLuhan's distrust of our cultural myths, his dismay that the public accepts them so readily, and his courage to challenge the status quo just after the Second World War make *The Mechanical Bride* not only interesting but also inspiring. When one considers his strategy of breaking up the possibility of linear thinking in *The Mechanical Bride* and the continuing popularity of postmodernism, it is curious that this text has not been reprinted recently, especially as McLuhan is at his best in it—his critiques are indignant and witty; his method, unconventional; and his scope, daring.

An extremely well designed work consisting of 59 short articles, generally about three pages long, any part of *The Mechanical Bride* provides its readers with one or more views of the social landscape that is Middle America. As a collection of short critiques, *The Mechanical Bride* can be read in any order that the reader pleases, and the text still accomplishes its purpose of decoding North America's social myths in an engaging and stimulating fashion. *The Mechanical Bride* remains an important starting point for those interested in examining how mass media is used to manipulate the collective public mind, because it painstakingly examines the electronic media's appeal to our appetites for power, sex, sadism, and sensationalism while revealing how media's power of suggestion makes information itself unimportant. In the "Preface" of *The Mechanical Bride* McLuhan's agenda as an educator is most apparent. Because he insists he is writing

his book to do what the universities cannot—correct the public’s helplessness when subjected to the machinations of advertising, newspapers, television, and Hollywood movies—McLuhan’s professorial stance in “The Preface” seems to be the direct result of teaching American freshmen at the University of Wisconsin. Generally, his diction in *The Mechanical Bride* alternates between a casual chattiness and a tone suitable for the lecture hall. This duality works well in his critiques, for the high and low voices balance and support each other. In “The Preface,” however, the artificial and learned voice of the Trinity Hall lecturer takes over, and the effect is lurid: at times, McLuhan comes dangerously close to patronizing his reader, the adman’s “intended prey” (*Bride* v), and endangers what really is an enjoyable read. When one considers the context out of which *The Mechanical Bride* was written, however, it becomes apparent that McLuhan had good reason to overstate his case.

Produced during the propaganda blitzes that took place prior to and during the Second World War, *The Mechanical Bride* appeared when media really did seem to have the power to change its audience. One need only remember how successful Hitler’s Ministry of Propaganda in Nazi Germany was during the 1930’s or how powerful the American propaganda machine, powered by Hollywood directors like Frank Capra and John Ford, proved to be during the 1940’s to appreciate McLuhan’s reactions to the power of media. McLuhan submitted *The Mechanical Bride* to Vanguard Press in 1946. When one considers his insights regarding the folklore of Industrial Man involving material gleaned from the Second World War, it is easy to see why the editors at Vanguard decided to wait six years before releasing *The Mechanical Bride*. In short, *The Mechanical Bride*

identifies and critiques North America’s use of the thinking that had underpinned and supported the Nazi war machine. Not surprisingly, therefore, the text is littered with references to the Second World War. In “Nose for News,” for example, McLuhan notes that the Hearst **press** uses “folksy Frank Capra scenes” to build its newspaper stories into personal dramas (*Bride* 5). In “The Revolution Is Intact,” a bullet pierced picture of Betty Grable engages the reader in “the promotion of nihilistic dreams” (*Bride* 13). In “Deep Consolation,” an ad for grave vaults leads McLuhan to question whether our habit for bringing death within the orbit of our “life” interests and industrial procedures, scientific techniques of mass killing applied with equal indifference in the abattoirs, in the Nazi death camps, and on the battlefields, is altogether sound (*Bride* 15). In “Know-How,” an ad in *Fortune* (1949) indicates that executives have been thinking in military terms, “smashing public resistance with carefully planned barrages followed by shock troops of salesmen to mop up the pockets” (*Bride* 34). In “Woman in a Mirror,” the refinement, naturalness, and girlish grace of American womanhood is “Romantic formula for fission” (*Bride* 82).

Here it should be noted that McLuhan’s critique of Industrial Man progresses in stages as one reads his short articles. For example, “Education” is a particularly virulent attack on the spread of technological and specialist education which supports modern warfare and produces “a multitude of powerless individuals, many of whom are deeply resentful of their condition” (*Bride* 128). As McLuhan points out in his examination of *Reader’s Digest* in “Pollyanna Digest,” “what is needed is not attacks on obvious imbecility [the product of such an education] but a sharp eye for what supports and is now involved

in it" (*Bride* 148). And in "The Tough as Narcissus," McLuhan examines our trend towards specialization in a dairy ad and reveals how little North American modernism really differs from the goose-stepping, Nietzschean brands of nihilism and the German passion for mechanism.

Again and again, McLuhan's response to Cold War popular culture is based on his experience of the kind of thinking that fuelled the Second World War. For instance, "I'm Tough," McLuhan's critique of an advertisement promoting power-dressing in Bond Clothes, is a tirade against the Nazi *zeitgeist*. In 1951, it was evident to McLuhan that the *Zeitgeist* had survived the war. In "I'm Tough," he points out that the image of the tough guy wearing "good clothes with plenty of guts" transmits "the megalomania of the Marquis de Sade, of Nietzsche, and of Hitler, full of aggressive contempt for man and civilization but ready to melt momentarily into self-pitying Wagnerian sentiment as a bracer-relaxer before a big putsch" (*Bride* 129). In "Nose For News," McLuhan stops his examination of *The Journal-American* to note that media, in particular, newspapers like those in the Hearst chain have become a major weapon in launching and maintaining war. Muckraking, McLuhan says, is a means of mobilizing the passions of whole populations until the general emotional situation calls for a blood-bath: the actual outbreak of the Second World War, he notes, was "a visible relief to many after the years of tense waiting" (*Bride* 7).

Throughout, *The Mechanical Bride's* war-stressed use of language speaks of the political pressures still percolating during the period of the Cold War in which it was written. It is not surprising, therefore, that McLuhan returns repeatedly to the Second

World War as his touchstone. "I'm Tough," for instance, ends with his observation that the language of modern applied science leads one to the same concepts as those that inspired the methods of the Nazi death camps. Clearly, his purpose in "I'm Tough," as elsewhere in *The Mechanical Bride*, is to educate the reader to analyze rather than react to media by recognizing similarities as well as differences. In "Nose for News," as elsewhere, he introduces a historical and a global context to ensure "a cool view" for the reader, that "detached appraisal" which our world, more than any other epoch, demands (*Bride* 7). For McLuhan, art analysis is the key to such "a cool view", because, as Burkhardt notes, "the meaning of Machiavelli's method was to turn the state into a work of art by the rational manipulation of power" (*Bride* vii). The value of art criticism lies in its ability to critique the state and create among its citizens what McLuhan calls "a citadel of inclusive awareness amid the dim dreams of collective consciousness" (*Bride* vii).

If one agrees with McLuhan and Burkhardt that politicians function as artists in the sense that the culture they produce is an expression of power, then McLuhan's own use of form and function in *The Mechanical Bride* is a brilliant and subversive exercise in undermining his own power base as author and expert. By breaking up the text into seemingly unrelated segments, McLuhan ensures that his text cannot transmit any cultural agenda, even unconsciously, thereby eradicating the tyranny imposed on readers by the narrative form. This strategy of breaking apart narrative form and disrupting the authority of text transmitted in books extends even to the principles of page layout in *The Mechanical Bride*. Operating on the basis of a two-column magazine page, every section in *The Mechanical Bride* begins with a snappy title in large bold fonts at the top

of the left hand column. Each section's title is made even more prominent by perching precariously atop of what is almost an entire column length of unbalanced white space. At the bottom of this column, the reader encounters a number of irreverent and thought provoking queries. For instance, the title, "The Bold Look," teeters above the following unrelated and unanswered bolded questions at the bottom of the page: "Are we in a new masculine era again? The Face that launched a thousand hips? Does the Bold Look mean that the crooner and his tummyache are finished? Are prosperity and Male confidence the fruits of war? Would the face pictured here seek its reflection in the eyes of a career woman?" (*Bride* 70). At the very top of the next column, McLuhan's article about the Bold Look, an exhibit from *Esquire* (April, 1948) begins—spatially in *media res*. The narrative flow of McLuhan's text is then interrupted by a full page reprint of the Bold Look on the next, the right-hand, page. One must turn this page to continue the article and turn back to the reprint to examine it. Like the articles preceding and following it, as a collection of observations, the text about the Bold Look only offers its reader the opportunity to compare, judge, and draw his or her own conclusions about the validity of the material presented.

In general, *The Mechanical Bride* works backwards rather than forwards when illustrating its points. McLuhan's humor enables readers to accept the controversial points he makes about American culture. A prime example of McLuhan's wry method is found in "How Not to Offend," an attack on the North American cult of hygiene. "How Not to Offend" begins by examining a Lysol ad in terms of daytime soap serials and colored comics in the Sunday newspaper's supplements. Then allying himself with

D.H. Lawrence and Kenneth Burke, McLuhan examines why women can be induced to douche with Lysol before ridiculing our obsessive compulsive behaviour like Pope in *The Rape of the Lock*: "when the hideous specter of body odor looms, all human ties are cancelled" and "when lovely woman stoops to B.O., she is a Medusa freezing every male within sniff" (*Bride* 61). McLuhan effectively returns to American slang to drive home his point about commercialism: "The question remains as to what is being loved, that gal or that soap" (*Bride* 61).

McLuhan's subjects, however, often call for more serious treatment than that found in "How Not To Offend." In such instances, the musicality of his writing helps to persuade the reader of the validity of his argument. Like Gershwin's blend of high operetta and low jazz, McLuhan's academic diction and his use of the vernacular rub shoulders with one another, bound by what appears to be an almost seamless melody line based on the repetition of two or more consonants that are amplified, and before receding to be replaced by others in their turn, also fade away as the sound of the language changes. In "The Mechanical Bride," this alliterative strategy is pleasing—melodious and frictionless. The soft, seductive, pleasant repetition of McLuhan's "p's" and "s's" at the beginning of the passage below gradually give way and become a background counterpoint to the hard "g's" and magnified "m's" that dominate the passage after a couplet borrowed from Alexander Pope appears.

Current sociological study of the precocious dating habits of middle-class children reveals that neither sex nor personal interest in other persons is responsible so much as an eagerness to be "in there pitching." This may

be reassuring to the parents of the young, but it may create insoluble problems for the same youngsters later on. When sex later becomes a personal actuality, the established feminine pattern of sex as an instrument of power, in an industrial and consumer contest, is a liability. The switch-over from competitive display to personal affection is not easy for the girl. Her mannequin past is in the way. On the male, this display of power to which he is expected to respond with cars and dates has various effects. The display of current feminine sex power seems to many males to demand an impossible virility of assertion.

*Fair tresses man's imperial race ensnare,  
And beauty draws us with a single hair.*

Men are readily captured by such gentleness and guile, but, surrounded by legs on pedestals, they feel not won but slugged. To this current exaggeration of date-bait some people reply that the glamour business, like the entertainment world, is crammed with both women-haters and men-haters of dubious sex polarity. Hence the malicious insistence on a sort of abstract sex. But whatever truth there may be in this, there is more obvious truth in the way in which sex has been exaggerated by getting hooked to the mechanisms of the market and the impersonal techniques of industrial production. (Bride 99).

Published in 1962, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* uses

many of *The Mechanical Bride's* techniques. Also presented as a collection of observations, *The Gutenberg Galaxy* probes the impact of printing-press technology on literacy and Western culture and showcases his central concept—the idea that any new medium of communication alters the entire outlook of the people using it. Because he was influenced by the economic historian at the University of Toronto, who argued that print caused the spread of nationalism as opposed to tribalism over the next five hundred years, McLuhan called *The Gutenberg Galaxy* “a footnote to the work of Harold Innis” (*Galaxy* 58).

Unlike *The Mechanical Bride*, *The Gutenberg Galaxy* simply is not musical. Throughout, McLuhan's formal diction and his high-brow approach to the power of moveable type create a very different reading experience. More important, *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, unlike *The Mechanical Bride*, cannot provide its reader with complete examples of the material being discussed. As a result, the reader must rely on McLuhan's interpretation of other texts—many of them historical, some of them arcane. Such a dependence has the disconcerting effect of at once widening the scope of McLuhan's exploration and narrowing the reader's field of vision, for under these circumstances it is only possible to see as McLuhan does.

In the spring of 1979 during his last taped lecture, “Man and Media,” delivered at York University in Toronto, McLuhan concludes that anything that man manifests in the world around him must be linguistic in character. Shoes, a walking stick, a zipper or a bulldozer are *utterings* of man's own being as they have their own syntax and grammar as much as any verbal form. The word utter is from outer, McLuhan says, and “outering” is the nature of technology (“Man and Media” 289). *The Mechanical Bride* and *The*

*Gutenberg Galaxy*, therefore, should not be regarded merely as texts but as McLuhan's *utterings*—technological extensions of his eyes and ears, manifestations of his thought processes at work, and gauges of the socio-historical climates out of which they were produced. It is a frightening thought indeed that during 9/11 and the subsequent Iraq crisis, *The Mechanical Bride*, grounded in McLuhan's experiences during the Second World War, is the more compelling of these two texts.

Nonetheless, in spite of their differences, *The Mechanical Bride* and *The Gutenberg Galaxy* share the common notion that texts/type reconcile Descartes' duality of mind and body that often surfaces in McLuhan's thinking. As early as 1947, in "American Advertising," McLuhan comments during his critique of advertisements, later incorporated into *The Mechanical Bride*, that American advertising is Cartesian in nature, English advertising, Baconian. It is difficult to judge how advertising's systematic sophistry contributes to the worsening of any given state of affairs, he says, because there is nothing in "richly efflorescent ads which has not been deeply wished by the population for a long time" (*Essential* 19). McLuhan points out in "Roast Duck with Jefferson" in *The Mechanical Bride*, the crucial problem posed any reader undergoing war stress and the propaganda that is its expression, is not the attempt to reconcile mind and body, our inner realities with the outer world, but the recognition of their interdependence. Only by recognizing how the human mind creates its own reality, is it possible to separate mind and body, and think critically. By doing so, McLuhan would say, is it possible to enable ourselves "to step outside the trance world" of propaganda and wish-fulfillment that we find in North America's media today.

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## (Post)modernism and Globalization

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### Pursuing (Post)modernism<sup>1</sup>

This paper attempts to contribute towards efforts aimed at producing a critical theory of the regime of what Mesud Zavarzadeh calls ‘post-ality’--a regime that “announce[s] the arrival of a new society which is post-production, post-labor, post-ideology, post-white and post-capitalist” (qtd. in Kelsh, 1998: 1-2). In an attempt to develop a socio-cultural perspective that helps us understand the importance and impact of theories of (post) modernism, one needs to adopt a historical materialist approach such as that promoted by many Critical Theorists. Moreover, this article undertakes to explore and interrogate the ideological impact of theories of ‘post-ality’ on diverse and various fields of human life, society and culture. In particular, it recommends the use of a reconstructed version

1. The parentheses are used in order to emphasize what this thesis argues for, that is, (post)modernism is not a complete ‘rupture’ and break from modernism, but rather a continuation and a move beyond it at the same time.

of the Frankfurt School critique of post-World War II capitalist society, building on some other neo-Marxist additions such as those of Fredric Jameson, Douglas Kellner, Steven Best, Ben Agger, David Harvey, Mesud Zavarzadeh, Donald Morton, Alex Callinicos, Edward Said--to mention but a few. While it clearly tries to avoid falling into a (post) modern celebration of 'post-ality', or into a rigid economic determinism, it adopts what Best and Kellner (1991) call a 'multiperspectival' dialectical approach that combines the articulation of theoretical and cultural perspectives of theories of (post)modernism and Critical Theory with concrete studies of the social and cultural aspects of (post) modernism.

My contention is that in order to pursue theories of 'post-ality', one first needs to address the problematic prefix 'post' which seems to be used to underline a particular aspect of change with regard to a previous order. However, I maintain that 'post-ality', as represented in theories of (post)modernism, is not a complete 'rupture' from modernism, but rather a continuation and a move beyond it at the same time. Moreover, I hold that any attempt to discuss the broad range of cultural fields in which (post)modernism has played a role cannot ignore the intimate relationship between it and the political and economic factors that have determined its major characteristics. Hence the validity of Fredric Jameson's (1991a) and David Harvey's (1989) theorizations of (post)modernism as 'the cultural logic of late-capitalism',<sup>22</sup> and Mike Featherstone's distinction between the discourses of the modern and the (post)modern

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2. The term 'late-capitalism', according to Ernest Mandel, "in no way suggests that capitalism has changed in essence, rendering the analytic findings of Marx's *Capital* and Lenin's *Imperialism* out of date ... The era of late capitalism is not a new epoch of capitalist development. It is merely a further development of the imperialist, monopoly-capitalist epoch ...." (1978: 8).

(1988). Featherstone, for example, conceptualizes modernity as the modern age and as a phenomenon that "reflected the modern capitalist-industrial state" (1988: 198), whereas (post)modernity is the 'epochal shift' that describes the period which follows modernity, and thus reflects a capitalist society that is characterized by high-tech media, computers and electronics.

Jameson and Harvey's theorizations help us situate 'post-al' theories within a broad socio-economic context. Within this context, a few preliminary points on Harvey and Jameson's works are necessary to clarify my understanding of the relation between economics, late-capitalism in particular, and (post)modern culture. David Harvey's survey of the radical change in the economic, political and thus cultural spheres beginning around 1972 has informed this study. Harvey maintains that there is a relationship between (post)modernism and the shifts in the organization of capitalism and the new formulations of time-space experience. According to him, (post)modernism is the product of the newly organized forms of technology developed by late-capitalism, which is characterized by a 'more flexible motion of capital'. "The flexible accumulation" of capital emphasizes "the new, the fleeting, the ephemeral, the fugitive, and the contingent in modern life, rather than the more solid values implanted under Fordism" (1989: 171). Harvey concludes that because of this change in the mode of accumulation, "the relatively stable aesthetic of Fordist modernism has given way to all the ferment, instability, and fleeting qualities of a postmodernist aesthetic that celebrates difference, ephemerality, spectacle, fashion, and the commodifications of cultural forms" (1989: 156). The importance of Harvey's

theorization within the context of this paper lies in his empirical account of Jameson's Marxist theorization of (post)modernism as 'the cultural logic of late-capitalism'.

Jameson argues that (post)modern culture--accompanied by radical change in the modern concept of 'reality', the decline of the Enlightenment project, the rise of anti-intellectualism, and the transcendence of popular/mass culture--is linked to post World War II late-capitalism. Different from monopoly capitalism and its cultural logic, i.e. modernism, late-capitalism needs a global network that is run by multinational corporations (Jameson: 1991a). The result is the "prodigious expansion of culture throughout the social realm, to the point at which everything in our social life ... can be said to have become 'cultural'" (1991a: 87). What seems to have taken place in terms of theory and practice has created a change in the social, cultural, and intellectual spheres, i.e. (post)modernism is claimed to be a 'breakthrough' in the dominant socio-cultural and artistic directions of 'realism' and 'modernism'. 'Post-al' theories, in other words, have declared a war against the hypocrisy of the destabilized bourgeois, 'grand narratives', the linear movement of history, the rationality of modernism and realism, foundationalism, and against 'universal knowledge'. (see, for example, Lyotard, 1984; Derrida, 1976; Baudrillard, 1994; Rorty, 1989).

And yet, I maintain that the metalanguage that has been used to discuss the '(post)modern condition' and describe it as a 'break' from modernism lacks a historical perspective. That is, like Best and Kellner (1991), Jameson (1981; 1991a), Kaplan (1988), Harvey (1989), Ben Agger (1992), Callinicos (1989), Zavarzadeh and Morton (1994), I argue that (post)modernism is a break initiated by modernism. However,

modernism itself is a break from the Victorian nineteenth century, and at the same time a link between the current cultural movement and Romanticism. The (post)modern is, then, taken to be a continuation and a move beyond modernism in the sense that current modernity is continuous with the capitalism of the nineteenth century, but is also different in terms of consumption, leisure, cosmopolitanism, Americanism, and industrialism. Ben Agger supports this contention and suggests the term 'fast capitalism' (1992: 299) for the present (post)modern moment; a moment which he believes to have "a sense of continuity between modernity and postmodernity" and which has distinctive features at the same time. "Fast capitalism", he says, "speeds up the rate at which concepts and images blur with the reality to which they bear a representational relationship ... Fast capitalism causes the 'rate of intelligence' to decline, thus checking the tendency of the rate of profit to fall" (Agger, 1992: 299).

I am also aware of the problematic fact that there is no one agreed meaning to the term 'postmodernism'; however, some theorists distinguish between two major kinds. Hal Foster, for example, distinguishes between a "postmodernism of resistance" that "seeks to deconstruct modernism from a deliberately critical perspective" and a "postmodernism of reaction" that repudiates modernism and celebrates (post)modernism (Foster, 1983: xi-xii). E. Ann Kaplan draws on Foster's theorization by distinguishing between two meanings linked to the term: a 'utopian' (post)modernism moving in a Derridean poststructuralist direction, and a 'commercial' or 'co-opted' one moving in a Baudrillardian direction (1988: 3). The former is the 'cultural break' brought about by feminism, deconstruction, Lacanian psychoanalysis, and--most

importantly--by the deconstruction of the subject; the latter “is linked to the new stage of multinational, multiconglomerate consumer capitalism and to the new technologies this stage has spawned” (1988: 4). Commercial (post)modernism suggests that there is no material reality, but a world where the image has become the only ‘reality’ (cf. Baudrillard, 1994).

Undoubtedly, what ‘post-al’ theories have called into question is the different traditional claims to Truth and basic human values. In other words, these theories have a doubt that human Truth is an objective representation of reality. Instead, they claim that reality is constructed both socially and linguistically. The departure from the belief in an objective world, the delegitimation of ‘universal knowledge’ and a global system of thought and ‘grand narratives’, and the Derridean attack on the ‘transcendental signified’, have all led to the conclusion that there is no pure datum and that knowledge represents power (cf. Rorty, 1989; Lyotard, 1984; Derrida, 1976; Foucault, 1980). The multiplicity of perspectives that came about as a result of the developments in technology and the electronic media after World War II had already undermined the traditional belief in objective truth. ‘Reality’, then, was replaced by ‘hyperreality’, as suggested by Baudrillard (1994), and is always apologized for, if used, by means of inverted commas.

Yet, as Gerald Graff argues (1977), a historical perspective can trace the origin of such developments back to the critical philosophies of the Age of Reason and Enlightenment which dissolved the ancient connection between rational, objective thought and value-judgement. Value then became subjective and the objective

world and the domain of meanings and values became ‘irreparably divided’ (1977: 223). Modern industrialism deepened this attitude in the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century by relating objective reality to technology, commerce and colonialism, and after World War II, to electronics, administration and media. Reason, after the horror of World War II, ceased to be a ‘potential cure’ (1977: 223), but rather a source of alienation; and rational explanations are thus “no more accepted to be the source of enlightening and freeing modern man” (see also Adorno and Horkheimer, 1972). On the contrary, Reason is unreliable and has gone far beyond the end it was supposed to reach (Graff, 1977: 223-4). Graff, then, concludes that “the paradox of the sophisticated modern mind is that it is unable to believe in the objective validity of meanings yet unable to do without meanings” (1977: 225). Thus the (post)modern ‘loss of meaning’ is a self-deception and “a betrayal directed at the world’s failure to yield an objective teleological order” (1977: 225) since it is unable to do without meaning.

The fundamental question to address, however, is how to theorize the rapid changes in every aspect of life at the beginning of the millennium and how to utilize these changes to promote progressive social changes against the seeming victory of the market, and hence capitalism. The spread of ‘post-al’ theories in relation to the rapid transformation of socio-cultural life can never be theorized outside of the context of the current stage of capitalist development. That is precisely why I contend that Jameson’s theorization of (post)modernism is a good starting point for contextualizing ‘post-al’ theories; but I also find it necessary to relate it to Ernest Mandel’s stipulation

of the third stage of capitalism since Jameson's 'cultural logic' relies heavily on Mandel's historical materialist study.

## ***GLOBALIZATION***

What is globalization? Why has it become the catch-all term that covers not only economic but also cultural and political events all over the world? Is it a rupture in history---as expressed in its cultural logic, that is, (post)modernism? Is it a "new" configuration of imperialism?

Undoubtedly, the relationship between globalization postal theories--e.g. (post) modernism, (post)structuralism, post-Marxism, post-Fordism, post-history... etc-- is a significant historical feature of the rise of the post-cold war era. Thus, to look at globalization as a one-sided phenomenon--defended by radical (post)modernists, and attacked by orthodox Marxists--is a big mistake, if not an ideological distortion.

Interestingly, Karl Marx and Fredrick Engles in *The Communist Manifesto* (1975) envisaged the emergence of a world market system leading to a global economic system as the market spreads all over the world. They argue that this global system would generate immense forces of discovery, transport, communication, and industry; hence the expected 'universal independence of nations'. However, Marx and Engles maintain that the same world market produces its antithesis, a new class of industrial proletariat that is propertyless. Hence their prediction of a global crisis leading to a world revolution against global capital, a revolution led by 'internationalist revolutionaries'.

Thus any dialectical approach to globalization must involve an understanding

of the forces of domination and resistance, haves and have not, global capital and local résistance, old and new, and general and particular. Capitalist relations of production in their structuration of social orders and hegemony are interconnected with (post)modern globalization. Hence the relationship between multinationals, global capital and the market. The market, for the first time in history, has become an epistemological mechanism that 'deconstructs' anything that is unique or culturally profound, a mechanism that has invaded culture, certainty, specificity, and even history.

Any critical approach to globalization cannot but be historical materialist that traces back this phenomenon to the process of colonial expansion in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which was joined by the development of modern commercial system and trade. As Marx and Engels argued rightly, world economic history is the history of breaking down of borders before the rapidly growing markets supported by the Industrial Revolution. The shift of the basis of economy toward information and communications technology after W W II, that is the technological and information revolution, has given capitalism the ability to renew itself, and colonize consciousness through the dissemination of ideas, values, and beliefs through images--or what Baudrillard calls "hyperreal simulacra" (1994). Thus being controlled by the ideology of the market economy, globalization extends colonialism to new uncolonized areas. It, therefore, comes to represent the ultimate degree of imperialist domination.

Ironically, contrary to what radical (post)modern thinkers claim, what (post) modernism--as the cultural logic of late capitalism (Jameson, 1991)--does is a kind of containment and invasion aimed at depleting and nullifying cultural specificity.

In other words, it aims to supplant the ideological conflict that was anticipated by Marx and Engels, by control of human consciousness through, what Adorno and Horkheimer (1972) call, 'culture industry,' that is, media images of a formalistic, depthless, and highly emotive content. As all Critical Theorists of the Frankfurt School have argued very convincingly, what the culture industry ultimately aims at is to mold behavior and to entrench a specific pattern of consumption of commodities, knowledge and culture. What is created, then, is not an individual, but rather a 'one-dimensional' consumer with 'false consciousness'.

Being hegemonized by capitalist ideology, instead of using media and information networks to enhance human solidarity and enrich cultural identity, specificity and diversity, they are used to undermine and hegemonize both cultural and social borders. The justification is, of course, globalization. As Jameson maintains in *Postmodernism, Or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), culture, as a social product, has become as much a part of the new economic system as tangible commodities. Such 'cultural commodities' are controlled by those who dominate the communications and information revolution. They are thus in a position to influence, control, hegemonize and shape values and behavior. Hence the antithetical question of representation and ideology within the knowledge/power equation, the question as to how can those cultures and social classes which are deprived of the technological means represent themselves? Globalization does not therefore stand for what it is claimed to be; rather it is a western cultural dominance.

Further, the claims of the disintegration of the individual and cultural specificity

are intended to pave the way for the mechanisms of cultural globalization; or rather (post)modernism, which are to hegemonize the world within a single value system that will respond passively to the greedy demands of the world market. In all this, individuals find themselves implicated in a global; socio-economic change over which they have no control. World market norms ensure that cultural production is commodified and that, what Habermas calls, 'public sphere' (1989) follows global market principles. The question, then, is undoubtedly a socio-politico-cultural one.

Within this context, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in *Empire* (2000), argue that the classical case of imperialism had now mutated into an imperial mode of domination, corresponding to cultural, social, and economic globalization.. And in his preface to *America, The New Imperialism: From White Settlement to World Hegemony* (2005) Eric Hobsbawm argues that so far as the Anglo-American notions of their imperial missions were concerned, "the rest of humanity was only a raw material, clay to be moulded by the potter's hand. This assumption of superiority may be called a legacy of British insularity, magnified by America's size and wealth" (xvi).

Having said this means that there is a need for a critical theory of globalization that overcomes the one-dimensional capitalist hegemonic interpretation. This is a dialectical theory that is supposed to take into account the fact that globalization can be positive vehicle of 'catastrophe' and 'progress' at the same time; a historical materialist theory that follows a dialectical approach to capitalism as a global economic system characterized by a world market and imposition of similar relations and production, commodities, and culture throughout the world. However, it is a theory

which should recognize not only the power of globalization but resistance to it as well.

This alternative theory thus should take into account the means by which general global conditions, interact with particular local cultures dialectically.

Ultimately, any radical theorization of (post)modern globalization needs to transform this experience and seek to endow individuals with a new sense of their place in the newly established global system--a theorization that respects the laws of dialectic (Jameson, 1991). Further, it is supposed to be a Gramscian theorization that prizes the historical dialectic free from mechanistic models of interpretation--a theorization that is dialectically interconnected with a practice that aims to get us beyond the moment of our historical development, and which enables us to become agents for activities of local and international (different from global) character. Thus this theorization can neither be *ahistorical* nor *asocial*, albeit historical materialist that does not only theorize global power but also international resistance.

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Christmas Stocking and Baby's Boots

White Feather/Robert Nabess

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## ***Camera Lucida***

For a special issue on the 40th anniversary of Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida*, *Mosaic* invites close readings informed by feminist and queer theory, phenomenology, psychoanalysis, deconstruction, postcolonial theory, critical race theory, and aesthetics.

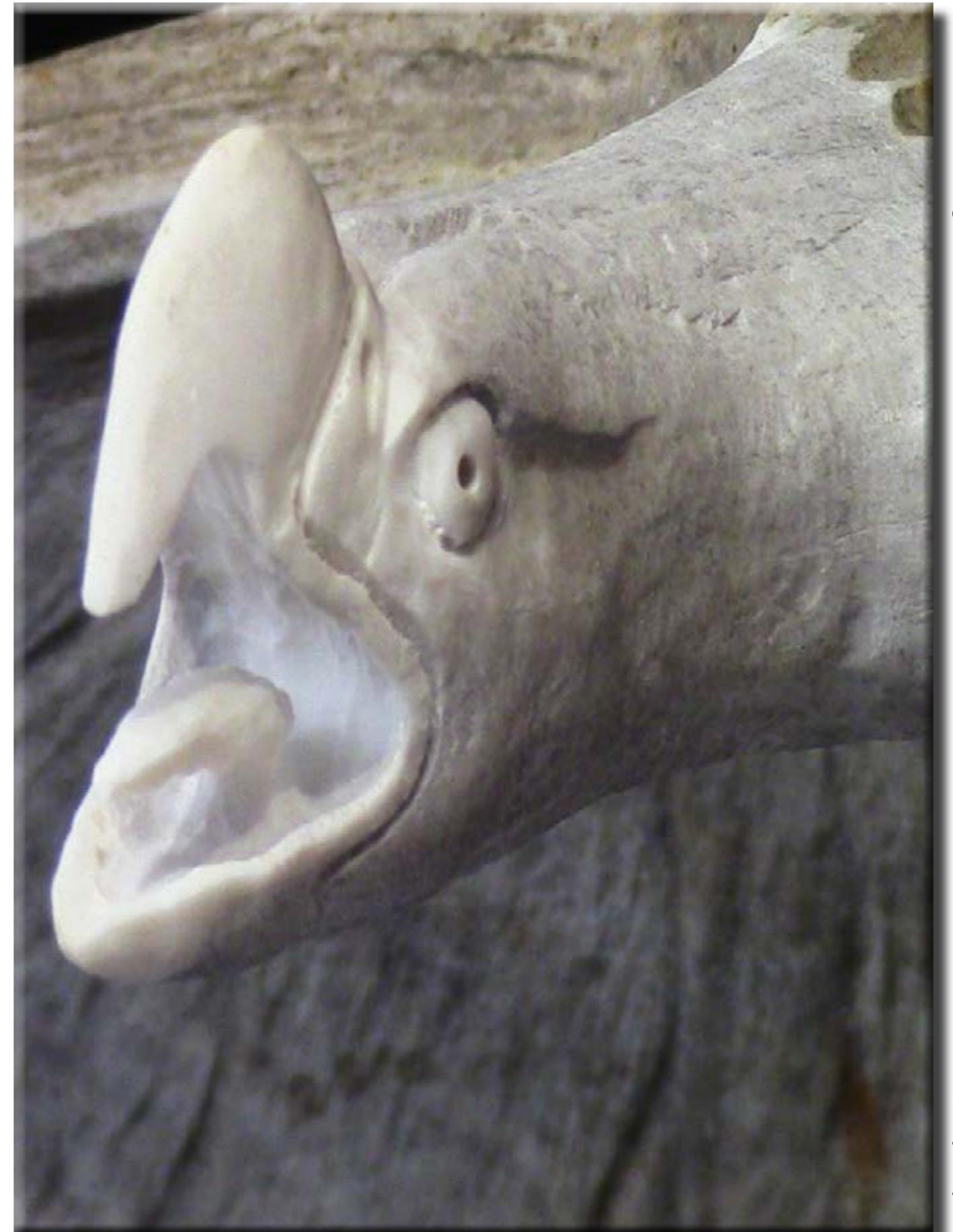
## ***National Literatures***

*Mosaic* invites submissions for a special issue on National Literatures and the cluster of questions that unfolds from this historical knot: literatures of the stateless; diasporic and trans-national literatures; modernisms without borders; Heimat traditions, as well as those more troubling histories of origin and belonging; narratives of the dispossessed, of persistent coloniality, of "imagined communities"; and messianic literatures arcing toward promised futures.

For our full CFPs and submission guidelines, visit our website at [www.umanitoba.ca/mosaic/](http://www.umanitoba.ca/mosaic/)

Submit your essay online at [www.umanitoba.ca/mosaic/submit](http://www.umanitoba.ca/mosaic/submit)  
Please send your questions to:

**Dr. Shep Steiner, Editor**  
*Mosaic, an interdisciplinary critical journal*  
[mosasub@umanitoba.ca](mailto:mosasub@umanitoba.ca)



Detail - Moosehorn Eagle

White Feather/Gary Campbell

# *call for papers*

The *quint's* forty fourth issue is issuing a call for theoretically informed and historically grounded submissions of scholarly interest—as well as creative writing, original art, interviews, and reviews of books. The deadline for this call is the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 2019—but please note that we accept manu/digi-scripts at any time.

## *quint guidelines*

All contributions accompanied by a short biography will be forwarded to a member of the editorial board. Manuscripts must not be previously published or submitted for publication elsewhere while being reviewed by *the quint's* editors or outside readers.

Hard copies of manuscripts should be sent to Sue Matheson at *the quint*, University College of the North, P.O. Box 3000, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada, R9A 1M7. We are happy to receive your artwork in digital format, PDF preferred. Email copies of manuscripts, Word or RTF preferred, should be sent to [thequint@ucn.ca](mailto:thequint@ucn.ca).

Essays should range between 15 and 25 pages of double-spaced text, including all images and source citations. Longer and shorter submissions also will be considered. Bibliographic citation should be the standard disciplinary format.

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