

POPULAR CULTURE REVIEW

Volume 24, Winter 2013



From the Editor



Editing *Popular Culture Review* for the last 27 years has been a labor of love. I would like to acknowledge the support of UNLV's College of Liberal Arts and Department of English as well as PCA/ACA and, most recently Policy Studies Organization.

Thank you all,
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From the Editor's Desk

As I write this, we are preparing for the 25th Annual Meeting of our parent, FWPCA/ACA, February 22 to 24, 2013 at the Palace Station in Las Vegas. Little did we think as we launched the organization in 1988 and the journal you are now holding in 1989, that we would be thriving a quarter of a century later. Of course, it rather amazes me that I am reasonably thriving, completing my 50th year at UNLV.

This issue of *PCR* fairly crackles with ideas, lucidly written to delight and expand the consciousness of the reader, articles begging to be discussed. Frequent contributors H. Peter Steeves and Daniel Ferreras Savoye have outdone themselves with fresh looks at art and literature. Steeves' article illuminates the phenomenological interactions between artist and viewer and the art itself in "The Concept of Conceptual Art", while Ferreras invites us to look at fiction as a parallel dimension, an idea you can expect to hear much more about in the future. Remember, you saw it here first.

Kenneth Payne introduces us to William Le Queux, whose many novels are an early twentieth century influence on later mysteries and thrillers, defining the Edwardian Englishman and male hegemony and expressing the unsettled nature of their time period. While Stephen King is no stranger to any of us, Alexandra Reuber makes a compelling case that the psychological Gothicism in his *Secret Window*, *Secret Garden* creates his most terrifying landscape.

David Chaplin convincingly argues Montgomery Clift's role as "the first rebel male" in cinema, while sociologists Ellis Godard and David Lopez argue that contemporary Nazi role playing and fetishism are just that—role playing. Srijani Ghosh examines the destructive role of several postfeminist "chick lit" novels in the creation of body dysmorphia. Finally Ji Hoon Lee has a positive take on Rock's philanthropic efforts.

Look for Ross Talarico's novel *Sled Run* reviewed in this issue. I couldn't put it down. Eminent biographer Carl Rollyson, luncheon speaker at this year's conference, is receiving well deserved accolades for his recent biographies of Dana Andrews and Sylvia Plath. Once you have read them, you may find yourself bingeing on his many earlier biographies. Daniel Ferreras Savoye's new book on James Bond is in press. Watch for it later this year.

You will be pleased to know that *PCR* will soon appear on line as well as in print. More on that later.

You will also note that we no longer have the old BlogSpot website which was hijacked. We have nothing to do with Lazarus LLC and do not endorse it. Follow us now at www.fwpc.org.

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The Concept of Conceptual Art: “You are Here” and Not Here

First Installation

You Are Here: An Olfactory Map of Life, 2008 (Chicago)¹

Description: Six antique wooden boxes sit on top of six old, rusted, metal stools in the middle of a large hall. Rope is tied between the stools, connecting them. Wooden boards with arrows painted on them are tied to the rope every 5 feet, indicating direction and flow to the “map.” Each of the six boxes is labeled: Birth, Home, School, War, Truth, and Death. Birth is the starting point on the map and it leads directly to Home. Home then branches off in two directions: one path leads from Home to School, another leads from Home to War. Both School and War eventually lead to Truth; and Truth finally leads to Death. Each of the six boxes has a toe-tag indicating the (fictional) contents, as well as a tube coming out of the side of the box to which an antique funnel is attached. The visitor takes up the tube and smells what is inside the box, with each smell representing what it is to occupy that different station in life. The smells are created through a variety of hidden contents not listed in the exhibit description (for instance, the Death box contains a rotting durian fruit, the School box contains old library books that were left in a damp basement for several months before the installation opened, etc.). Small, battery operated fans inside the boxes blow the smells into the tubing and toward the external funnel to keep the air, and thus the smells, flowing. The visitor navigates through the map and through life by means of smell—but also, of course, by means of touch and vision. The tags read as follows:

Birth Contents: “gauze, blood, bleach, hope, afterbirth”

Home (that never was) Contents: “cookies, soap, apple pie, nurturing, freshly mown grass”

School Contents: “pencil shavings, textbooks, chalk, conformity, Tater Tots”

War Contents: “shell casings, oil, medals, honor, rotting flesh”

Truth Contents: “truth”

Death Contents: “ashes, soil, pine, regret, formaldehyde”

Materials used: Funnels, oxygen concentrator tubing from a nursing home auction, antique hemp rope, antique metal stools, Canadian 120-year-old red barn wood, rusted wire, paper toe-tags, U.S. Army ammunition box, 150-year-old pine box, primitive golden oak glove box, antique W & J LANG Cake Biscuit Bakers box, lead school delivery box from the early 1900s, antique embalming fluid box, small fans, latex paint, unnamed contents of boxes.



Figure 1 Detail of *An Olfactory Map of Life*. Photograph by Monika Lozinska-Lee

The History of the Idea of Conceptual Art

In conceptual art, the idea driving the art is usually taken to be more important than the work of art itself. One might even say that the idea *is* the work of art itself and thus any physical object becomes superfluous. That is, someone could have the idea of constructing a map that could be navigated by means of smell, and though the particular sensory way of interacting with such a work of art might seem to be central to the art itself, it is truly more about the *idea* of an olfactory map than about actually smelling anything. One could read the description of such an installation and legitimately ask, “How much have I missed by not actually, physically interacting with the objects as they have been described?”

The idea behind conceptual art is thus not only central to the art but seems to have become the aesthetic object itself. As a one-sentence definition of the movement, this does about as good a job as any of defining what is meant by “conceptual art;” yet it also leaves far too much unsaid. Ideas are always important in art. And is it truly the case that art can consist of merely ideas?

It is unclear when conceptual art *per se* began. Most art historians argue that the work of Marcel Duchamp, close to a century ago, marked its birth. The idea, that is, behind hanging a urinal on a museum wall and calling it a “Fountain” seems to be more important than the actual fountain itself. As an audience, we do not miss much by not getting to see the urinal. Hearing or reading about it seems almost sufficient in and of itself; in other words, the work

itself is the *idea* of putting the urinal on the wall. Once you are familiar with the idea, you are in the presence of the art.

There are art critics who argue that all art after Duchamp has been necessarily conceptual because he forced us to reconsider the nature of the aesthetic experience at an ontological level. Phenomenologically, at least we can say that it is certainly the case that a urinal on a museum wall is experienced differently than a urinal in a restroom. The latter seems to have little sense of the aesthetic to it.

Perhaps. But one of the most important things we can learn from conceptual art is that it is likely the case that aesthetics is always a mode of appearing, not merely a category for understanding the being of traditional works of art displayed and presented in traditional spaces and manners. That is, when a urinal is placed in a museum one of the things we are forced to contemplate is the beauty that is in the urinal—the smooth flow and curve of the lines, the sheen of the porcelain, the careful choices that went into the design, etc. The fact that the artist himself did little to create this object—all he did, really, was sign it and ask us to consider it as a work of art—means that we are then retroactively forced to think about the way in which such qualities were already there in the *everyday* urinals we have been seeing all our lives and taking for granted. The aesthetic, that is, is always already operational in our lives, though we have, perhaps, been taking it for granted and not giving it our full attention.

What constitutes art is, at least in part, a function of how we experience something. Context and setting can turn something into a full-blown aesthetic object even as it hints that all objects are aesthetic objects to some degree. When we take something *as* art rather than *as* some other sort of thing, it is not as if a new object appears in the world. Rather, an aesthetic object appears as one way in which an object can appear. Taken to the extreme, this becomes the claim that anything at all can be anything at all if we simply say it is and take it to be such. “Ceci n’est pas une pipe”? Well, it is and it isn’t. And this is not *just* a urinal? It is and it isn’t. In 1961, Robert Rauschenberg was asked to participate in an exhibition of portraits at “Galerie Iris Clert” and rather than painting something, he sent a telegram reading: “This is a portrait of Iris Clert if I say so.” And it was—and it wasn’t. What Rauschenberg was exhibiting was an idea. And the idea itself was the object of art, supposedly making the telegram into a portrait and the entire concept of doing so into the aesthetic experience for the audience.

Nineteen-sixty-one was a good year for art. Apart from Rauschenberg’s telegram, there was M. C. Escher’s *Waterfall*, David Hockney’s *We Two Boys Together Clinging*, Jasper John’s *Maps*, and several performances of Rachel Rosenthal’s *Instant Theater*.² It is also the year that Yves Klein Blue was given a patent. The synthetic ultramarine pigment had been developed by Klein and a team of chemists, and once the patent was given so that Klein essentially owned that particular hue of blue (and thus, in some sense, all works of art anyone else might ever create using that pigment), the artist moved toward even further

distancing himself from the physical aesthetic object by having naked women covered in the pigment roll around on blank canvases as per his directions—directions he had given remotely, hundreds of miles away—thus making “paintings by Yves Klein.”

It was in the early '60s, too, that Christo's work began gaining popularity. His *Iron Curtain* was a mass of oil barrels jammed into a Paris street in order to create a traffic jam—and the viewer was asked to consider the traffic jam and the idea of oil barrels creating a traffic jam itself as the work of art. By 1972, Fred Forrest had done something ostensibly nicer for the citizens of Paris by spending money to buy a blank page in *Le Monde* on which readers were encouraged to construct their own works of art. The work of art, he claimed, was the idea that there were so many different works of art to come out of the project and the idea that everyone had the freedom to make his or her own contribution in secret. In the later '70s, Walter De Maria ordered a one-kilometer long brass rod to be constructed in Germany and buried it vertically in the ground so that only a few centimeters were sticking out. Essentially, like Forrest's private newspaper drawings, this *Vertical Earth Kilometer* work could not be seen by anyone for what it was, but the *idea* that there was a kilometer of brass buried beneath the viewer and the *idea* that the object of art was essentially hidden from experience was the real work of art—a work of art, unlike the rod itself, that was thought to be accessible to everyone.

Certainly, the 1960s and '70s in general marked the ascendance of conceptual art as a full-fledged cultural movement, though this time period did not invent the idea of conceptual art. Duchamp's *Fountain* had come five or six decades earlier and surely there are instances of conceptual art that can be traced back to the earliest aesthetic acts of humans. Diogenes, a contemporary and frenemy of Plato, was doing conceptual performance art in the guise of stand-up philosophy two-and-a-half millennia ago. This is, after all, the genius who refuted Zeno's argument that motion is not possible by standing up at the lecture, saying “I refute you,” and then walking out. The same man who carried around a lantern in broad daylight and told the citizens of Athens, holding it up to their faces, that he needed it to help him see if he could find a true man because so far, no luck. He is the same artist who was called a dog by his detractors, so he urinated on them and bit them when they came too close. Zeno lived his life as “Zeno,” as a true '70s *happening* (i.e., the 370s BCE), as the socially conscious and philosophically complicated Ziggy Stardust of Ancient Greece. And in making the concepts of philosophy into a work of art, he simultaneously made his life into a work of art, thereby showing us that life is, for all of us, already art. Living, Diogenes knew, is about ideas and about how we embody and enact them.

The first thing that conceptual art does, then, is open a space that allows us to think of all objects—of the world and even ourselves—as art. But there are still more specific questions that can be raised precisely concerning the way in which we wonder about the relationship between *ideas* and *objects*.

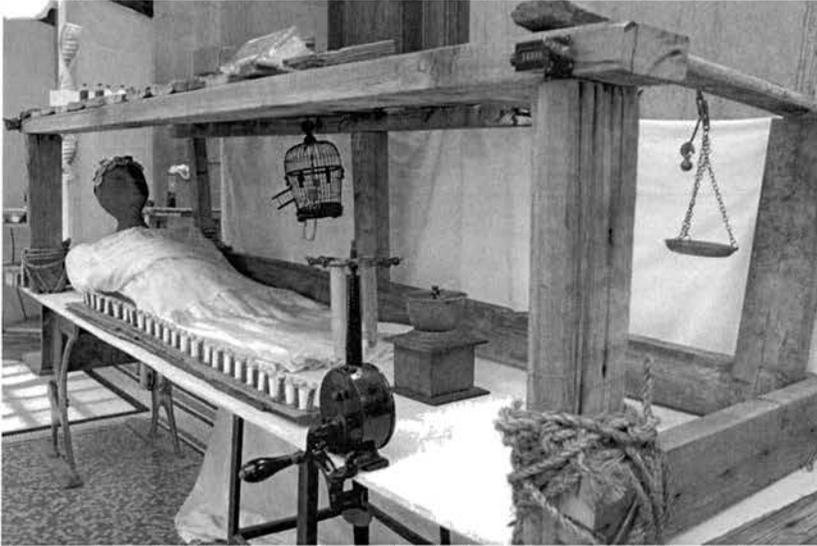


Figure 2. Detail of *The Human Genome Projection*. Photograph by Monika Lozinska-Lee

Second Installation

You Are Here: The Human Genome Projection, 2008 (Chicago)

Description: Several structures in a large room masquerade as the centerpieces of a late-nineteenth-century traveling carnival/sideshow of medical oddities. In the middle stands a kiosk constructed from old barn wood, including a long table with an antique mannequin on it. The mannequin's brain has been mapped, with tags nailed to its head in order to indicate what that area of the brain is dedicated to processing/knowing (e.g., "flight or fight," "fear of death," "the name of that guy who was in that thing," "*Dónde está la biblioteca*," etc.). On or near the table there is a test tube centrifuge with test tubes filled with ashes, an x-ray viewer with x-rays of broken bones from abused children, a small video screen (hidden inside a wooden box) scrolling through old-time photos of medical curiosities and modern images of DNA, a meat grinder into which the mannequin's hospital gown/wedding dress is being fed, vials of black and white powders, and mason jars with embalmed "fetal skeletons." Nearby, there is a booth with a curtain. When one opens the curtain and enters the booth, a sensor is tripped so that Gregorian chants begin to play through hidden speakers. A light turns on inside an antique lighted microscope that sits on a metal hospital table with a sign inviting viewers to look into the microscope to see an actual sample of human DNA that has been fully mapped. The viewer can operate the microscope, focusing the image and changing the intensity of the bulb. Once the image comes into view, it is found to be a microdot that reads

“You Are Not Here.” Directly outside the booth are several tables constructed from old barn wood. One table has a test tube mixer running on it, with several antique glass marbles in a pan that are labeled A, T, G, and C. The marbles clank around in the metal pan and hit each other in a constant series of new combinations. This percussive sound echoes throughout the hall in which the installation has been placed (the only sound apart from the chants that are audible only to someone inside the microscope booth). Another table has an antique doll nailed to a metronome. The metronome clicks and flashes a light, increasing in tempo whenever anyone approaches the table. There is also a 5' x 5' x 5' box encased in glass inside of which there are spinning knives attached to a fan (that seems to be short-circuiting), an oscilloscope, and a strobe light. An attendant dressed in a white lab coat and Butoh-style makeup carries a dirty wooden clipboard in one hand and an assortment of antique medical and pseudo-medical devices in a Victorian walrus-skin doctor bag in the hand. He walks slowly and deliberately through the exhibit, sizing up the visitors. He is always silent, but is constantly changing out the x-rays near the mannequin and, from time to time, stopping a spectator in order to measure and “test” him or her, recording his data on the clipboard with a stubby, dirty pencil.

Materials used: Antique toy child's metal tin cup, 1940s Sleep-Time doll, Seth Thomas vintage metronome used by a child who excelled at playing the violin by six years old and lost all knowledge of music due to traumatic brain injury at the age of 20, antique Oxford Cutlery butter knives, 120 year-old barn wood and nails, black light, UV ink, UV paint, antique hemp rope, wood and leather bellows from early 1900s, tile, Telequipment S61 oscilloscope used by General Electric scientist during the Korean War, vintage wooden pulley with hooks, Eimer & Amend antique hand-crank test tube centrifuge with test tubes, analog crank counters, antique coffee grinder, speakers, two antique school desks (c. 1910) taken from a school that a Nobel Prize winning scientist attended fifty years before winning that prize, round metal rim tags, vintage glass marbles recovered from a Chicago home that burned down in the mid-1960s, wooden case, rusted razor blades, blue lights, 1940s German nautical map mileage gauge with compass, recently recovered one-inch flechette darts dropped from U.S. helicopters during the Vietnam war in order to kill Vietcong hiding in the jungle, antique scale, shadow box, photo of the artist's mother and uncle as children (c. 1951), 1950s enamelware medical tray, wooden birdcage, mason jars, Jell-o, miniature skeletons, Styrofoam head, female torso display mannequin, glass bottle and vials, human genome project Venter Collins card, X-ray light box, paper, multiple X-rays of children all under the age of seven thought to have been potential victims of child abuse, Graf-Apsco vintage 900 series lighted microscope, metal wheeled cart, MP3 player programmed with Gregorian chants, 1950s stainless steel medical tray and mirrored instrument, salt, soot taken from the ground of a metal blasting workshop, fabric, antique maps, carpet tacks, plywood, Victorian genuine Walrus hide doctor's bag,

antique lab coat, assortment of antique medical and pseudo-scientific medical devices, pencil.



Figure 3. *Detail of The Human Genome Projection*. Photograph by John W. Sisson

Performance and Authorship

Ideas are thus key to conceptual art. It is the concept that one is supposed to encounter, that one is meant to take up as the point of the work. In some cases, the object itself can seem superfluous (hence, the number of works of conceptual art that exist as mere instructions on how to create something rather than presentations of the actual thing). Actually doing something or making something physical is not the ultimate goal of most conceptual art, but rather it is having an intellectual realization itself that becomes an aesthetic experience.³

Since most conceptual art is deeply dependent on a text or a background story to explain it, there are many questions that get raised as to how the meaning of conceptual art is founded. In the past, twentieth-century aestheticians often claimed that the author's intent is not important to the meaning of a traditional work of art. Once the painting or sculpture or installation, etc. exists, it is a communal object and thus finds its meaning in the varied experiences of the community, their interpretations, and the intersubjective meaning they bring to the experience. We cannot, that is, know what "Waiting for Godot" *really* means by asking Beckett, and we cannot learn what the blue *Old Guitarist* *really* means by asking Picasso. The author, it is said, has no privileged position from which to declare some objective, true, complete, full, real meaning. All of this seems fair. We are not always in full awareness of our own intentions, and even when we are, those intentions change in the process of making the art such that to ask the artist what something means

should garner a changing answer as the artist him—or herself changes (and as the context changes around the artist). Meaning in art, as with meaning in all things, is a communal project that founds objectivity on intersubjectivity. The author's intent is of no more importance necessarily than any other "fact" we might bring to the discussion.

But with conceptual art such a claim is controversial. Unless the artist explains that the couple of centimeters of brass you are looking at are only the tip of the kilometer-long rod buried in the ground, unless Rauschenberg tells us that it is a drawing by Willem De Kooning that he has erased and is now calling his own work of art,⁴ unless, that is, we know the author's intent and story, we don't really get the full picture and thus the full aesthetic experience. At a point in history when the art object itself was becoming less fetishized and thus less important, the artist him—or herself was interestingly becoming more important.

Some critics find this to be something potentially troubling about conceptual art: focused on the artists more than on the art, conceptual art can easily slide toward narcissism if one is not careful; and conceptual art thus leads to a "cult of personality" such that a work becomes important only because some particular person is behind it and has declared it important (e.g., if Rauschenberg sends a telegram and claims it is a portrait, the gallery is happy to display it; if Rauschenberg's dentist did the same, no one would likely care). This is certainly not necessarily the case, but it is one way in which conceptual art is thought to be interestingly distinct and harder to pull off well.

In performance art the challenges are somewhat different—at least at first glance. Performance art is often associated with conceptual art because it is trying to convey an idea in its fleeting moment before us. The idea may be a notion such as "Home" or a feeling such as "Hope," but it is a concept all the same. In many ways, the performance seems to be "about something," which means "about something other than the performance." One can always say the same of Cezanne's apples on the canvas, of course, but there is also just the sense that they are apples. The performance artist typically makes a statement, expounds on an idea, portrays a feeling, or exhibits a concept in a manner that is more direct than "traditional" art. And while we might think that we have not really missed much if we don't get to see the actual postcard, the actual brass rod, or the actual erased drawing (because it was the idea behind each of these things that was the real aesthetic work), this is not the case for most performance art. If one didn't get to see Rachel Rosenthal on stage in 1984 surrounded by a veritable Noah's ark of 35 different species of animals in her piece *The Others*, then one indeed missed out on a key element of the aesthetic experience. Perhaps it is the case that the title and the back story and the ideas and concepts are key to making *The Others* work, but seeing the performance itself seems necessary to the aesthetic experience in a way that seeing the Rauschenberg postcard is not necessary. This would mean that the performance artist has a special duty and an extra challenge. It is not only the concept in his or her art that is important, but also the execution of it.

Phenomenologically, however, performance is always necessary for art. This is because the aesthetic object is never exhausted by our experience of it. The same could be said to be true of any object, but for aesthetic objects it is even more the case.



Figure 4. Detail of *The Human Genome Projection*. Photograph by John W. Sisson

For objects in general, the reason we have a sense of things being “outside” of us has little to do with spatiality and the limits of our bodies. It is not the case that we have a sense of an externality to objects because they are “beyond” our flesh. We are not *inside* our flesh, peeking out at the world like voyeurs. Instead, we are *in* the world, and our consciousness is in the world, spreading out and into everything around us. The “outsideness” of objects is, rather, a manifestation of the way in which they always necessarily exceed our conscious grasp. Since the being of an object is found in all of the ways in which it can possibly appear, and since those ways are innumerable infinite (because there are infinitely many ways in which we can experience something), we can never fully know—never possess or constrict or own or overcome—an object. There will always be some profile that is hidden, some way in which it could be

experienced that we have not yet enacted and fulfilled. The object races away from us even as we come to know it better. It is never exhausted, used up, known, and done with. If I experience an apple, there is always another vantage point from which I could see it, another profile it has to offer, another context in which it can appear with new meaning. I might study the apple from Here and There, sniff it, bite into it, or toss it back and forth from hand to hand. But even with a lifetime spent getting to know the apple there will always be more left to uncover, another experience I could have had but didn't. The apple is never exhausted by my being conscious of it: it is outside of and beyond me, even if it finds its being in the infinite number of ways it can be given to consciousness.

All of this is true for every object of consciousness, but for aesthetic objects there is something additional going on. The aesthetic object finds part of its being in *the performative expression* of the viewer.⁵ What Cézanne's painted apples can mean is more than what they make present. In order to see this we must first accept a less-than-obvious truth: art does not represent.

To say that art is not representational is to say that art does not replace, echo, or shadow something real as Plato might have feared. Abstract and conceptual art are typically understood to be non-representational, but the truth is that no art represents something other than what it is. A painting of an apple is not a *sign* of an apple. It does not denote or refer to an apple. Rather, it *is* an apple. A picture or image of something is one way in which that thing can be present to consciousness. If I look at an apple directly, taste an apple, remember an apple, imagine an apple, see a photograph of an apple, view a painting of an apple, or even think the word "apple," the object of consciousness in each case is exactly the same: an apple. Each way of presencing merely carries with it its own complex manifold of presence and absence. Language conjures up real things. To say the word "apple" makes an apple present. But a word is a fairly absent way for a thing to being present. A painting of an apple, too, has a great deal of absence to it, but so does a physical encounter with an apple. When I merely look at an apple, I presence the absence of the backside of it, of its sweetness or sourness, of its smell, etc. All of these aspects of the apple are experienced when I look at the apple, but they are experienced through apperception rather than perception, through our ability to directly experience their absence as something positively present. Consequently, when I see a painting of an apple it is an apple that is present to my consciousness (i.e., the object of consciousness is not "an image of an apple"), and I can thus taste, smell, and feel the apple in such an experience, though in very limited ways. A good painting makes these experiences less absent than a bad painting. This is why, perhaps, Cézanne once destroyed a painting he was working on because he felt the viewer couldn't taste the apples enough.⁶ Presence and absence—in a complex manifold—are the ways in which things appear, the way in which they have their being.

If art is never about representation, then we must ask ourselves specifically: what is it about an aesthetic object that is so special? All works of

art require performance. This is most easily seen in a play or a piece of music, of course, but it is true for all aesthetic objects. When a poet reads a poem aloud, he or she performs the work for us. And even when one reads a poem silently, there is never true silence: the words sound in the reader's mind, ringing and echoing as words always do. A painting, too, is performed. There is both the performance of its original construction and the performance of the audience that sees it. Jackson Pollock became famous for making the narrative of the construction of the painting central to the meaning of the painting, with drips of paint taking the viewer by the hand and walking him or her, Hansel-and-Gretel-bread-crumb-style, backwards through the path that Pollock himself had taken through the forest of the canvas. We see the performance that created a Pollock painting quite easily, and as our eyes try to trace that path, we repeat the performance a second time (though like all repetitions, it is never exactly the same). This is an obvious case of performance, but the same is true for all painting. When we look at a Cézanne still life, there is a performance that necessarily created the work, but the artist doesn't wish us merely to repeat or reconstruct that narrative. Rather, Cézanne lets the viewer perform the painting him—or herself, uncovering a new story in the process. The performance begins thus: the viewer stands a certain distance from the canvas and is instantly thrown in space into the spatiality of the painting.⁷ If, for instance, the painting is several feet away on a museum wall, but the painting is a painting of a table set with apples and oranges, the viewer instantly enters the spatiality (i.e., the world) of the painting and sees the table from Cézanne's perspective rather than his or her own. For example, if Cézanne painted the table as being about six feet away from him, and if the finished canvas is now on a museum wall ten feet away from the viewer, the viewer does not experience the table as being sixteen feet away. Instead, the viewer sees the table as six feet away, instantly collapsing the (apparent) distance between him—or herself and the wall.⁸ This is what it means to *inhabit* the painting. This is what it means to have our consciousness always already "out" in the world. We think from a place inside the canvas because our consciousness is in the work of art. Once we begin to perform the painting from within, our eyes move around the canvas, focusing here and there. This takes time, and as time unfolds a performance takes shape. We move from left to right, or we dart back and forth, or we scan up and down, or we focus for a long time on one apple while ignoring the apple nearby, etc. What makes Cézanne one of the greatest artists of all time is his understanding of how such performances unfold and his ability to orchestrate an experience for the viewer that is rich, informative, beautiful, and rewarding. By painting the table and its contents from different perspectives, Cézanne makes it such that while our eyes move across the canvas it seems as if we are physically moving around the table. We walk around inside a Cézanne painting all while standing still in front of it, seeing this apple from the far right, this ginger pot from above and to the left, this orange from behind, etc. In the amazing *Madame Cézanne in a Yellow Chair* (1893-1895), if we move into the painting and then let our eyes

scan from top to bottom, we can even see Madame Cézanne stand up from her seat to greet us! Performance is thus key to painting itself, and whether the body is thrown and the eye scans a soup can, a starry night sky, a man wearing a derby with an apple obscuring his face, or a series of melting clocks, it is always the case that we perform the work of art. Cézanne just knows this, makes use of it, and creates masterpieces like no other.

An aesthetic object is not exhausted by our experience of it, it does not represent something other than what it is, and it must be performed. What remains to be said is how the performance of an aesthetic object is particularly a performative *expression*. "Expression," here, is not meant to suggest that aesthetics is merely about the affective or emotive. Middle English from the late fifteenth-century brought us the term from the Latin "expressio" which meant "a pressing or squeezing out." Thus, rather than suggesting, for instance, that an expression of a feeling is a *sign* of a feeling or something that points to the feeling, we must take an expression of a feeling to be an actual manifestation of a feeling, the bursting-forth not of something that is hidden or internal, but an acknowledgment of a feeling's being out into the world because we are always already there. Further, the affective is not seen as dualistically related to rationality or reason, but is, instead, part of *logos* itself. When we press reason, the affective is found to be contained within and throughout. An expression is therefore an acknowledgment and a centering of attention on the way in which reason emotes; and a performative expression is one in which we enact, embody, feel, and think.

In Cézanne's *The Black Clock* (1869-1871), the clock, shell, lemon, tablecloth, etc. are in the world as I take them up. They are beyond me and not exhausted by my experience of them. I will never know them completely even if I might at some point know them well enough to make claims about them. Also, the painting does not represent a clock. I do not experience it as a mere image of a clock, but rather it is the black clock that is the object of my consciousness. Further, I must perform the painting, allowing the painting to move me in space and time even as my body and my gaze unfold a narrative of looking. Finally, I am asked to pay attention to what is *expressed* in the performance of the painting—i.e., what it means to feel, think, and be conscious of death, temporality, sexuality, and all the rest that is experienced with the world of the painting and thus necessarily in my world. All of this expression comes to bear on me and my worldview—I *feel* it shaping me and moving me—and I am changed. A good work of art does this in a major and meaningful way, but all works of art operate in the same manner. Just as a good conversation with someone can change my life, so can a good work of art. All conversations work in basically the same way. What marks a good conversation apart from all of the others is the manner in which it unfolds and what is said within that conversation. And so it is with art as well. A finger-painting magnetized to a refrigerator door and *The Mona Lisa* in the Louvre call to us to think about the performative expression in each instance. They mean something different and

change our world in different ways. At different times of our life they are, one hopes, just the sorts of conversations we need.

Third Installation

You Are Here: The Map Precedes the Territory—Live Satellite Feed from Iraq, 2008 (Chicago)

Description: A large sprawling installation with a table made from 120-year-old barn wood as its foundation sits inside a darkened room. The central table has the majority of items with which the public is asked to interact. A satellite dish affixed to a 9' pole with a blinking strobe light is attached with cables to a wooden crate sitting on the table. Inside the crate there is a black and white monitor. The viewer is told that it is possible to see a live video feed from Iraq, scanning the desert across 360-degrees every 300 seconds. When one puts one's head into the crate, one can see the images of the video feed and even hear fighter jets pass over from time to time as well as people yelling in Arabic in the distance. In reality, the images are a recorded loop, and the desert is just outside Las Vegas. If the viewer waits long enough, the outline of the Las Vegas Strip comes into frame, the loud and abrupt sound of a slot machine paying off is heard, and the film flashes the words "YOU ARE NOT HERE BUT YOU ARE HERE" in bright white before resetting. What the people in the distance are yelling in Arabic are such things as: "This is not what you think it is. You are here but you are also there. You do not know where you are. The structures that support There and Here are the same," etc. There are two WWII battlefield telephones on the table. Both are connected to hidden tape players also set on a loop. The visitor is encouraged to pick up the phones and hear a conversation. The first conversation is in Arabic and concerns the nature of simulation, Jean Baudrillard, capitalism, and what constitutes our view of reality and how this makes political occupation possible. The other conversation is an edited version of President George W. Bush's "Mission Accomplished" speech in which he appears to be talking to himself. Also on the table are several other items, including books (the most important of which is an antique book on the military use of maps that also contains English translations of all of the Arabic spoken in the recorded pieces in the installation). Near the central table there are freestanding side tables and barn doors resting to the sides of the table like ramps. Plastic army figures, many of which are burned and melted, are mounting an invasion of the table up the barn door ramps. A reel-to-reel tape recorder is at floor-level where the army figures begin; some of the figures are on the reels, spinning. The tape that is playing—at a volume so low that one has to sit down on the floor and put one's ear to the speaker—is a recording of a soldier talking about post-traumatic stress disorder. Nearby, a restored, animated, 70-year-old, wooden mannequin in the form of a young boy is wearing a Soviet-issued gas mask, waving his arms when motion sensors indicate someone has come near. In one hand he holds a royal straight flush

poker hand made out of cards from the U. S. government-issued Iraq War deck. A 16mm movie projector from the 1940s lights the mannequin from across the room, showing old war footage across the boy's face and body. A small table to the side of the projector houses a rotating laser that is pointed at a target saying "There." The rotating laser sweeps across a 45-degree arc, coming to focus on the "There" target in the center. The laser and target are encased in glass, and the internal walls inside are angled mirrors such that the laser light bounces infinitely from side to side as it moves, hitting the "There" target while also necessarily hitting all of the other targets inside the box as well. Beside the laser is a wooden table with a blue spotlight focusing on a miniature antique globe. The globe, dressed up like a pincushion with recently recovered one-inch flechette darts dropped from U.S. helicopters during the Vietnam War in order to kill Vietcong hiding in the jungle, glows in the light.

Materials used: U. S. government Iraq War playing cards, 120 year-old barn wood and nails, child's Soviet Army GP-5 gas mask and canvas pouch, 1940s restored Silhouettes animated store mannequin, 16mm movie reel and metal case, 1943 16mm Moviegraph projector E-743, wooden rods, black wooden card table, unfinished pine card table, lasers, mirrors, motors, aluminum foil, plywood, toy globe, 6 inch metal black fan propeller, 6v motors, vintage desk globe, fishing line, G. I. Joe weapons, shell casings, antique hemp rope, blue LED light, strobe lights, satellite dish, enamel paint, World War II U. S. military phones, rusted tray table, U.S. Army dress greens 39R military uniform worn by a soldier who was injured in a mine explosion, reel to reel recording of a Viet Nam vet discussing his psychological case history, vintage plastic green army men, "Map Interpretation with Military Applications" (1943 first edition book), black and white portable television, antique magnifying lens, vintage reel to reel tape recorder, MP3 player, recently recovered one-inch flechette darts dropped from U.S. helicopters during the Vietnam war in order to kill Vietcong hiding in the jungle, CD player, blue and black-lights, 1940s child's intercom telephone play set, DVD player, 12v motors, antique globe bookends, two U.S. Army ammunition boxes (7.62 small cal and 50 cal), shell casings, coaxial cable, crystal globe on brass stand, Russian Navy barometer.



Figure. 5. *Detail of The Map Precedes the Territory: Live Satellite Feed from Iraq.* Photograph by Monika Lozinska-Lee



Figure. 6. *Detail of The Map Precedes the Territory: Live Satellite Feed from Iraq.* Monika Lozinska-Lee

The Concept of the Concept

Concepts themselves are tricky things. The history of philosophy is in many ways the history of our struggle to understand concepts. Plato, of course, considered concepts to be so important that he argued that they have more reality than our own physical world. “Tree,” that is, is far more real than any tree we have ever seen. And so are “Freedom,” “Beauty,” “Love,” and all other universals. These Ideals live in the Realm of the Forms, the Realm of Being, while we are trapped in the world of particulars, the Realm of Becoming. All of the actual trees we experience are shadows of the more perfect “Tree.” For this reason, in part, Plato banished artists from his proposed utopia. A painting of a tree is a shadow of a physical tree, a shadow of a shadow, and thus even further removed from the true reality, the true Form, the true concept.

Immanuel Kant considered the search for *a priori* concepts—concepts that we have in our minds before we experience anything in the world, concepts that thus did not arise from experience and abstraction but are built into conscious thought as the transcendental possibility of thought itself—to be the

foundation of all philosophy. His great contribution to epistemology was his supposed discovery of the fourteen fundamental concepts that are necessary for there to be any experience at all, the fourteen “categories of the mind” that are the precondition for conscious engagement with the world itself. These *a priori* concepts, he argued, include such things as “Space,” “Time,” “Causality,” and “Number.”

In the twentieth-century, Gilles Deleuze and Jacques Derrida also came to focus on concepts. Deleuze defines philosophy as “the activity of creating concepts.”⁹ And Derrida argues that our concepts are not universal and not a reflection of a reality that is “out there” in some objective scientific sense, but rather all of our concepts are constructs that carve up a malleable world.¹⁰ The world can be carved up, that is, in an infinite number of ways. Concepts, and the language that embodies them, are used to keep the chaos at bay, but they do not reflect anything universally true or necessary in the old, metaphysical senses of such terms.

In English we get the word “concept” from the Latin “conceptus” which is from the past participle of “concupere.” “Concupere” means “to conceive” (literally, “to take with”—also related to the Old French “concevoir”). “Conceiving” thus indicates a mental apprehending and a pregnancy, but also a “taking.” As a result, a concept is a “taking with.” It means we apprehend the world anew, give birth to a new world by becoming pregnant with a new worldview. We take things together that we did not take together before. Multiple trees are now seen as part of “Tree,” for instance. The concept does this work for us.

It is important to note, however, that a concept has a violent force to it. It is a *taking*, not a receiving or a giving. It reaches out and grabs the world and forces it to give something up. Chaos is ordered; anarchy is held at bay. Things are now conceptually organized and structured. It is, perhaps, wise to remember that concepts have this power behind them and are, in some sense, always a conservative project—always trying to organize and classify and maintain a precise order, always conserving even when they seem radical and outlandish.

The worries of Plato and the hopes of Kant were metaphysical in nature, based on the belief that our experience of the world is separate from the world itself—indeed, even a distortion of the world that keeps us from knowing things, and the truth, as they really are. The goal of philosophy, according to metaphysics, is to remedy that problem. Philosophy is consequently thought to be unrelated to art and, in a concrete sense, separate from and opposed to daily life. It is this tradition of philosophy that we must overcome. And conceptual art, properly understood, helps us in this task—even as such a re-imagined understanding of philosophy strives to help art in return. If art is not about representation, and if all art is performative expression, then the concepts that are employed are powerful, indeed, but perhaps there can be a celebration of the chaos as that which makes an appropriate order appear. It will be a celebration that takes place even while we discuss the values that are inherent in our

conceptualizations and the values that we should promote. This is not to say that art needs to be subservient to politics or ethics. This is not a prescription for propaganda. Rather it is to realize that the very act of conceptualizing, and the very act of making art, is always already soaked through with moral decision-making.

Conceptual art, then, is not different from any other type of art in an ontological way. Something is lost if we do not see Duchamp's urinal, do not get to stare at Rauschenberg's erasure, and do not walk through some lesser artist's installations. Simply to read or hear about these things is to be in the presence of them—and to be able to perform the concepts they are bringing to the fore—but it is to presence them in an absent way. All concepts, when not fleshed out fully, when not lived and explored and performed, are ethereal and ghostly, absently intended even while they are directly before us.

And if the artist's intention seems more important in conceptual art than other forms of art, this is just a reminder that conceptual art should be showing us that the opposite is always true. To think we understand an erasure if we know the famous sketch that has been erased is to think, falsely, that our only access to that sketch is outside what is given, outside in some narrative that the author or a commentator might tell us in order to let us in on the secret. This simply is not the case. First, because what is erased is still there on the page; the traces of its absence still reverberating and present for us to see. To be attuned to that absence, even to project our own erased pencil strokes, is the performance that rewards us. And second, because what is told to us directly by the artist is always just as suspect—and just as trustworthy—as what we can see for ourselves, even in conceptual art. Who is to say, really, that the most important point of Rauschenberg's erasure is what, specifically, has been erased? The background description and the statement of the author's intention are interesting, but they are not the work of art in full. Something is missing if we search them out singly and think we have found the world.

Furthermore, should I encounter a few centimeters of a brass rod sticking out of the ground while walking through a forest, even if I do not know that there is a full kilometer more buried straight below me, I need to be intrigued and amazed and overcome by the beauty of it all in the same way that I need to learn to see and feel the endless rhizomes connecting the forest life, the arterial roots of trees branching out for miles around me as they search for water and comingle their damp fingery tendrils, the web of life and nonlife that is always underfoot supporting me and lifting me up and asking to be seen in all of its unseen glory when all that might be *visible* is just the tip of it all. Metaphysics, and the scientific worldview in which the world is reduced to data and only that which can be presently present, presently measured, presently controlled and fully known can appear, blinds us. But to miss the hidden kilometer that is always there in all art and in the world around us would be to miss the aesthetic altogether. To miss all of this would be to miss the point. To

miss all of this would be to miss the art, to miss our cue to be on stage and perform our world, to miss being alive.

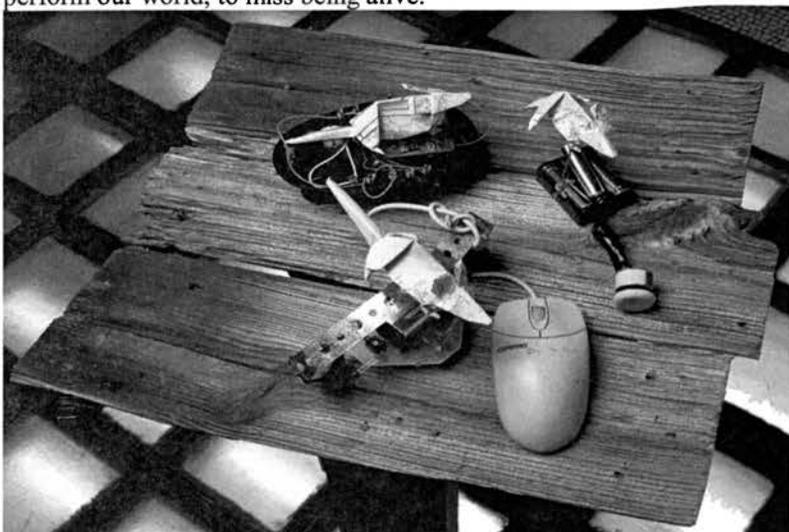


Figure. 7. Detail of *The Lab is Dystopia*. Photograph by John W. Sisson

Fourth Installation

You Are Here: The Lab Is Dystopia, 2008 (Chicago)

Description: Using old bricks and 2 x 4 boards from a dismantled nineteenth-century barn, a maze is constructed on the floor of a room. The maze spans 625 square feet, inside of which the viewer encounters a variety of robots. Nearly all of the robots look like mice or have map-origami mice on top of them (i.e., pages of maps that have been folded into origami mice and affixed on top of the robot base). The public, always outside the maze, plays the role of the scientist, either torturing or rescuing the animals inside by using various remote controls and other devices to change the environment and alter the behavior of the robots. There are two remote controls that move the humanoid robotic scientist (standing approximately 20 inches tall and dressed in a white lab coat), and the operator is left to choose whether to help or hinder the mice in their project of being forced to map the scientist's (i.e., the viewer's) maze. Some of the robots feel their way around the edges of the maze, methodically mapping it out as they try to escape; others move randomly. Some respond to sound, light, and/or the proximity of a physical barrier. Viewers are encouraged to shout at the robots to find the ones that respond to sound, to shine the antique flashlights provided in order to see which ones respond to light, etc. Some mice have been in the maze far too long and scurry, spin, and pace without reason. There is also a cat robot in the maze, programmed to follow the robotic scientist until he

encounters a mouse robot, at which point the cat robot autonomously attempts to destroy the mouse robot with his jaws and paws. The maze is completely enclosed. It has no start, no center, no finish, and no exit.

Materials used: Tiffany lamp pieces, bricks from a demolished school, 120 year-old barn wood, antique hemp rope, antique maps, parts from several Roomba I-robots, various motors and gears, batteries, IR sensors, photocells, heat sensors, sound sensors, nineteenth-century stained glass panels, tongue depressors, motion detectors, various computer mice, refurbished Robosapien redesigned and outfitted in a white lab coat, vintage cloth fabric, antique flashlights, robotic killer cat (designed by the artist), various salvaged and original small robots and mechanical parts, mousetraps.



Figure 8. Detail of *The Lab is Dystopia*. Photograph by Monika Lozinska-Lee

Conclusion: Here

If the world is ever-malleable, then the concepts we choose to promote and live carry with them ethical and social-political import at every step because they do not exist on their own but rather are our organization of the world, our re-ordering of the chaos even as we celebrate it, our choices against a backdrop of rules that limit us and make choice possible. With such living comes responsibility. To organize the world this way instead of that—to make art about X instead of Y, to celebrate A instead of B, to call this into further absence and bring that into greater presence—is thus a decision that is at once aesthetic, ontological, political, and ethical. In the end it is surely the case not only that the activity of thinking is itself a sort of conceptual art, as thinking organizes and remakes the world, but that the artist him—or herself helps us think, elucidating

concepts, introducing new concepts, exploring the nature of concepts, and demonstrating how our minds and the world with which they are engaged are a living aesthetic experience. That we live this life and this art together is a necessary implication of such truth—a realization of a responsibility, and if we do it right, a joy, that has no start, no center, no finish, and no exit.

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Notes

¹I created all of the individual installations discussed here for the 2008 “Site Unseen” installation and conceptual art juried festival hosted annually by The Chicago Cultural Center, Chicago, IL. Each was a part of my large exhibition entitled “You Are Here” which spanned four halls/theatres in the Center. I am grateful to Dolores Wilber, Julie Laffin, Claire Geall Sutton, Jess Mott, Clark Hayes, and everyone at the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs for their help in mounting the exhibits and their boundless support. Thanks also to Danielle Meijer, Maryse Meijer, Nileen Clark, Tommy Truong, Brian Proffitt, Mae the Bellydancer, Marci Roesch, Christina Green, Laura Mahler, Pete Parsons, Bill Martin, Matthew Girson, Jesús Pando, Lesandre Ayrey, Jim Brenner, Lynda Garza, Dinah D’Antoni-Niedas, Jorge Niedas, Dilek Huseyinzadegan, Jeremy Bell, Ali Abbas, Felicia Campbell, Salwa Abbas, Aziz Bawany, Adam Bawany, and Robert Maldonado for “performing” the works. Also many thanks to photographers Monika Lozinska-Lee and John W. Sisson, Jr. for their incredible photographs, some of which are reproduced here.

²One thinks also of artists such as Henry Flynt, Yoko Ono, Robert Morris, Dan Graham, Hans Haacke, Douglas Huebler, etc

³One is reminded of the bumper sticker that reads: “Think about what it’s like to honk if you love conceptual art.”

⁴In fact, in Rauschenberg’s *Erased De Kooning Drawing* (1953) it seems we know *even more* about the truth of the being of the work of art when we dig into the story of how Rauschenberg approached De Kooning and demanded that it be a major, excellent drawing that he erased and not just a quick knock-off that De Kooning offered to draw especially for “the stunt.”

⁵Mikel Dufrenne makes a similar appeal to “expression” in his aesthetics, though what I am suggesting is somewhat different in ways that I hope to make clear. Cf., e.g., Mikel Dufrenne, *Phénoménologie de l’expérience esthétique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1953).

⁶See my *The Things Themselves: Phenomenology and the Return to the Everyday* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006): 107.

⁷This is true if one sees the painting on a museum wall, in a book, on a computer screen, etc. There is always a diegetic as well as physical space in which the following unfolds.

⁸For more on this point, see my *The Things Themselves: Phenomenology and the Return to the Everyday* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006): 99.

⁹Cf. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, Tran. Graham Burchell and High Tomlinson (NY: Columbia University Press, 1996).

¹⁰This is worked out throughout Derrida’s oeuvre, but one might consult, e.g., *Margins of Philosophy*, Trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982) and *Of Grammatology*, Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

Introduction to Parallel Dimensions Studies

0.1. The Missing Body

If there is one notion upon which traditional historically oriented literary scholars and cutting-edge, post-structuralist critics can agree, it is, tragically enough, the un-definition of our corpus of study. From the very beginning, the discipline of literary studies has never appeared preoccupied with clearly delimitating nor defining its corpus of study, and the term “literature” itself still covers a wide variety of cultural artifacts, which are not even necessarily written. It is fairly obvious by now that the etymological sense of the word “literature,” which implied writing (from the Latin *litera/littera*, “letter”) has never really applied to what we consider fair game in literary studies, and the generally accepted reign of Shakespeare over the Occidental canon, sanctified by an academic authoritative figure such as Harold Bloom, speaks for itself: we have chosen a playwright¹ as the emblematic figure of the art of writing, bypassing the fundamental differences of transmission between a written text and a theatrical performance.² Similarly, renown Marxist critic Terry Eagleton uses 17th century French playwrights Corneille and Racine as undeniable examples of fine literature, while summarily dismissing Raymond Chandler’s novels as not being literature—“You may consider Raymond Chandler ‘good of his kind,’ but not exactly literature (...)”— and ultimately denying any possibility to define literature: “Anything can be literature and anything which is regarded unalterably and unquestionably literature—Shakespeare, for example—can cease to be literature” (Eagleton 9). Once again, the figure of the illustrious bard is evoked, if only to illustrate the ultimate fluidity of our always elusive corpus of study: if even Shakespeare himself can be excluded from literature, then, indeed, no one is safe.³

Besides this elementary mediatic confusion, which has allowed from the very beginning the inclusion of a performing art into the literary canon, literary studies have been extremely flexible as to the different genres of writings that deserve to be considered literature, accommodating religious meditations, philosophical essays, funerary eulogies, sermons or letters without any type of typological discrimination, and just as intolerant of other narrative genres and forms, which, for no apparent reason other than their possible popular origin, were never deemed worthy to be canonized.⁴ The arbitrariness of the literary canon becomes all the more apparent when one considers it diachronically: whereas 17th Century French philosopher Descartes and Spanish theologian Teresa de Ávila are considered canonical literary figures, 20th Century writers such as Simone Weil⁵ or Brice Parain belong resolutely to the canon of philosophy and do not appear in any literary anthology. It would seem then that the literariness of a genre—be it theology or philosophy—would

depend mostly on the Century, leaving the actual definition of literary genres in the same uncertainty as the corpus itself.

An actual, functional definition of literature has never been the priority of literary studies, and as we move into the still uncharted universe of interdisciplinary cultural studies, such definition does not even appear to be any longer pertinent; the dramatic changes that have altered the way we transmit and perceive narrated universes over the last few decades call indeed for an urgent overall re-conceptualization of our corpus of study and methodology, which naturally transcends the semantic possibilities of the word "literature." It would be preferable to identify the body before proceeding to any investigation.

0.2. Un-definition Associated

The last three decades of post-structuralist theoretical practices have further complicated the issue by erasing the distinction between criticism and literature,⁶ and based upon a gross mistranslation of a decontextualized quote from Derrida's *Of Grammatology* taken as axiomatic, turning every sphere of human experience into a "text," for, as we all know by now, "there is nothing outside the text"⁷ and consequently, everything is literature. This new level of confusion has allowed critics to abuse rhetorical devices of a literary nature—metaphors, play on words, original spellings, flights of lyricism—to the point of claiming and sometimes even obtaining literary status. Many highly respected lighthouses of post-structuralism have evolved towards creative writing, such as H el ene Cixous and Eve Kosofsky Sedwick, whose late works are poetic and auto-biographic rather than critical, or Julia Kristeva, who, after promoting successively structuralism, psychoanalysis, and feminist semiotics, has turned her interest towards detective stories, perhaps encouraged by the planetary success of *The Da Vinci Code*.⁸ Naturally, when critics claim the status of creative writers, not only does the possibility of defining literature as an object of study becomes yet more remote, but the task of literary criticism itself suddenly appears either redundant or simply superfluous: the investigation cannot merge with the object of study without immediately losing its reason to exist.

The last three decades or so of over-conceptualized artsy theoretical discourse have obliterated what the formalists and structuralists had achieved when they attempted to establish the bases for a possible "science of literature." Although the linguistic nature of their inquiry often led the early formalists to prioritize language over literature, their attempt remains perhaps the most honest effort to describe our corpus of study. Rather than literature, the formalists, and later the structuralists, chose to define "literariness," which they conceived as a specific use of language that produces semiotic violence and hence, calls the attention upon itself.⁹ If the notion of literariness helps to conceive the literary phenomenon, it also tends to transform it into a mere linguistic mode which appears to be located inside as well as outside literature itself, as illustrated by Roman Jakobson's famous analysis of the political slogan that helped

Eisenhower to win the election in 1952: "I Like Ike" (357) is indeed "literary" in the sense that it produces an aesthetic effect, namely phonetic and associated to the poetic devices of rhyme, rhythm and alliteration; however, it is not what we could call the most representative manifestation of literature. Political and commercial slogans usually exhibit literary traits which do not turn them necessarily into literature, for their meaning is strictly limited to their intentionality and precludes any type of ambiguity: an overly polysemic publicity would just defy its purpose.¹⁰ Furthermore, language can be used literally and still produce literature, as in the case of the hard-boiled detective and crime stories, such as those by Raymond Chandler or Donald Westlake,¹¹ which would seem to imply that literature can indeed escape the boundaries of "literariness."

However, the formalists' intent had at least the merit to attempt a logical and functional definition of our corpus of study; since then, it seems that we have all but given up on the idea, as if modern and postmodern critics alike relished the notion of an ontologically un-definable object of study. Eagleton, for instance reminds us of John M. Ellis' conception, which compared literature to a "weed," without any specific essence or precise delimitation:

John M. Ellis has argued that the term 'literature' operates rather like the word 'weed': weeds are not particular kinds of plant, but just any kind of plant which for some reason or another a gardener does not what [sic] around. Perhaps 'literature' means something like the opposite: any kind of writing which for some reason or another somebody values highly." (Eagleton 8)

It is both surprising and significant to find the same quote under the feather of a convinced post-structuralist practitioner as Jonathan Culler, who paraphrases Ellis' notion at length in his *Very Short Introduction to Literary Theory*: "Take the question "What is weed"? Is there an essence of 'weedness'—a special something, a *je ne sais quoi*, that weeds share and that distinguishes them from non-weeds? . . . Weeds are simply plants that gardener don't want to have growing in their gardens. Perhaps *literature* is like weed." (Culler, *Literary Theory* 22)¹²

The botanic view of literature has therefore the capacity to reunite critics from very different, if not opposed, horizons, as can be a Marxist and a deconstructionist, but it does not, however, help defining what *is* literature—and Culler's tasteful "*je ne sais quoi*," if undeniably fashionable, is also a statement of defeat: rather than addressing the issue, we embrace our incapacity to resolve it. Culler's choice of a French expression to declare his ultimate impotence when it comes to defining literature exemplifies both the choice of form over content that characterizes postmodern trendy critical discourse and the undeniable—if quite arbitrary—prestige of French language and thought that

inform, albeit mostly in translation, most of the last three decades of post-structuralist inquiry: bluntly put, if it is French, it must be right.¹³

1.1. Fictional Theory

If the concept of literariness ultimately proves unable to define the literary phenomenon, the efforts of the formalists and structuralists to rescue literature from the ever menacing “Great Text” allow us to perceive the most obvious flaw of post-structuralist criticism, that is the forceful confusion between literacy and literature; contrary to literature, the language of criticism should strive to maintain a unilateral relationship between the signifier and signified by using language in a monosemic manner, to precisely avoid *becoming* literature: if literary criticism was supposed to interpret literature in order to better its understanding, then a brand of literary scholarship that conceives itself as literature simply defies its purpose—we will not explain the meaning of a short story by writing another short story.

Oblivious to this simple and quite evident fact, postmodern literary scholarship has enthusiastically cultivated literariness in its discourse, aping the liberties that Jacques Derrida, arguably the most influential critic in contemporary Anglo-Saxon literary criticism, took himself vis-à-vis the French language. Being a philosopher rather than a literary critic—yet another serious anomaly when we consider his sacrosanct position within the field of literary studies¹⁴—Derrida expresses his epistemological doubts about the nature of meaning in a manner that complements the elusiveness of his conceptions on language and communication: whether the signified is irremediably transcendental and any meaningful binary opposition susceptible to be deconstructed because based upon a hidden metaphysical system—making *everything* potentially literature—is a purely philosophical proposition, which not only is far from being resolved, but furthermore should not concern literary studies unless proven accurate at the most basic level. This is a difficult, if not impossible task, for in spite of all their efforts, postmodern critics have proven unable to erase the difference between, say, Poe’s “The Purloined Letter” and Jacques Derrida’s “The Factor of Truth” (“*Le Facteur de vérité*”). It still seems to many that the actual short story is still more narratively authoritative than what Derrida had to say about it,¹⁵ regardless of the brilliant stylistic feats of the deconstructionist master—which, incidentally, might be either lost or won in translation.

Unlike Sedwick, Cixous and Kristeva, who discovered themselves a literary vocation after having earned a reputation as critics, Jacques Derrida has always had a tendency towards literature, as shown by *Glas*, which merges a poetized commentary on Hegel with an equally suggestive and polysemic meditation on French playwright Jean Genêt, or by *The Postcard (La Carte postale)*, the first part of which, “Envois” (“Dispatches”), is a sort of fragmented dairy made of loose reflections, disconnected memories and personal anecdotes addressed by the narrator to an anonymous recipient, which appears much closer

to a postmodern epistolary novel than to an epistemological essay. The manner in which the “Envois” were conceived is literary enough in itself, for Derrida informs us in the introduction that they could be read as a “preface to a book I never wrote” as well as “the remnants of a correspondence that was recently destroyed” (*Carte 7*); the places of the missing segments are indicated in the text by 52 empty spaces “at the precise location of their incineration” (8) and the number 52 is the result of an extremely complicated calculation of which Derrida claims to have no recollection (9). We are therefore confronted to a purely formal device that does not complement the traditional didactic intent of a philosophical essay but rather undermines it by injecting literariness into the text and blurring its supposed intentionality. Of course, one could argue that Derrida chooses to formally reflect the doubts regarding language and meaning he expresses in the content, thus creating a semiotic harmony between form and content, an aesthetic effect generally associated with literature rather than philosophy. However, once this has been established, there is not much else to say, for the “Envois” do not hold textual authority from a narrative point of view—they are too personal, elliptical and repetitive to generate a coherent narration—nor at the epistemological level—they are purposely ambiguous and confusing; perhaps the true meaning of *The Postcard* is hidden as well in the silence of the “incinerated” 52 signs, as the impossible poem of the Great Unspeakable.

Whether the first part of *The Postcard* is more literary than philosophical, indeed very reminiscent of a type of French postmodern novel illustrated among others by the likes of Philippe Sollers¹⁶ has not prevented post-structuralist critics to abundantly refer to its third chapter, “Le Facteur de vérité,” (“The Factor of Truth”) arguably one of Derrida’s most commonly quoted essays, hence openly disregarding the ambiguous intentionality of the volume itself and treading solely on the reputation of its author in order to provide conceptual credibility to their inquiries, which naturally tend to become just as “literary” as those of their illustrious model. It appears that, for the ruling postmodern literary establishment, “literature” is simply a commodity and, rather to define it, we are still working hard at un-defining it further in order to accommodate scholarly stylistic creativity and sacrificing what is perhaps the most convincing feature of our field, namely the pleasure principle.

1.2. Fun Studies

If the concept of literariness does point out to some specificities of literature, it does not, on the other hand, try to define the literary phenomenon from the point of view of its relationship to pleasure, imagination and reality, but rather conceives it as a sort of linguistic mode that implies an inevitable latency between signifier and signified—and so, whatever is not literal becomes literary. However, once we take mediatic variations and intentionality into consideration, we are able to reach a unifying principle that allows us to define the “literary” phenomenon—which naturally can no longer be conceived as

solely “literary” in the strict meaning of the word for it includes a variety of media, such as theater, film, or comic books. When we consider the intentionality of the “literary” message, regardless of its medium, and if we move away from the excesses of radical reader’s response theory, which implies that the reader is actually creating the text,¹⁷ we are able to perceive a fundamental difference between, for instance, an income tax form and a short story: whether the former disregards the pleasure principle to establish a unilateral relationship between text and reality, the latter on the contrary, only relates to reality indirectly and establishes its authority by responding to the pleasure principle, that is, exhibiting aesthetically satisfying features. The authors of an income tax form may strive to present it in the clearest, most efficient manner, however, they are not driven by aesthetic considerations, and the tension income tax forms are susceptible to generate is usually not of the narrative kind: its written nature does not necessarily warrant its literary potential. As to reading a train schedule as a work of literature, a possibility defended by Eagleton, not only does it appear counter-productive for it implies ignoring the very reason to exist of said text, i.e., scheduling train departures and arrivals, but, more gravely yet, it seems also irremediably boring—and literature is not supposed to be boring: indeed, literary studies may very well be the most paradoxical of all academic disciplines for they consist in studying the means by which we entertain ourselves; whether it is a play by Shakespeare or a short story by Poe, a comic book by Warren Ellis or a current TV series about a likable serial killer like *Dexter*, our corpus of study is composed by cultural artifacts designed to induce pleasure through entertainment—in one word, *fun*.

If one can usually, almost instinctively distinguish between a literary and a non-literary artifact, it is mainly due to the intentionality of its message and the relationship it establishes in regard to reality and imagination. Whether a tax income form or a plane schedule create a non-ambiguous, unequivocal relationship to reality and generate textual authority exclusively on the bases of their function—that of informing us of plane arrivals and departures or of how much money we owe the Taxman—a short story or a poem, on the contrary, implies a departure vis-à-vis reality, either linguistic or narrative, or both, and its textual authority depends mainly upon its capacity to induce pleasure in the recipient—hardly the priority of an tax income form. Literature—either written or not—has always served the pleasure principle, which has led both Oscar Wilde or Stanley Fish to declare its fundamental uselessness,¹⁸ merging the notion of pleasure with that of usefulness: not only is literature quite useful, as we will see shortly, but it is as well pleasurable, which might be the reason why any reader can still make the difference between a short story by Edgar Allan Poe and an over-conceptualized post-structuralist essay, regardless of how “literary” the latter attempts to appear.

This principle applies to the other mediatic concretization of “literature,” and, just as we have naturally accepted Shakespeare, Molière or Samuel Beckett’s plays as representative of the Occidental “literary” canon, we

are entitled to consider Quentin Tarantino's films, Jim Moffat's telefilms, Warren Ellis' comic books and Jim Morrison's lyrics as works of "literature," for they share the same fundamental intentionality, that of creating a polysemic and pleasurable message, rather than expressing purely functional, essentially monosemic information.¹⁹ From a diachronic perspective, this is hardly new, and one could be left wondering why "literary studies," regardless of their theoretical orientation, have never addressed the issue before: if we do not generally deplore that, as the level of literacy grew steadily in Europe throughout the 19th Century, reading fiction became an alternative to going to the theatre, we should equally accept that, as technology made the distribution of visual information increasingly available over the last five or six decades, cinema has progressively replaced text as the privileged medium for the transmission of pleasurable, polysemic messages. This is not to say that written literature is condemned to disappear but only to point out that the privileged vehicle for the creation and transmission of pleasurable messages has changed over the course of history; just as written fiction or cinema did not eliminate theatre from our cultural landscape, written fiction has indeed survived to cinema and TV shows, albeit losing its privileged status within the collective exchange.

From orality to performance, from the written to the visual, the goal of "literature" has always been to serve the pleasure principle by creating imaginary worlds, which, contrary to common opinion, far from being useless artifacts, have helped structure the manner in which we conceive reality.

2.1. The Literary Multiverse

The main intentionality of a literary work, either written or not, is the creation of a parallel dimension whose relationship to reality is aleatory, uncertain, variable and unpredictable. Whereas the signification of other common textual and visual products—instructional booklets, phone books, legal documents, programs, menus, advertisements, commercials, marketing and political slogans, and so on—is established in direct relationship to reality, "literary" objects produce coherent semiotic structures whose ties to reality are essentially, fundamentally indirect: poetry, either written or recited, creates an imaginary parallel chain of referents, hence creating another linguistic reality, while narrative fiction, either textual or visual, creates an imaginary parallel chain of events, hence structuring another reality.²⁰

The fundamental weight of the parallel dimension concept in our collective consciousness²¹ can be felt historically as well as culturally simply by observing the influence that religious narrations have had upon the construction of our reality. All human collectivities have generated a metaphysical narrative which speaks of a parallel dimension, be it Mount Olympus, Asgard or the Kingdom of Heaven, and have transmitted it either orally, visually and/or textually, depending on the available medium or media; the importance that such narrations have had upon our understanding of reality and the construction of

our consciousness is as pervasive as it is essential, and still accounts for many a conflict throughout the planet.

Parallel dimensions structured through religious narrations do serve a definite social and cultural cohesive function rather than the pleasure principle; however, we do find a strong sense of narrative tension and semiotic violence in all of them, if for nothing else than because literary authority had to be established in the first place to capture and keep the attention of the would-be faithful: Greek as well as Christian mythologies are indeed “literary,” for they refer to another dimension which is constructed and transmitted in a semiotically and aesthetically convincing manner.

Beyond the metaphysical realm, the importance and influence of the literary multiverse upon human consciousness is itself the dominant theme of several canonical works, as different as can be, for instance *Don Quixote of the Mancha* and *Madame Bovary*: whereas Cervantes’ novel is the story of a gentle madman who loses himself into the parallel dimension evoked by chivalry novels, Flaubert’s is that of an unfortunate bourgeois housewife who reads too many romantic novels during her youth at the convent and dooms her life by desperately trying to live the adventures they describe. In both cases, the narrative tension is built upon the conflict that opposes an identifiable reality to an imaginary parallel dimension, for both Don Quixote and Emma Bovary are defined by their will and desire to inhabit another universe, that of the wandering knights for Don Quixote and that of the romantic and passionate lovers for Emma. *Don Quixote of the Mancha* and *Madame Bovary* hence present directly the theme of the literary parallel dimension, each relying upon a solid literary tradition, chivalry books and romantic novels respectively, and their considerable appeal throughout the Occidental world as well as their undeniable canonical status—both are indeed listed by Bloom—underline the essential nature of the concept: the story of a human consciousness getting lost into a parallel dimension created by literature has gathered a vast and very diverse readership beyond cultures and languages, and still does to this day: although the second part of *Don Quixote*, which is usually considered artistically superior to the first by the critics, appears to have lost most of its textual authority in the 21st Century, the first part (which actually includes the four parts of what was supposedly a complete novel by itself) still remains susceptible to establish a satisfactory, pleasurable contact with a modern readership. As to Emma Bovary, she is, unfortunately, as current as ever.

The notion of parallel dimension—often, although not always, more or less in conflict with reality—constitutes in itself a recurrent theme in a great variety of narrations and in different modes,²² from Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* to Howard Philip Lovecraft’s “The Dunwich Horror,” from the Wachoski Brothers’ *The Matrix* to Martin Campbell’s *The Green Lantern*. It could even be considered as one of the most characteristic narrative staples of the fantastic mode, as illustrated by Lovecraft’s “The Call of Cthuhlu,” Clive Barker’s *WeaveWorld* and Wes Craven’s *Nightmare on Elm Street*. Dreams,

madness and death—all recurrent narrative motifs of the fantastic mode—naturally point to the existence of unknown dimensions, for these are three domains of human consciousness which remain epistemologically out of bounds; in the fantastic narrative multiverse, dreams materialize, madness might be sanity and death is not necessarily the end, as if the entire mode were fundamentally dedicated to probe the limits of our dimension in order to suggest the existence of another.

The success of imaginary parallel dimensions can be measured by their influence upon the construction of our own cultural reality; if religious practices illustrate the most obvious and internalized connections between imaginary parallel dimensions and the construction of our historical and cultural reality, secular narrative and linguistic parallel dimensions have as well a profound influence on our consciousness. For instance, upon its publication in 1774, Goethe's first novel, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* is rumored to have provoked an epidemic of suicides among its readership, as the post-adolescent German youth fully identified with the unfortunate Werther and imitated him further than just by donning identical attires and feeling desperately and hopelessly in love. More recently, the movie *Juno*, which tells the story of a somewhat sunny teenage pregnancy, has been held responsible for inspiring a string of voluntary pregnancies in a Massachusetts high-school. Whether a specific, quantifiable relationship between the film and these young ladies' behavior remains impossible to determine—just as between violent action films and violence in the streets²³—the connection between reality and imaginary parallel dimensions is, on the other hand, hard to miss.

The ferocious product placement practices that plague most of today's important cinematic events are perhaps the most material signs of the influence narrative parallel dimension have upon our collective consciousness, for they represent major capital investments on the part of corporations apparently deprived of imagination that must resolve to infect imaginary parallel dimensions with the marks of their merchandise in order to produce benefits in the real world, often endangering the semiotic integrity of the narration in the process—even James Bond 007 has been forced to drink beer. The literary multiverse has become a great—if not the greatest—display case for modern distribution, demonstrating that the influence parallel dimensions have upon human perception and behavior has become pervasive enough to be quantified in terms of investments and revenues.

As we can see, the literary multiverse, which was never solely literary, is everywhere and informs our understanding of reality on a multitude of levels, hence our task as literary and cultural scholars is both clear and perfectly justified without any need to raid the conceptual apparatuses of more or less neighboring fields in the Humanities (or elsewhere): Imaginary Parallel Dimensions are indeed fun, but must nonetheless be taken very seriously.

2.2. The Birth of Imaginology

As we move away from the ill-fated term “literature,” we can define our corpus of study as the set of cultural objects generated by the Imaginary, i.e., structured imagination, which openly refer to non-existent parallel dimensions and respond primarily to the pleasure principle. Depending on their narrative modes, these imaginary parallel universes can attempt to resemble our reality, as is the case of 19th century European realistic novels, or on the contrary, openly transcend its natural laws, as is the case of any openly anti-realistic narrations, from fairy tales to science fiction. However, regardless of how removed the internal laws of any imaginary parallel dimension can be from those of our reality, a connection must be established between both—the imaginary universe and our own—in order for the message to be transmitted that is to allow us to enter that imaginary world; our task, simply put, would then consist in analyzing the possible connections between imaginary parallel dimensions and reality, either that of the author if we choose a historical/contextual approach, or our own, if we opt for a semio-structural type of analysis. Both moves—context to text and text to context—are pertinent and not necessarily mutually exclusive but rather complementary:²⁴ the knowledge of the historical circumstances surrounding the genesis of any imaginary parallel dimension provide *supplementary* information, i.e., data surrounding this particular parallel dimension, while its semio-structural analysis reveals *complementary* information, i.e., the different semiotic codes at play within its structure. Over time, as the original context of the sender disappears, that of the receiver keeps on evolving, and so does the message; hence the value and meaning of imaginary parallel dimensions must eventually transcend their original context in order to retain their currency: the pleasure we derive from reading *Tom Sawyer* cannot be directly related to our knowledge of the deep South in the 19th Century; if we are still able to enter this particular parallel dimension, it is because it contains its own time and space continuum, as an independent dimension of reality, radically different from ours but with which we can however connect. Imaginary parallel dimensions can either suffer or benefit from the irremediable disappearance of their original contexts and receivers: while time—ironically enough—has not been especially kind to Marcel Proust’s great novel, *Searching for Lost Time (À la recherche du temps perdu)*, the endless, asphyxiating sentences of which are no longer much appreciated in this era of text messages, Pérez Galdós’ short novel, *The Spendthrifts (La de Bringas)*, generally considered as a minor work, is almost more pertinent today than when it was published in 1884, for it tells of a housewife whose love for clothes and credit causes her to bankrupt her household along with her morals: malls and credit cards have made this particular imaginary parallel dimension more informative and identifiable than ever.

By studying the relationships between parallel dimensions and reality, we are able to interpret their influence upon our consciousness, both individually and collectively, a necessary, perfectly justified endeavor, which has a legitimate place within the Humanities. Naturally, in order to do so, we must

take for granted that there is such a thing as an objective reality and consequently contradict thirty odd years of post-structuralist thought, which in the end should not be all that difficult, yet another undeniable advantage of properly defining the limits of our corpus of study: we are *imaginologists* rather than epistemologists, hence we do not have to abide by the axioms of cultural constructionism, which, incidentally, have been abundantly denounced as being unfounded, if not a bit silly.²⁵

Imaginary parallel dimensions can only be conceived in function of reality, according to the basic binary opposition Reality/Imagination; to deny the existence of an objective reality, as cultural constructionism does, would imply that all is imagination and that there are therefore no differences between imaginary parallel dimensions and our own. But just as we can perfectly distinguish a scholarly article from a short story, we can as well tell the difference between fiction and non-fiction, and between a serious epistemological inquiry and an imaginary parallel dimension; it would be greatly advisable, in this time of fictional, lyrical, over-conceptualized rhetoric, that critics do the same.

The endemic un-definition of our corpus of study, both in form and content, has naturally inhibited the development of a sound conceptual apparatus beyond the tools put forward by the formalists and structuralists, which, as we have seen, cannot be used as systematically as their creators believed, and explains in great part the current theoretical disorientation of our field. The concept of imaginary parallel dimensions is a methodological principle which allows us to define the limits of our corpus as well as to acknowledge the variety of its materializations; rather than considering literature as an undefined set of “texts” that elicit some special kind of attention,²⁶ which is the post-structuralist, reader-oriented version of the formalist notions of defamiliarization, semiotic violence and literariness, parallel dimension studies focus upon its capacity to create semiotically coherent non-existing universes in a variety of oral, written and visual media, or any combination of the above. Literary scholars were never trained to ponder the Great Epistemological questions, nor to evaluate the merits of the latest hypothesis in quantum mechanics;²⁷ but we have the expertise and the capacity to explore the imaginary multiverse and analyze its remarkable influences upon all spheres of our reality—which indeed exists, which is even the reason why we feel the constant need to escape its boundaries by generating parallel universes.

The field of imaginology or parallel dimension studies, formerly known as literary studies, has nothing to envy from its neighbors, neither from the Humanities nor from the so-called “hard sciences;” it is as essential as epistemology or the physical sciences, and just as fundamental, for it addresses directly one of the most primal needs of human beings, which has always been and will always be: that of inventing worlds.

Notes

1- Shakespeare is universally known for his theatre rather than his poetry.

2- It is indeed not by chance that the great 17th Century French dramaturge Molière was adamant in controlling every aspect of his performances; the sending entity in the theatrical medium is not solely the text, but all the components of the performance: director, actors, prop-masters and so on.

3- Naturally, Eagleton's casual elimination of an entire narrative genre from literature—namely the hard-boiled detective story—might seem a bit excessive, especially when we consider the significance this particular narrative structure has acquired in modern and postmodern societies. (See Ferreras Savoye, "The Detective Narration and the Myth of the Urban Truth.")

4- For a critical analysis of the official literary canon, see Ferreras Savoye, "Comic Books and the New Literature" and "Postmodern Doom and *Transmetropolitan* Salvation."

5- Simone Weil, author of *La pesanteur et la grâce*, was a socio-metaphysical thinker contemporary of Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir who attempted to reconcile faith and social consciousness.

6- Renown deconstructionist Paul de Man gloriously fuses literature and criticism in the most nonchalant manner in the brilliant conclusion of his often quoted essay, "Semiology and Rhetoric": "Literature as well as criticism—the difference between them being delusive—is condemned (or privileged) to be forever the most rigorous and, consequently, the most unreliable language in which man names and transforms himself." (33); notwithstanding the inherent sexism of de Man's choice of words—after all, women should also be allowed to "name and transform themselves"—and the fact that two contradictions in a row—condemned/privileged, rigorous/unreliable—do not necessarily make for a coherent statement, we can observe that the alleged "delusiveness" of the difference between literature and criticism is presented as a given, as if it were such an obvious truth that it deserved neither any further demonstration nor its own sentence.

7- "*Il n'y a pas de hors-texte*": the word *hors-texte* in French comes from the lexical field of printing and refers to the illustrated plates that accompany the text of a book, hence, a correct translation of this well-known Derridian precept would be: "there are no illustrations," a much less appealing formula than the creative English translation "there is nothing outside the text," which adds the word "nothing" to the original, suggesting a definite philosophical depth to what appears to be a simple observation in the original French.

8- Most of the narrative paradigms found in Kristeva's *Murder in Byzantium* (2008) are strikingly similar to those we encounter in Dan Brown's religious thrillers—ancient secrets, mysterious cyphers, a religious sect and a killer on the loose—and the author did state that her intention had been to write the "anti-*Da Vinci Code*." In terms of readership, Kristeva has indeed succeeded, for the

popular reception of *Murder in Byzantium* pales in comparison to that of Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*—it would appear that postmodern critics who decide to become fiction writers are not all that convincing outside of the academic circles.

9- Semiotic violence appears when language is used “unnaturally”—for lack of a better word—and hence defamiliarizes us from reality, which, according to the formalist approach, is the main function of a work of art: to free us from the anesthetizing familiarity of every day's life. This is perhaps the only moment when literary criticism has been able to tackle, on its own terms and without losing sight of either its intent nor its corpus of study, an ontological issue usually reserved to philosophy, namely the existential angst generated by the repetition of everyday life's routine.

10- Advertisements use different semiotic codes more or less related to the product they are promoting, however their messages cannot leave any room to ambiguity, for they are there to serve a very specific, essentially monosemic message, dictated by the laws of marketing: publicity cannot be overly defamiliarizing for it would distract it from its main function.

11- The formalists' elegant, if not entirely satisfactory solution to this dilemma was to locate semiotic violence, hence defamiliarization, within the syntagmatic, sequential organization of the narrated events rather than within the language used to describe them: the most straight-forward news wire is then susceptible to become literature at any moment, for it exhibits some kind of intentional narrative organization.

12- Culler uses the weed analogy in two essays, “La Littéralité” (32) and *Short Introduction* (21), however, whereas Ellis' name is mentioned in “La littéralité” as the originator of the weed theory, it does not appear in *Short Introduction*; when it comes to the definition of its object of study, post-structuralist theory must hence resolve to appropriate a venerable notion from the 1970s, which is not exactly convincing nor postmodern in the least.

13- The somewhat contrived and over-inflated importance of French contemporary thinkers in North American academia is amply documented in Jean-François Cusset's *French Theory*.

14- The manner in which “literary” studies have been raiding neighboring fields of the humanities—be it sociology, psychoanalysis, philosophy or anthropology—to sustain their conceptual validity could be seen as a sure sign of scientific disorientation; we are indeed very far from the Russian formalists' intent to establish the bases for a “science of literature,” a project which, given the current state of conceptual decomposition that affects our discipline, appears a little less naïve every day.

15- Derrida's essay is a meta-critical analysis of Jacques Lacan's reading of “The Purloined Letter,” that uses Poe's short story as pretext rather than text in order to evaluate the merits of psychoanalysis.

16- Sollers was the chief editor of the avant-garde journal *Tel Quel*—since then re-baptized *L'Infini*—in the pages of which Derrida published some of his early work.

17- The critical trajectory of a fervent proponent of radical reader's response theory such as Stanley Fish is highly representative of the general disorientation of our field when it comes to the definition of both our corpus of study and our occupation: after claiming that literature is solely created by the reader (*Is There a Text in the Class?*), Fish turned his attention towards a classic TV series (*The Fugitive in Flight*), most likely in order to capitalize upon recent, authoritative scholarly interest in popular culture, and is of late admonishing the profession for neglecting the study of literature to promote political agendas (*Save the World on Your Own Time*); in other words, after denying the possible intrinsic existence of literary texts and turning the English department at Duke university into a post-structuralist, ideologically oriented theoretical powerhouse, Fish criticizes his peers for no longer studying literature, having shown the way by taking on a classic TV series: in the true spirit of reader's response theory, Fish is creating the discipline and the corpus of study as he goes.

18- "All art is quite useless." *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 4.

19- As pointed out by Brice Parain as early as 1942, no language besides that of mathematics can be deemed to function in a strictly monosemic manner; all human exchanges are constantly subject to semiotic variations which may range from slight semantic ambiguity to total misunderstanding.

20- These two categories, i.e., narrative and poetic, often intersect and so, poetry can be narrative and narrative prose poetized; French romantic poet Lamartine's long narration in verse *Jocelyn* and any of Victor Hugo's novels, for instance, present very comparable levels of semiotic violence and, given that the somewhat grandiloquent tone of Lamartine has not aged well, one could argue that Hugo's prose remains more poetic today than Lamartine's poetry. Baudelaire's prose poems or Lautréamont's *Les Chants de Maldoror* are convincing illustrations of a perfect balance between poetic semiotic violence and narrative construction; although both are generally deemed to be poetry, the former could also be considered as highly poetized short stories and the latter as a semiotically ultra-violent novel. In the same fashion, although from the other side of the spectrum, novels such as James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* or Luis Martín Santos' *Time of Silence* could be as well described as poetic, or at least linguistically defamiliarizing, for both exhibit, each in its own way, strong semiotic violence. We find equivalent values in the cinematographic language, and we can oppose for instance Terry Gilliam or Tim Burton's "poetic" conception of cinematography to a more prosaic, down-to-earth type of cinema, exemplified by the action and adventure genre.

21- Recent developments in quantum physics and string theory seem to point towards the existence of a physical multiverse, i.e., a set of parallel worlds or dimensions; however, benefiting from the mistakes of my elders, I will not venture to establish any relationship between my theory of narrative worlds and

that put forward by physical sciences: as proven by the famous Sokal hoax, which shed light upon a great deal of pompous silliness (see *The Sokal Hoax*), scholars in the Humanities are not prepared to deal with matters as removed from their field of expertise as can be the recent developments in physical sciences.

22- The concept of mode designates the narrative conception of the work vis-à-vis reality; it is preferable to that of "genre," which has become terminologically vague, since it refers both to format (short story, novel), thematic categories (detective stories, romance novels) and narrative conceptions, i.e., modes (realism, romanticism).

23- Whether a violent film inspires violence or the story of a pregnant teenager generates the need to become pregnant is indeed an open debate; if we consider the possible cathartic effect of imaginary parallel dimensions, then the spectacle of violence would precisely alleviate the violent tendencies of the receptor, and that of teenage pregnancy have a soothing effect upon rising teenage hormones.

24- See Ferreras Savoye, "The Birth of Counter-Theory."

25- See *Theory's Empire* and *The Sokal Hoax*.

26- The post-structuralist conceptions of language and culture cause any cultural object, be it textual or not, to dissolve sooner or later into the metaphorical "Great Text."

27- We should indeed remember famous theorist Luce Irigaray's original understanding of Einstein's well-known equation, $E=MC^2$, which she denounces as being "sexed." In the highly fictionalized imaginary parallel dimension known as "post-structuralist theory," it would seem that even physical laws are susceptible to exhibit reprehensible sexual behavior.

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King's Psychological Gothicism in *Secret Window, Secret Garden*: Repression, Illusion and Parasomnia, or . . . How Well Did You Sleep?

Introduction

Like *The Shining* (1977), *The Dark Half* (1989), and *The Bag of Bones* (1998), *Secret Window, Secret Garden* (1990) tells a story of a writer who suffers from a recent writer's block, emotional distress, and irrational anxiety attacks due to happenings in his past. Similar to Jack Torrance in *The Shining*, Mike Noonan in *Bag of Bones*, and Thad Beaumont in *The Dark Half*, Mort Rainey, the main character in *Secret Window, Secret Garden*, is haunted by uncontrollable exterior and interior forces which he is incapable of understanding or explaining. They are forces that at a first glance seem to belong once again to Stephen King's adapted catalog of late eighteenth, early nineteenth-century gothic fiction including seemingly supernatural occurrences and figures, the phenomenon of the haunting past, an isolated residence, a gothic villain pursuing a young woman, a mad man losing control, and the overall sensation of danger and fear.

However, Stephen King created something unfamiliar and new. Through his combination of gothic hallmarks with discoveries of modern psychology and sleep studies, King developed a literary masterpiece of psychological horror that seems to be more disturbing than anything he ever wrote before and that even makes a Jack Torrance, Thad Beaumont, and Mike Noonan (almost) look normal. In *Secret Window, Secret Garden* King relates a story about a man who, in the aftermath of his divorce, develops severe dissociation identity disorder (DID) that is "marked by a disturbance in the integration of identity, memory, and consciousness" (APA online), and shows "features of derealization, antisocial, and conduct personality disorder" (Reuber, *Identity*) with symptoms ranging from serious self-contempt, self-pity, and mood swings to outbreaks of uncontrollable temper and fugues into the dream-world. He created Mort Rainey, alias John Shooter.

Gothic Setting of Sublimity

In contrast to Jack Torrance, Thad Beaumont, and Mike Noonan, Mort Rainey suffers from failure in his professional *and* private life. In addition to his incapacity to write, he lost his wife due to divorce. To overcome his emotional hardship, Mort Rainey chooses his isolated summer cabin in the deserted town of Tashmore Glen as his main residence. In this solitary setting, he tries to forget that one day, "he had discovered [Amy and her boyfriend Ted] in bed together, [and that] he had told Ted that he would kill him" (King, *Window* 296). By moving to his isolated summer cabin, Mort Rainey, like Jack Torrance and Thad

Beaumont, hopes to close “a huge door on a room full of monsters” (King, *Shining* 179) to liberate himself from his painful past, to be able to re-focus on his work, and to surmount his writing block. From this it follows that Mort, like his fictional predecessors, is consciously or unconsciously longing for something lost—his ambition and capability to write—the outer manifestation of his desired inner peace.

Although it seems that Mort consciously chooses remoteness and silence for a new beginning in his private and professional life, his decision to move to Tashmore Glen is not based on any firm evaluation of his present situation. In contrast to Jack Torrance who reflects upon and then decides to relocate to the Overlook Hotel in order to overcome his writing block, Mort does not take action by consciously moving to Tashmore Glen. He passively retreats to a very familiar location and by doing so, falls into the place of the marital past. Instead of actively looking for something consoling and new, Mort unconsciously returns to something very scary and old, even older than his past relationship with Amy. He returns to his unconscious.

House of Madness

Full of memories of his life with Amy, the solitary summerhouse at Teshmore Glen soon becomes Mort’s resort of mourning as well as his refuge to another world. However, instead of finding peace, he encounters physical and psychological pain. He suffers from his current every day life and from the betrayal of his wife Amy in combination with his incapacity to write. Even though he desires to work, he is incapable of doing so. He has not “written anything worth a damn since he [has] left Amy” (King, *Window* 246). But what prevents him from writing?

The obvious answer to this question is that the most recent tumults of his private life have traumatized him and have provoked his writing block. A psychological evaluation of the young man’s professional lameness and state of mind shows that the divorce from his wife Amy has triggered the writer’s extreme frustration, serious self-doubting, self-discrediting, hypersensitivity to criticism, lack of self-confidence, extreme procrastination, and suffering from betrayal. These are all symptoms of his depression, erroneous self-contempt, and increasing self-hate, which he unconsciously but progressively projects on his environment.

However, it needs to be noticed that Mort’s suffering from inner unrest actually goes back to his student years, when Mort once betrayed one of his fellow students, John Kintner, by publishing his story under Mort’s name. As Amy cheated on Mort, Mort deceived John Kintner. Even though Mort does not make this connection and misreads his current psychological imbalance and professional lameness solely as a consequence of his matrimonial loss, Mort’s plagiarism and Amy’s disloyalty have to be seen as one unit that forces the writer to reevaluate “what’s right and what’s fair” (King, *Window* 273). While processing his wife’s betrayal, Mort also confronts his long-repressed guilt

towards John Kintner, which in his current state of mind takes the personified form of a man nobody else can actually see: John Shooter, a writer accusing Mort of plagiarism.

In order to escape this psychological threat, Mort seeks consolation in the land of dreams, where his divorce is not yet finalized, where he can pretend "that the last six months had never happened," and where he seems to be as a prolific writer. Ironically, Mort's escape into the dream world is not what Karen Horney calls a "way out of the dilemma" (128) but is rather a factor which increases his already existing restlessness, anxiety disorder, and emotional distress. In this "half-awaking, half-sleeping zombie state" (King, *Window* 257) Mort experiences his most intense night terrors and anxiety attacks because it is then that he feels most "divided in his own house" (Horney 100) and mind. He finds himself enclosed in unfamiliar classrooms, loses his way in vast cornfields, is chased by Amy and the (un)familiar John Shooter, both holding knives in their hands, and is exposed to many "different [voices] of memory" (King, *Window* 257-58; 230). In these moments of nocturnal turmoil, Mort suffers from an out-of-body experience in which he looks at a bodily representation of himself and experiences life-threatening situations.

His syndrome of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can easily unfold in the realm of the surreal as his brain then "selects emotionally charged memory traces from autobiographical memory" (Valli online). The dysphoric imagery of Mort's unsettling reveries is especially prominent in the following three dreams: 1) Mort's dream about Amy, 2) Mort's encounter of Shooter and Amy in the cornfield, and 3) Mort's return to the classroom of the "SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS"

Mort's Dream about Amy

"He dreamed of Amy. He slept a great lot and dreamed of Amy a great lot these days, and waking up to the sound of his own hoarse shouts no longer surprised him much" (King, *Window* 246). The fact that Mort dreams about Amy repeatedly demonstrates the writer's maladaptive coping with reality as well as his separation anxiety. He lingers in a nostalgic perception of the past and by doing so, reinforces his already existent emotional distress leading to the utterance of "hoarse shouts" (King, *Window* 246), either to release the emotional and psychological pain, or to escape from the dream-world in which he sought refuge.

Meeting Shooter and Amy in the Cornfield

As Mort's inner unrest intensifies, his helplessness and disorientation in life worsen to a degree that he fears annihilation of his self. The compression and distortion of these sensations finds expression in the distorted and condensed dream-content,¹ whose main location is an unknown cornfield headed by the sun. Even though the dream appears to be composed of seemingly "disconnected fragments of visual images" (Freud, *Dreams* 40), the analysis of

these individual dream-thoughts shows that together they relate a coherent story that is linked to Mort's first and third dream. Mort dreams:

He dreamed he was lost in a vast cornfield. He blundered from one row to the next, and the sun glinted off the watches he was wearing—half a dozen on each forearm, and each watch set to a different time [...]. Ahead of him, the corn on both sides of the row shook and rustled. Amy stepped out from one side. John Shooter stepped out from the other. Both of them held knives. [...] Mort turned to run, but a hand—Amy's, he was sure—seized him by the belt and pulled him back. And then the knives, glittering in the hot sun of this huge secret garden. (King, *Window* 255)

“In relation to the human psyche, the “vast cornfield” has to be understood as an allegorical representation of the labyrinthine unconscious, the home of the (un)familiar John Shooter on the one hand, and of Mort's feelings for his all too familiar ex-wife Amy, on the other” (Reuber, *Pop-Screen* 34). The cornfield is nothing else than Mort's “secret garden”—his unconscious—that not only harbors his repressed desire, anger, and fear, but in which these sensations can grow and develop under “the hot sun” (King, *Window* 255). The fact that Mort perceives watches set to a different time while stumbling through the cornfield stresses his feeling of helplessness and disorientation in the past, present, and future. He knows neither what to do, nor where to go, nor how to handle the divorce. His reaction is panic. Hence he screams: “*Please help me!*” (King, *Window* 34).

The dream continues with Amy stepping forward from one side of the field and John Shooter from the other. Amy's appearance in this dream is of an ambiguous character and far from reassuring. On the one hand, her presence refers to Mort's familiar and highly idealized matrimonial past. On the other hand, her threatening arrival with another man alludes to Mort's discovery of her betrayal and the resulting annihilation of the once established marital, personal, and emotional life.

Amy's *combined* emergence with John Shooter also suggests a menace to Mort's professional life. It has to be understood as a threat to *everything* that once was familiar and dear to him. In this sense, Amy and Shooter function as what Sigmund Freud would have called a “collective figure” or “composite structure,” in which features that “are peculiar to one or other of the persons concerned but not common to them” (Freud, *Interpretation* 355) are represented by the same figure or structure and, thus, form a new and unfamiliar unity.

Amy's and Shooter's personification of the contradictory set of ideas such as marriage versus divorce, emotional stability versus emotional distress, loyalty versus disloyalty, professional success versus professional failure, and safety versus danger, provokes two reactions: First, it stirs Mort's psychological

unease and fear of self-dissolution; second, it triggers Mort's unconscious longing to liberate himself from the source of pain.

The separation from the past, whether involuntarily enforced upon or chosen by Mort Rainey, finds symbolic representation in yet another ambiguous dream-thought: the weapon of the knife. Hence, his dream expresses both *his* fear of separation and annihilation and *his* wish to react violently against his ex-wife. It expresses Mort's unconscious desire to kill *her*; an act Mort almost achieves at the end of the narration when he flings himself "at her, raising the screwdriver over his head and then bringing it down" (King, *Window* 370).

The fact that both characters—hallucinated and real—emerge from two different sides of the cornfield, but then build a combined force against Mort, indicates that his existing boundary between the real and the imaginary has diminished to a point where reality and dream-world have become one. This amalgamation of realms in addition to the life-threatening dream-thought of glittering knives "in the hot sun of this huge secret garden" (King, *Window* 255) intensifies Mort's emotional hardship. Traumatized by his wife's disloyalty and disturbed by Shooter's accusations of plagiarism, the young man helplessly blunders from one corner of his life to the next. He is lost in a vast field of memories, sensations, and images of psychological distress: sensations that shake and provoke the prevalence of night terrors² and nightmares, the imaginative manifestation of Mort's PTSD.

Mort's resulting nocturnal agitation then leads to a variety of personality disorders in his waking state, among which the following three are developed the most: derealization, antisocial, and conduct personality disorder. All three have to be understood as a response to his increasing fear of emotional, professional, and physical annihilation to which Mort responds with prominent mood swings, catatonic behavior, hallucinations, aggression to animals and people, and increased repetitious destruction of property.

In the Classroom of the "SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS"

Coinciding with the second dream, Mort's third dream has a life-threatening undertone. The dream's latent content and its manifest dream-thoughts express Mort's helplessness and fear of extinction. This time, however, the dream setting is no longer a vast cornfield, but an (un)familiar classroom of a school whose name is representative of Mort's inner strain: the "SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS." Mort relates his dream as follows:

It was a familiar classroom, although he couldn't have said just why. He was in the classroom with John Shooter. Shooter was holding a grocery bag in the curve of one arm. He took an orange out of the bag and bounced it reflectively up and down in his hand. He was looking in Mort's direction but not *at* Mort; his gaze seemed fixed on something beyond Mort's shoulder. ... The writing on the blackboard was [easy] to read. SOWING SEASON *A Short Story by Morton Rainey*, it said.

Suddenly something wizzed over Mort's shoulder, just missing his head. The orange. As Mort cringed back, the orange struck the blackboard, burst open with a rotten squashing sound, and splattered gore across what had been written there. ... Shooter dipped into his bag again. *What's the matter? Shooter asked in his calm, stern voice. Don't you recognize blood oranges when you see them? What kind of writer are you?* He threw another one. It splattered crimson across Mort's name and began to drip slowly down the wall. *No more!* Mort screamed, but Shooter dipped slowly, implacably, into the bag again. ...; blood began to sweat its way onto the orange's skin in pinprick droplets. *No more! No more! Please! No more! Admit it, I'll admit anything, everything, if you just stop.* (King, *Window* 275-76)

In contrast to the first two dreams, the focus of this third dream has shifted from Mort's private life and his interaction with Amy to Mort's professional life and the unavoidable interaction with John Shooter. Due to dream condensation, distortion, and displacement the manifest dream-thoughts "seem *disconnected, confused, and meaningless*" (Freud, *Dreams* 19). A closer look, however, shows that the domineering dream-thought of the "secret garden" links the three dreams with each other.

Instead of the vast cornfield, Mort is now sitting in a classroom. As the farmer sows corn seeds onto a field in order to harvest corncobs in the fall, John Shooter plants seeds of unease and repressed knowledge into Mort in the classroom of the "SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS" reminding Mort of the publication of his short story "Sowing Season." In this sense, John Shooter reduces Mort, the established writer, to a student. He forces Mort to reflect upon his former student life and to answer the question, "*What kind of writer are you?*" (King, *Window* 275).

Since this question has been occupying Mort's mind for a long time, Shooter's articulation of the same spurs Mort's already existing identity confusion and fear of ego liquidation even more. It indirectly illustrates Mort's weakness and Shooter's power. In regard to this dream, Stephen King expresses the juxtaposition of weakness versus power and life versus death in three ways: First, via the positioning of Shooter and Mort in the classroom; second, through Shooter's aggression towards Mort; third via Mort's uncontrolled screams for help.

The fact that Shooter sits behind Mort, but yet is able to read the title of Mort's short story written on the board supports our analysis and illustrates Shooter's unearthly power to see through things as well as Mort's vague, almost transparent and fading existence. Furthermore, Shooter's removed position suggests that some hidden secret has re-emerged from Mort's unconscious and now occupies the young man's mind to the extent that it provokes what the

psychoanalyst Levin defines as "increased fear activation" (498). As Mort is incapable of understanding the dream's dysphoric imagery and of achieving "a fantasy solution" (McKellar 89) of the pictographic dream-language and its repressed dream-content, he screams in his dream: "*I am lost and afraid!*" (King, *Window* 255).

This verbal outbreak illustrates Mort's frailty and extreme fear of self-dissolution, a fear that finds its symbolic manifestation in the juice of the blood oranges dripping down the board and smearing Mort's name to the degree that it becomes almost unrecognizable. Mort's excruciating scream, *No more! No more! Please! No more! I'll admit it, I'll admit anything, everything, if you just stop*" (King, *Window* 276), emphasizes his fear of ego liquidation and loss of identity.

The fact that Stephen King has exchanged the dream-thought of the knife for *blood oranges* needs to be noticed. Displaced and located in the classroom, the orange has to be understood as yet another composite structure that fulfills many different functions: First, as a fruit from the garden, the orange refers back to Mort's "secret garden" that once found representation in the cornfield. Hence, the orange alludes to Mort's unconscious "out of which come the shadowy behaviors that are so difficult to comprehend or even accept" (Kelly 72).

Second, the reddish colour of the "pinprick droplets" (King, *Window* 276) on the orange's skin suggests that Mort is afraid of his own uncontrolled behaviour leading to complete destruction of himself and his surroundings. This being said, the orange loses its common perception as luxurious fruit of the fall, but becomes a threat to Mort's existence.

Third, as an object that is thrown at Mort, the orange functions as another weapon in the land of Mort's dreams, and adverts to the "knives, glittering in the hot sun" (King, *Window* 255). It refers back to Mort's fear of and desire for separating himself from his emotional pain that he associates with his ex-wife Amy and the hallucinatory figure John Shooter.

Fourth, even though the orange misses Mort's head, it splatters crimson across Mort's name on the board until his name is almost unreadable and his identity has been dissolved. Consequently, the orange has become representative for Mort's professional dissolution, marital breakup, and personal collapse. The splattering orange is, thus, the emblem of "Mort's head being knocked against the blackboard until it bursts open with a rotten squashing sound, and splatters gore and crimson across" (Reuber, *Pop-Screen* 36). The orange has become the harbinger of Mort's emotional, professional, and physical death.

This particular dream occurs shortly after Shooter leaves Mort's summer cabin at Tashmore Glen with the words: "Three days. Use it the way you like, Mr. Rainey. ... Meantime, you think about what's right and what's fair" (King, *Window* 273). It can be argued that Shooter's words functioned as residues of memories and stimulated Mort's repressed notion of betrayal and guilt towards his once fellow student John Kintner manifesting themselves now

in the pictographic language of this third dream. These words force Mort to face his demons and to reestablish his inner peace while being at the SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS.

Mort's out-of-body experience makes him scream: "*Please help me! I'm lost and afraid!*" (King, *Window* 255). As Mort's anxiety and sleep disruptions increase, his suffering from a "persistent difficulty sleeping," creating a "sleep-deprived equilibrium" (Dement 130) that intensifies. Due to the "more frequent awakenings from sleep, and [the] poorer overall sleep quality" (Levin 494), Mort is incapable of finding any physical or emotional rest. Consequently, Mort's already existing emotional distress worsens and instigates an enhancement of Mort's night terrors and parasomniac violence as both are linked to the process of disturbing imagery with a high affect load during REM sleep.

As the story continues, Mort's dreams become an indistinguishable haunting part of reality. He is no longer capable of distinguishing between what is real and what is not. His suffering from derealization gives everything around him a "sense of unreality" (King, *Window* 257). The resulting intellectual uncertainty and unfamiliarity of the situation in combination with the haunting notion of betrayal prompt a frequent reoccurrence of a man who "doesn't look exactly real" (King, *Window* 241) but rather resembles "a character out of a novel by William Faulkner" (King, *Window* 241): John Shooter. He is a man whose identity is an artifact consisting of the following ideas: a fictional character with a strong southern accent just like John Kintner; a writer who reminds Mort of his failure as a professional writer by accusing him of plagiarism; a stranger who wears Mort's hat, is imitating his voice, and is wearing his clothes,³ a person, whose name is a pseudonym for Ted's hometown Shooter's Knob. John Shooter is nothing else than an outer manifestation of Mort's repressed double. He is the writer's dark half.

Who am I? Meeting John Shooter, Meeting Myself

On the one hand, John Shooter can be read as the personification of Mort Rainey's shame, helplessness, betrayal, unsuccessfulness, and guilt. On the other hand, the imaginary figure is the embodiment of Mort's unrealistic self-idealization or what he thought he ought to be—a successful writer. John Shooter is the epitome of the author's repressed identity, his suppressed past "that ought to have remained hidden and secret, but yet comes to light" (Freud, *Uncanny* 376) in a state of transient and intermittent insomnia⁴ provoked by psychological stress, depression, and alcoholic intoxication. In this respect, the usually unconscious phenomenon of idealization has become a threatening obstacle "that substitutes for realistic self-confidence and realistic pride" (Horney 100). The familiar has taken an unfamiliar form of appearance and as such comprises the converged meaning of the two German words, *heimlich* (homely) and *unheimlich* (wild, mysterious, uncanny). Shooter reminds Mort of

his unsuccessful ambition and of his incapacity to answer the most haunting question: "Who and what am I?" or "Who is Mort Rainey?"

Instead of moving forward in order to (re)define himself through the creation of a new private and active professional life, Mort turns backward towards the past: his life with Amy and the proof of authorship of the short story "Secret Window, Secret Garden." As Jack Torrance needs to explore the past of the Overlook Hotel, almost perfectly locked away in "secret" boxes in the hotel's cellar, Mort is possessed to reveal John Shooter's identity and history. In this process, Mort rediscovers his own history, which first breaks through in the author's scary dreams, but then also becomes apparent in his diurnal life in the form of bodily illusions of his double, John Shooter. As soon as Shooter has gained omnipresence in Mort's life, Mort's surrounding transforms into an uncanny place of utmost unfamiliarity, in which everything known and safe becomes unknown and frightening. Mort descends into a state of "psychotic decompensation" (Levin 492), which manifests itself in his DID, producing Mort's mood swings, aggressiveness, derealization, and "unusual perceptual experiences" (Dobbert 25).

Whereas Jack Torrance in *The Shining* slowly realizes that his chosen environment of the Overlook Hotel does not foster but rather hinders his productivity, stirs his repressed longing for alcohol, and negatively transforms his family life, Mort lacks any understanding of his emotional or mental state. He suffers increasingly from self-alienation, night terrors, and repetitious parasomniac behavior. Mort's progressing self-alienation indicates his affliction with profound depersonalization, which Michelle Lambert defines as "an experience of feeling detached from [oneself]" (Lambert 141) to the degree that one becomes "an outside observer of one's mental processes or body" (Lambert 141).

As the analysis of Mort's dreams and of his daily routine has shown, the young author faces several out-of-body experiences. These, in combination with the increase of his "unfocused rage" (King, *Window* 261), provoke his lurid parasomniac activities, such as nailing his cat Bump to a trashcan, killing his two friends Greg Carstairs and Tom Greenleaf with a screwdriver, driving two and a half hours to burn down Amy's house, and destroying the bathroom in his summer house.

Like the narrator of Poe's "The Black Cat" (1843), Mort is compelled to kill his cat, since it is a living reminder of his once emotionally rich married life. Mort falsely assumes that the cat's death will enable him to repress and negate the still existing emotions for his ex-wife, without realizing "that repression of the softer tendencies will reinforce the aggressive ones, making them all the more compulsive" (Horney 71). King illustrates the psychological reinforcement of Mort's aggressive tendencies further through the brutal murder of his two friends Tom Greenleaf and Greg Carstairs. Their deaths are inevitable, as they are about to discover Mort's mental and emotional instability, and the real reason for the existence of the bodily illusion of John Shooter—

Mort's unbearable guilty conscience towards John Kintner that was only triggered by Amy's disloyalty.

As Mort's memory weakens, his state of functional amnesia following the violent acts increases. He suffers from "temporarily impaired consciousness" (Cartwright 1149) during which his fear of memory activation is cut off. As a result, the writer lives in total denial of his dark half. His inability to remember his deeds, in combination with his absolute unawareness of being "both great good and profound evil" (Moskowitz 23) is disclosed in his repetitive questions: "If I did all that, why can't I remember? ... Why can't I remember even *now*?" (King, *Window* 241). Mort's mental confusion is indicative for the young author's highly developed DID, which allows "a disruption in the usually integrated functions of consciousness, memory, identity, or perception of the environment" (Moskowitz 23). In these dissociative states, Mort's once familiar environment transforms into an unfamiliar place filled with hypnopompic and hypnagogic images.⁵ Mort's attempts to escape from reality by accessing the land of dreams, in combination with his suffering from DID, psychogenic amnesia, and identity alterations, prove that he is suffering from both normal and pathological dissociative states⁶ during which he finds himself involved in actions of which he later does not have any recollection.

Progressing Self-alienation Towards Self-dissolution

Ignorant about his true self, Mort Rainey misperceives his unease as professional unproductiveness, bad marriage, sexual betrayal, alcohol, low self-esteem, an "un-woman smell" (King, *Window* 310) in the house, or simply as John Shooter whom he understands as "a donkey to [be used to] pin this rotten, stinking tail on" (King, *Window* 261). In projecting his unknown sensations that provoke his sincere inner tumult on the outside, he not only objectifies and shifts his responsibility of dealing with these inner disturbances on his companions but also detaches himself from everything familiar. Hence, he experiences self-alienation and the incapability of self-definition. The resulting inner conflicts manifest themselves in the character's change of physical appearance and psychological temper, which is representational for an unconscious externalization and projection of his usually well-repressed inner conflict at whose core is the definition of identity.

As a consequence, Mort lets love turn into disgust and hatred, beauty into horror, total silence into mysterious noises, and sanity into madness. Mort changes into "some stranger who [looks] like Mort" (King, *Window* 368) without the real Mort actually being present. Mort's personality, like that of fictive colleague Jack Torrance, deteriorates into "FALSE FACES!! NOT REAL!!" (King, *Shining* 641). His disturbed self-image, interpersonal relationships, intense anger, extreme aggression, and "stress-related paranoid ideation" (Dobbert 49) are all indicators for his existing DID that show strong features of derealization. His personality disorder lets Mort Rainey discover that he does not hallucinate the intruding presence of the imaginary writer, John

Shooter, but that Shooter's name is written everywhere in the house and that Shooter "had been here . . . had been, or was still" (King, *Window* 309). It is then that the remote and deserted summer home at Tashmore Glen comes fully to life and speaks its own language of tumult and destruction.

As the winding staircases to unorganized office space and a messy living room in *Secret Window*, *Secret Garden* are architectural manifestations of the character's helplessness and disorientation in general, so do they represent his repressed unconscious in particular. Mort's house has to be understood as the emblematic outer representation of the inner "rooms" of the young man's troubled psyche. His madness "occurs because [he] cannot deal adequately with the forces that surge beneath [his] conscious mind" (Gibbs 11). Similar to the ending of Poe's short story "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839) and King's famous novel *The Shining*, Mort's summer house and once main residence in Derry fall apart—an allegorical expression for the character's loss of mind and identity.

When Mort's increased madness overshadows every contact with the real world, Mort misinterprets Amy's disloyalty towards him as the sole cause for the continuous reappearance of John Shooter, whose identity he understands as a recall to SHOOT-(h)ER; to cut "[that] eye from the socket" (Poe 189)⁷, which gives him insight into the darkness of his psyche. In order to eliminate the cause of his intense pain, to suppress the arousing unconscious, and to reestablish his inner peace, he decides to kill his ex-wife: First, by pulling her back and attacking her with a screwdriver, then by bringing "the scissors down in a silver arc" to be finally able to bury her at a special "place in the garden" (King, *Window* 369). Now Mort's second dream has become reality and the once only imagined, but objectified and distorted desire to kill Amy demands execution. The fictive cornfield has turned into a real battlefield of physical survival on the one hand, and a shattered war-zone representing total mental and emotional breakdown, on the other. The collapse of limits between the realm of the imaginary and the real is complete.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can state that Stephen King's combination of late eighteenth-century gothic hallmarks with twenty-first century American family life and medical as well as psychological phenomena, has given his story *Secret Window*, *Secret Garden* a very uncanny touch and lets it stand out as a literary masterpiece of psychological horror. It is this particular amalgamation of old and new, of past and present, of literature and psychoanalysis, which transforms the familiar into the unfamiliar, lets readers not only wonder but makes them an integrated part of the exceptional happenings taking place at the summerhouse at Tashmore Glen. The portrayal of Mort's unconscious with its symptomatic formation of guilt and anxiety clearly shows a development from the supernatural to the psychological and medical, which is expressed in Mort's

nocturnal and diurnal fight against the demanding stranger who blames him of plagiarism—his unconscious.

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Notes

¹ - According to Sigmund Freud's understanding of dreams, we have to distinguish between dream-thoughts and dream-content. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) Freud explains that "dream-thoughts are immediately comprehensible, as soon as we have become aware of them. The dream-content, on the other hand, is expressed as it were in a pictographic script, the characters of which have to be transposed individually into the language of the dream-thoughts" (277). As a result, dream-thoughts "convey the obvious meaning of the dreams, whereas the dream-content focuses on the discovery and explanation of 'hidden fields' within the dream thoughts (Reuber, *Pop-Screen* 30).

² - Nightmares are frightening dreams, which usually only occur during the second half of the night. Due to their threatening content, the dreamer fully awakes and becomes "aware of his or her surrounding" (*EMD* on-line). In contrast to nightmares, the dreamer experiencing night terrors suffers from total amnesia regarding the nocturnal event, does not awake fully, and, thus, is not aware of his environment. Whereas the dreamer usually is incapable of going back to sleep after the experience of a nightmare, the dreamer suffering from night terrors goes back to sleep easily.

³ - The phrasing of this particular sentence has been strongly influenced by Danny's description of his mentally ill father Jack Torrance in *The Shining*. For further information, see King, *The Shining*, 639.

⁴ - The medical term "insomnia" refers to an overall poor quality of sleep, which is characterized for example by the difficulty falling asleep, night restlessness, or frequent awakening during the night or too early in the morning. The different types of insomnia are classified as transient (acute, short term) intermittent (on and off), and chronic (constant).

⁵ - Whereas hypnopompic imagery results from hallucination-like images accompanying semi-conscious moments during waking, hypnagogic imagery appears usually while falling asleep. Numerous confusions of imagery experiences with real events occur in these states dividing wakefulness and sleep, as well as reality and the imaginary. For further discussion of disturbing imagery in dissociative states see McKellar, *Mindsplit* 89.

⁶ - Whereas normal dissociation regards day-dreaming and the refuge into the dream-world, the pathological state of this particular personality disorder addresses the phenomenon of depersonalization and derealization.

⁷ - Mort's behavior is similar to that of the estranged narrator in Edgar Allan Poe's short story, "The Black Cat," who also tries to suppress his re-emerging unconscious and guilt, first by cutting out the cat's eye, and then by murdering his wife.

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Montgomery Clift: An American Original

A recent scholarly work titled, “The Passion of Montgomery Clift” emphasizes the near-religious fervor with which Clift’s fans describe their idol. Indeed, the author purports “...His fans describe him in terms approaching religious ecstasy” (Lawrence 1). Thus, it is no accident that the word “epiphany,” with its strong religious connotations, is used here. As pertains to the impact of Clift on cinema and society, however, the more secular definition, “A comprehension or perception of reality by means of a sudden intuitive realization” (freedictionary) of the word will be employed. This more mundane usage of the word is not meant to diminish Lawrence’s work on Clift as quasi-religious icon; rather, its usage is more consistent with the profound sense of realism and originality Clift brought to his roles via his “...radically interiorized acting style” (Lawrence 7).

This research is designed to solidify Clift’s role as the first “rebel male” in American cinema and evaluate the role he had on both cinema and culture in a global context. This will be established in the context of the forthcoming chapters: Chapter II, “Clift, Brando and Dean;” Chapter III, “Clift and the 1960s;” Chapter IV, “The Spirit of Clift in the Strangest of Places: Rocky Balboa and the Punk Rock Movement;” Chapter V, Conclusion: “The 1980s and Beyond—Cheap Stereotypes Need not Apply.”

Montgomery Clift first burst onto the cinematic landscape in *The Search*, a critically-acclaimed, profoundly moving tale of Karel Malik (Ivan Jandl), a young Czech boy recently liberated from Auschwitz that Clift helps reunite with his mother. While Clift was nominated for an Academy Award for his performance, the most extraordinary commentary on his work was provided by legendary fashion photographer Richard Avelon, as he is quoted in Bosworth (138) as stating: “The minute Monty came on the screen I cried because he was so realistic and honest, and I was deeply touched. He seems to be creating a new kind of acting—almost documentary in its approach. It has the style of reportage.” Michael Costello substantiates the impact Clift had on audiences and other actors in his review of the film: “The naturalness and absence of cliché in Clift’s performance, which lends an unforced credibility to his efforts to care for the boy, was a striking departure at the time and would become highly influential with other actors. Clint Eastwood, strangely enough, has cited this as the performance that had the greatest impact on his own career.” From Clift’s early work in films such as *The Search* (1948), *Red River* (1948), *The Big Lift* (1950), *A Place in the Sun* (1951) and *From Here to Eternity* (1953), Clift embodied a new brand of screen idol: sensitive, idealistic, introspective, egalitarian and not particularly smooth with the ladies. The world had never seen a leading man of this sort, and writers struggled to articulate just what made him so appealing. Actor Bill Gunn is quoted in Bosworth as saying, “...He

had an individual attitude about himself. He wasn't bland, or all grins, he wasn't even that nice. He just *was*" (Bosworth 138). The usage of the word *was* implies his very essence on screen was completely unique and could not be boiled-down to lazy stereotyping. Joe Morella and Edward Epstein capture the ethos of Clift in the films listed above with their assertion, "Stubborn individualism in a sensitive male endeavoring to surmount harsh realities was epitomized by Clift's version of the screen rebel" (34).

While Morella and Epstein's description of Clift in *Red River, A Place in the Sun* and *From Here to Eternity* seems to capture the essence of Clift's character perfectly, this characterization is equally applicable to his work in *The Big Lift* and *The Search*. Although the description of Clift's screen work above may not appear to apply to the underappreciated semi-documentary, *The Big Lift* (1950), at first glance, these attributes are still on display in the film. Ralph Stern describes as, "...A surprisingly sophisticated foray into issues of identity, appearance and deception in the blockaded city" (66). Clift clearly rebels against the "Ugly American" label that his co-star, Paul Douglas, wears with pride. His efforts at speaking German, his sensitivity to the despair all around him, his generosity and his willingness to mingle with the common folk of Berlin clearly set him apart as a "cultured outsider" and place him in stark contrast to the way Americans abroad are typically portrayed in film. In *The Search*, Clift demonstrates the same willingness to speak German when the situation arises and is sufficiently moved by the plight of a young war orphan in post-war Germany that he, as a natural outgrowth of his compassion, takes the boy under his wing as a surrogate parent. In these films (with the exception of *A Place in the Sun*), Clift is providing more than merely entertainment; he is providing a blueprint for a "better way to live." Megan McGurk indicates how *From Here to Eternity* (FHTE) "illustrates how Clift led audiences to where we can ponder an alternative for what it means to be a man onscreen or in everyday life. Each scene in FHTE builds towards a character audiences identify as ethical, cooperative, communicative, purposeful, idealistic, contemplative, as well as one who resists cultural imperatives to dominate or belittle women." The consistent theme in Clift's work is a quiet dignified style of independence and a well-thought-out rebellion and stubbornness that resonates strongly to this day.

II. Clift v. Brando and Dean

Montgomery Clift often comes up third when the names Clift, Brando and Dean are mentioned as the seminal "rebel males" in film. This is simply wrong. Dean will always be revered for dying at the height of his popularity, but it must be borne in mind that he only made three films and the neuroses of his screen characters often stretched credibility. Brando deserves credit for the animalistic energy he brought to *Streetcar Named Desire* (1951) and the sense of realism he injected into *On the Waterfront* (1954); however, he degenerated into a fat, money-grubbing, mumbling, effort-minimizer later in his career. While Brando is quoted in "brainyquote.com" as saying, "The only reason I'm in

Hollywood is that I don't have the moral courage to refuse the money," Clift maintained his artistic integrity until the end, and was quoted late in his career as stating that he had never made a film he was ashamed of (Lawrence 277). Indeed, in his last film, the poorly-regarded cold-war thriller, *The Defector* (1966), Clift rises well above the material and brings a sense of realism, loneliness and courage to the role. McGurk explains the slight on Clift's contributions to cinema and culture as follows: "At some level, it's galling to note how totalizing their (Brando and Dean's) legends have become for the era, while Montgomery Clift gets pushed to the margins of celluloid history. My sense is that Clift was resigned to a less lauded status because what he brought to the screen was far more subversive and mutinous in the context of patriarchy than his tough-guy contemporaries." To borrow a phrase from Carlos Acosta, originally used to describe the difference between boxers Vitali Klitschko and Devin Vargas, "The gap between Clift and Brando cannot be adequately expressed by any language on earth; it's that vast." A recent review of "The Passion of Montgomery Clift" by Elisabetta Girelli seconds McGurk's claim that Clift continues to be underappreciated: "Given his eventful life and exceptional talent, it's inexplicable that Clift has been so neglected by film scholars" (93).

Amy Lawrence contrasts Clift's solid work in *The Defector* with the excesses often found in Brando's work as follows: "Unlike Brando, who often ridiculed his characters and would find ways to make otherwise acceptable films worse by his overweening contempt, Clift's jokes make his character more playful and interesting" (277). Thus Brando, much like Woody Allen, often allowed his ego and self-indulgence to overwhelm his work.

It is interesting to note that the identities of Dean and Brando are inextricably linked to the clothes they wore in their most famous roles, *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) for Dean and *Streetcar Named Desire* (1951) and *The Wild One* (1954) and for Brando (the blue jeans, t-shirt, windbreaker or leather jacket). It is well-argued by McGurk that, "Dean and Brando looked cool in their clothes, but in the 1950s, they were still wed to a narrow understanding of what it meant to be a man. Dean and Brando relied heavily on anger and its impotent flipside as a catalyst for character development." While clothes do make the man to a strong degree for Dean and Brando, that is an awfully superficial way to be defined. Although there are iconic images of Clift linked to his clothing (his Hawaiian shirt in *From Here to Eternity*, t-shirt, chino pants and leather jacket in *A Place in the Sun* and his look of unease in his Fancy Dan attire of *The Heiress* [1949]), the argument could be made that Clift, however, *transcends* clothes in the sense that he is never defined by them. That is, Clift leaves an equally memorable impression in clothes that haven't reached iconic status (his military uniform in *The Search* and working-class "gone native" attire in *The Big Lift* and *The Defector*, cowboy garb in *Red River* and *The Misfits* (1961) and black slacks with black turtleneck in *The Defector*). Furthermore, unlike Brando and Dean, whose looks mentioned above are tied to particular

films and points in time, Clift recycles his look mentioned above from *A Place in the Sun* in *The Defector* and his “gone native” appearance utilized when his military uniform becomes soiled in *The Big Lift* for the escape scene in *The Defector*. By doing so, Clift demonstrates an ability to exist *outside of time* in the context of how he was conceptualized through attire.

III. Clift and the 1960s

1. The Antidote for Bond:

Beginning in 1962 with *Dr. No*, the James Bond series has attained iconic global status. Bond is everything Clift is not: cocky, irresistible to women and largely defined by his clothes, gadgetry and catchphrase: “Martini, shaken, not stirred.” While the series has provided brainless escapism, it has also been criticized for its blatant objectification of women—captured by what Robert Arp and Kevin Decker refer to as the “Male Gaze” of Bond (202-203). With the exception of the Shelly Winters character in *A Place in the Sun*, Clift is alternately drawn to the totality of woman as provider (*The Heiress*), life partner (*From Here to Eternity*), confidant (*The Misfits*) and intellectual companion (*The Defector*). Ultimately, it has been Clift, not Bond, who continues to leave audiences shaken (*A Place in the Sun*, *Judgment at Nuremberg*, 1961) and stirred (*Red River*, *The Search*, *From Here to Eternity*). While Bond has always been a clever, clichéd product of savvy marketing, Clift defies categorization. The distinction between Clift and Bond (or, indeed Clift and his clichéd co-stars—Douglas in *The Big Lift*, Lancaster and Sinatra in *From Here to Eternity*) is well-delineated by McGurk: “His (Clift’s) performances still carry the ability to shock audiences with a singular originality; his performances are a cut above the cheap stereotypes which many actors safely trade upon.”

2. Cliftian Elements in the British Social Realist Movement:

While the films of the British Social Realist Movement (BSRM) tend to focus topically on bleak, gritty, urban, distinctly working-class environments, Clift’s films are not so neatly demarcated by class or grungy municipal environs. However, the emotional elements common in films of the BSRM— isolation, rebellion against the existing regime and economic struggles—are integral elements of many of Clift’s films. One observes all of the aforementioned attributes in three of Clift’s most famous works: *The Heiress* (1949), *A Place in the Sun* and *The Misfits*. Furthermore, in each film, Clift’s desire to improve his lot financially leads him down the road to ruin. We observe Clift as mercenary fortune-hunter in *The Heiress*, only to have the tables turned on him by the object of his affection. In *A Place in the Sun*, it is Clift’s ambition to rise above his working-class upbringing that ultimately leads to him being convicted of murder and in *The Misfits*. It is Clift’s conflicted desire to avoid “working for the man” (inculcated by the line from both he and Clark Gable’s character, “Anything’s better than wages”) and his drive to earn a living as a rodeo performer and wild horse roper that leave him frequently concussed and

physically broken-down before his time. Laurence Harvey, in the superb BSRM entry, *Room at the Top* (1959), seems to take a page out of Clift's roles in *the Heiress* and *A Place in the Sun*, as his desire to advance economically and socially drives him to marry for money over love and ultimately to the suicide of his mistress. While more in the swaggering, macho and dangerous rebel mode of Brando, Richard Harris, in *This Sporting Life* (1963), displays the Cliftian elements of quiet self-belief (Harris bluntly refuses to negotiate down in his rugby contract from what he believes he is worth) and an awkwardness around women (his early, futile attempts at courting his landlady are tinged with a profound sense of pathos and serve to add to the downbeat nature of the film).

IV. The Spirit of Clift in the Strangest of Places: Rocky Balboa and the Punk Rock Movement

What do Rocky Balboa and elements of the punk rock movement have in common with Montgomery Clift? Quite a bit, really. We observe elements of Clift in the original *Rocky* (1976) film, as the main character, Rocky Balboa, is a sensitive loner and outsider (a journeyman boxer, by definition, is an outsider to the realm of fistic mainstream acceptance) whose shyness leads to inarticulacy around women. While Clift, like Rocky, is seen as somewhat uncommunicative, that trait was born out of Clift's self-assured aloofness; with Rocky, however, it emerged from a lack of confidence in his conversational skills. Clift is noted as demonstrating, "...zeal, fortitude, endurance and lack of complaint in the face of persecution" (Lawrence 184) in roles such as *I Confess* (1953) and *From Here to Eternity*. The same characteristics can be attributed to Rocky Balboa. Both Stallone (at least in the first of the *Rocky* films) and Clift throughout his career demonstrate a refreshing lack of ego in their work. This lack of overwhelming ego sets Clift and early Stallone apart from Dean, Brando and Sid Vicious—who will be discussed in greater detail shortly—an artist whose ego was far in excess of his talent and professionalism.

What ultimately places *Rocky* in a different realm than what we see in Clift's work is realism. While *Rocky*, with its gritty, urban location filming and clumsiness portrayed in the courtship between Rocky and Adrian, attempted to convey a sense of realism, the plot was so absurd as to lose all credibility. The film ultimately fails in this regard, as its underlying theme is outrageous enough to make *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure* (1985) look like an exercise in neorealism. Joe Queenan describes Sylvester Stallone as "...A witless *faux prole*" and the original *Rocky* film as "cheerfully moronic" (2). These are adjectives one would never hear applied to Montgomery Clift or any of his films, so Rocky Balboa—despite channeling many Cliftian characteristics—ultimately falls short of embodying the ethos of Clift in the realism arena.

In Sid Vicious, one also observes Cliftian attributes. The punk and progressive music scene has shown a fascination with Montgomery Clift dating back to "The Right Profile" by The Clash (1979); "Monty Got a Raw Deal" by R.E.M. (1992) followed. The year 2007 brought us the tunes, "Montgomery

Clift” by Craig Bennett and “Just like Montgomery Clift” by Doug Powell. There was even a U.S. based, progressive–electronica–rock band named “Montgomery Clift” who plied their trade in the early 2000s. While Vicious pre-dates these musical contributions, his visual presence, awkwardness around women, brooding vulnerability, individualism and domination by the women in his life, clearly evoke Clift. The negative influence Nancy Spungen had on Vicious is well-documented, but he was also significantly controlled by his mother, a fellow heroin junkie and purported to be the one who administered the final lethal dose to Vicious (*Final 24*. www.biography.com. 2007).

Clift was victimized by his Mother’s attempts at joining high society. As Nigel Watson states of Clift’s Mother, “She had aristocratic pretensions for her children that sound amusing, but in reality it made her children prisoners of her single-minded obsession.” Although his appeal was narrower in scope, Sid Vicious must also be acknowledged as a rebel icon. Like Clift, with his dark good looks and slender build, Vicious looked the part of object of desire to the opposite sex, but clearly wasn’t. Clift portrayed doom and nihilism both on-screen and in real life much the same way Sid Vicious did. They both failed to “get the girl” and live happily ever after. There was an undercurrent of tragedy apparent in both of their personas. David Hochman writes about Clift, “Exorcising his personal demons onscreen made Clift Hollywood’s first dark-side-of-the-moon actor (paving the way for everyone from Marlon Brando to Jennifer Jason Leigh).” Vicious differs significantly from Clift, however, in three fundamental ways: 1). in his emphasis of style over substance; 2) lack of serious commitment to his craft and 3). In his lack of innate artistic capabilities. That is, whereas Vicious’ identity had to be conceived by his manager, publicists and the desires of the disenfranchised and nihilistic fans of punk rock, Clift’s true identity shone through his celluloid persona as the result of his dedication to Method Acting. As Lawrence states, “When playing a part, fans felt, Clift was most authentically himself” (56). Steve Cohan develops Lawrence’s argument further: “For Clift, the qualities of integrity and intensity make ‘acting’ and ‘being himself’ equivalent terms” (225). The coalescence of off-screen and on-screen identities embodied in Clift stand in stark contrast to the brash, rude, reckless and violent image of Sid Vicious vis-à-vis his alter-ego (the shy, polite, goofy and tenderhearted Mama’s Boy, John Simon Ritchie).

V. Conclusion: The 1980s and Beyond: Cheap Stereotypes Need not Apply

The 1980s witnessed the “teen comedy” come into its own. Films such as *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* (1982), *Risky Business* (1983), *Revenge of the Nerds* (1984), *The Breakfast Club* (1985) and *Ferris Bueller’s Day Off* (1986) were immensely popular as audiences took comfort in the tidy stereotypes they provided. While these films aren’t necessarily “bad”, they all suffered from the malady of being woefully predictable and superficial in their characterizations. It is refreshing to reflect on the fact that there is no such parallel for Clift in the 1980s (and beyond) teen comedy, as he wasn’t a soc, jock, brainiac, band

dweeb, cocky blonde guy, desperate virgin, stoner or loner weirdo (stereotypes cleverly portrayed in *Not Another Teen Movie*, 2001). As actor Bill Gunn (*ibid*) said of Clift: "He just *was*." That is, Clift embodies the complexities that reside within us all. The appeal of Clift was largely in the fact that those alienated by their culture felt as if he *got* them. Clift accomplished something unthinkable in a classic teen movie: he made the sensitive, brooding, loner "cool." Paradoxically, the more effortless, realistic and free of cliché Clift's screen characterizations were, the more we realize how difficult it is to "act" in that way. The far easier route to acting is to reside in the neatly-compartmentalized role Hollywood has prescribed for you. For example, while one could interject themselves into the starring cast of the TV show, "Friends" with relative ease, it seems unlikely that anyone could say to themselves, "Yeah, I could have played that role in *The Search* just as well as Clift."

Recent works by Stern, Lawrence, and McGurk have once again elevated Clift's status as a cinematic genius, rebel icon and catalyst for cultural change. It is hoped that this study will build upon those recent contributions and provide a further foundation for deeper exploration of the body of work provided by Montgomery Clift. While there has been a substantial amount of work focused primarily on Clift's personal life (LaGuardia, 1977; Bosworth, 1978; Hoskyns, 1992, Leonard, 1997; Capua, 2002 and Lancaster, 2005) and somewhat more limited, but very fine, research that has focused more on his professional contributions (Morella and Epstein, 1971; Kass, 1978; Lippe, 1989; McCann, 1993; Stern, 2007; Lawrence, 2010 and McGurk, 2010), it would be edifying to see more scholarly work focusing on in-depth analyses of Clift's films. This is the one area in the life of Clift that remains insufficiently examined.

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The Edwardian Englishman And Male Hegemony in William LeQueux's *The Seven Secrets* [1903]

At one point in Grahame Greene's novel of 1943, *The Ministry of Fear*, the protagonist, Arthur Rowe, declares that "the world has been remade by William Le Queux" (65). This was a backhanded compliment at best, and not quite the glowing tribute to Le Queux that it may appear. In *The Confidential Agent* (1939), Greene had already challenged as outmoded the "pre-1939 thriller" popularized by Erskine Childers, John Buchan, and others—including Le Queux. These had been mainly pre-World War One "Clubland" adventure sagas (essentially reassuring and reinforcing) premised on a xenophobic and ethnocentric vision of English cultural superiority (Snyder 203-204). However, for all its irony, the context makes the protagonist's declaration instructive and significant, and it tells us something at least about Le Queux's prominent place in popular literary culture, readership, and taste (in particular, crime or mystery fiction) during the first two decades of the 20th century. In the passage in question, as the German bombs rain down on London during the Blitz, Arthur—in half dream, half memory—is addressing his deceased mother, who died before the First War. The real burden of his reference to Le Queux is to draw a line under a vanished cultural era made up—in the protagonist's words—of "tea on the lawn, evensong, croquet, the old ladies calling, the gentle unmalicious gossip, the gardener trundling the wheelbarrow full of leaves and grass. People write about it as if it still went on; lady novelists describe it over and over again in books of the month, but it's not there any more" (65). That tranquil English lawn has been left behind by a world in which "real life" [Arthur's phrase] has overtaken the outlandish events in the thrillers that his mother had laughed at, with their "spies and murders, and violence." The thrillers "are like life," Arthur says. The murders and violence of the pre-World War 1 potboiler have become part of the new brutal actualities of a changed national and international reality, the fictional unimaginable concocted by Le Queux and others has become the everyday, the fantastic has become the commonplace. But it is certainly not as if Le Queux's fiction managed to remain completely insulated from the stresses and strains rippling through early Edwardian society. By examining his novel of 1903, *The Seven Secrets*, I want to argue that—for all of its undoubted shortcomings and its formulaic middlebrow banality—Le Queux's mystery fiction nevertheless exposed a range of social and cultural insecurities that would eventually surface in the years preceding the cataclysm of the First World War. In making such a case, I am conscious that it may well involve issues of authorial intentionality. My assumption will be that in *The Seven Secrets* (as to some extent with nearly all the Le Queux novels of this type) we have a text that unconsciously or inadvertently reveals conflicting ideological impulses as opposed to one which is intended explicitly to critique particular hegemonic practices or to deconstruct an entire hegemonic social order.

In an avalanche of over 200 best-selling mystery novels turned out with conveyor-belt regularity during the opening twenty-five years of the century, Le

Queux routinely recorded disruptions to the hitherto secure world of the English upper middle class establishment and the lower strata of the aristocracy (which for Le Queux stood as the repository of what was decent, moral, and honorable in the English character). Eventually, the threat would be fended off, the mystery unraveled, the malefactor unmasked and brought to book, and the social *status quo ante* restored and justified, shaken but none the worse. On the face of it, this was an essentially conservative and an often reactionary agenda. Sensational, melodramatic, sentimental (and blatantly sexist), this became the tried and tested formula that made Le Queux a household name with his middlebrow readership and established a wide and enduring reading community (Pittard). At the same time, in the process, the novels often grappled with the tensions created by the late Victorian “crisis of masculinity” and the *fin-de-siecle* gender debates. Through a masculinizing agenda, the male protagonist or protagonists (usually of an approved class and social pedigree) display perseverance, courage, and intuition in solving an enigma which has threatened a calamitous collapse of order, control, and stability. In this standard scenario, the protagonist—with his allies, if any—becomes identified with a normative and hegemonic masculinity, while other male figures (who are sometimes actually pillars of the upper-bourgeois establishment, as in *The Seven Secrets*) may become deviant and disruptive expressions of an aberrant masculinity and moral bankruptcy that must be rooted out and expunged. So, although the typical Le Queux mystery would always be resolved comfortingly with the Edwardian *status quo* and its values valorized and rescued from chaos (the necessary and common ideological expectation of his reading community), it was also unavoidably part of a more generalized nostalgia for a declining social order and would often not conclude without having examined related issues (in *The Seven Secrets*, for example, the questions of public versus private heroism and individualized idealistic leadership versus the institutionalized).

The social *milieu* of *The Seven Secrets* is predominantly upper-bourgeois and professional, and the events take place mainly in grand London houses, Harley Street consulting rooms, fine old country mansions, and the first-class compartments of trains. The narrator-observer is thirty-three year old Dr Ralph Boyd, MD. In his own words, Ralph is “not much of an ornament to the medical profession (Le Queux 7) but is very well connected and probably in line for a knighthood. He admits, “I suppose it was because my father had represented a county constituency in the House of Commons, and therefore I possessed that very useful advantage which is vaguely termed family influence, that I had been appointed assistant physician at Guy’s. My own practice was very small, therefore I devilled, as the lawyers would term it, for my chief, Sir Bernard Eyton, knight, the consulting physician to my hospital” (Le Queux 7). Ralph’s close friend (with whom he will play something like Watson to the friend’s Sherlock Holmes) is the pipe-smoking semi-Bohemian Ambler Jevons, described as “an investigator of mysteries ... possessed of an ample income left him by his aunt [which he] augmented by carrying on ... a profitable tea-blending business.” As a part-time sleuth very obviously in the Sherlock Holmes mould, Jevons is no amateur. “He was a born detective,” says Ralph, “with a keen scent for clues, an ingenuity that was marvelous, and a patience and endurance that were inexhaustible. At Scotland Yard, the name of Ambler Jevons had for several

years been synonymous with all that is clever and astute in the art of detecting crime" (7). Together, the Ralph-Jevons duo constitutes a composite of many of the values and attributes of an idealized (not to say fantasized) re-formation of early Edwardian English masculinity: education, professional and social status with the right background and connections, business acumen, comradeship, public-spiritedness, scientific skill, intellectuality—and not to forget money. And yet, from the outset, what is ostensibly a secure and stable bourgeois masculinity is more unsettled and under pressure than would appear. Because, as Ralph puts it at the beginning, he lives "in hourly dread of some catastrophe the nature of which I'm utterly at a loss to determine" (6). Ralph is haunted by what he calls "a mysterious feeling of insecurity" and an unaccountable "sense of impending evil" (10).

Ralph's premonitions of looming disaster are soon borne out when he is summoned to the house of one of Sir Bernard's best patients, the very wealthy Henry Courtenay, whom Ralph finds stabbed through the heart in his own bed. With no clues as to the identity of the killer, everyone chooses a suspect. The police, mistakenly but predictably, settle on the innocent butler, and Ralph (perversely and ludicrously) half-convinces himself that it may have been his own sweetheart—cum-fiancée, Ethelwynn, sister of the dead man's wife. Ralph does so firstly on the strength of some dark suspicions planted in his mind earlier by the woman-hating Sir Bernard about some guilty secret that he claims Ethelwynn is hiding and, secondly, when he discovers what he takes for circumstantial evidence in a blood-stained fragment of chenille he finds by the victim's bed—the same chenille as on the fringe of one of Ethelwynn's shawls. Ralph puts two and two together and gets five. He pictures how the shred of fabric must have come away from the shawl "by the sudden uplifting of the arm of the wearer" (38) as Ethelwynn had raised the knife. "I saw how cleverly I had been duped," Ralph says, "I recognized that this woman, whom I thought an angel, was only a cunning assassin." In fact, as will be revealed, Ralph sees nothing at all. Not only does he condemn his beloved as a vengeful murderess (he learns from a letter to the dead man written by Ethelwynn that she had actually been secretly engaged to Courtenay herself before he had married her sister), but he also persuades himself that Sir Bernard's warning about Ethelwynn's dark secret must have been based on fact. "He was at least an honest upright man who...had my interests deeply at heart. In the progress I had made in my profession I owed much to him, and even in my private affairs he had sought to guide me, although I had, alas ! disregarded his repeated warnings" (49).

As the plot unravels, Ralph's unquestioning acceptance of the medical patriarch's say-so and his unthinking faith in Sir Bernard's reliability and moral authority will seem grotesquely ironic as well as being potentially disastrous as it could well send his betrothed to the gallows. Ralph may be intended by Le Queux partly to personify the idealized early Edwardian bourgeois male, but his appalling failure to distinguish honesty from corruption accurately is as reprehensible as his callous and near-misogynistic rush to judgment against the completely innocent Ethelwynn. Indeed, a little later, Ralph will reinforce his assumption of her guilt with some rampant gender stereotyping when he admits, "I could not bring myself to believe that such a perfect face could conceal a heart blackened by the crime of murder. But alas ! all men are weak where a pretty woman is concerned. After all, it

is feminine wiles and feminine graces that rule our world. Man is but a poor mortal at best, easily moved to sympathy by a woman's tears, and as easily misled by the touch of a soft hand or a passionate caress upon the lips. Diplomacy is inborn in woman, and although every woman is not an adventuress, yet one and all are clever actresses when the game of love is being played" (Le Queux 61). With self-justifications like this in the pursuit of injustice, for a while, Ralph becomes complicit in the disruptions swirling in the wake of the murder. In Ralph's case, actually, "feminine wiles" and passionate caresses have nothing to do with it, as patriarchal duplicity is soon to be revealed as the true cause of the chaos and disorder. Another instance, it might be said, of the conflicted gender ideologies that run through the novel, particularly in relation to disturbances to conventional male hegemony.

With the order of the upper-bourgeois world now shattered, and with the police hopelessly off on entirely the wrong trail, it falls to Ambler Jevons to intervene in the interests of truth and justice. As with his more illustrious predecessor, Sherlock Holmes (first introduced by Conan Doyle to the readers of the *Strand* magazine in 1891), Jevons represents an extra-legal justice and an individualized solution to crime as against police routine. Jevons has no faith in the police, no trust in coroners' juries, and no belief in the English legal system as a whole. In terms of the gendered ideologies evident in the narrative, Jevons's views on these matters appear decidedly subversive, amounting to a comprehensive indictment of more or less the full apparatus of the male-dominated legal authorities, from an ineffective and bungling police force which is quite likely to charge the innocent and fail to detect the guilty up to a coroners' system which produces wildly inaccurate determinations of fact which may well be influenced by considerations of social class and gender. When Jevons learns that the butler is the prime suspect, he declares that "the police so often rush to conclusions on a single suspicion" (36). In this case, he is certain that "they've got hold of the wrong end of the stick, as usual" (138). "That's the worst of police inquiries," he says, "they display so little ingenuity. It is all method—method—method. Everything must be done by rule." When it comes to method, Ralph defends Jevons's rule-breaking as "different from the hard-and-fast rules followed by the police. He commences at whatever point presents itself, and laboriously works backwards with a patience that is absolutely extraordinary. He has unearthed a dozen crimes where Scotland Yard has failed" (75). As Ralph puts it, Jevons "worked independently, and although he assisted the police and was therefore always welcomed by them, his efforts were always apart, and generally marked by cunning ingenuity and swift logical reasoning that were alike remarkable and marvellous" (33).

To cut short a long and implausibly complicated narrative involving disguises, impersonation, a widow's fortune, a rewritten will, and a form of thought-control, Jevons is finally able to exonerate Ethelwynn and to identify Sir Bernard as the culprit, the murderer by drowning of Ethelwynn's sister and Courtenay's widow, Mary, and the instigator of Courtenay's earlier death at Mary's hand while she had been in a "frenzy of insanity" under Sir Bernard's mesmeric influence. As the renowned super-physician to the aristocracy, Sir Bernard had abused his position of trust and impeccable reputation to kill rather than heal—his ultimate objective being

to obtain control of his friend, Courtenay's, millions. Jevons does not mince words in confronting Sir Bernard with his guilt—"your demoniacal ingenuity almost surpasses the comprehension of man" (147) Jevons declares, and he later tells Ralph "that crafty old scoundrel was possessed of the ingenuity of Satan himself—He was a veritable artist in crime" (148).

The revelations concerning Sir Bernard's diabolical guilt are explosive in their implications and potentially damaging to the assumptions no doubt held by many in Le Queux's readership about the legitimacy of male prerogatives in general and the integrity of upper-bourgeois male authority in particular. For one thing, Sir Bernard's murderous cupidity derives from the very heart of the upper-class professional establishment, and not from the urban criminal working-class. In Sir Bernard, we have the knight of the realm, the renowned head of his profession, healer to princes and countesses, as fraudster and murderer. Hardly the usual suspect. The implication is that the upper-class and aristocratic order is itself weakened (there are even implications about 'race degeneration' in this) and is losing any automatic claim to the moral and ethical superiority and leadership that it may once have enjoyed by right. To make matters worse, the villainous Sir Bernard has also been guilty of using 'bad science' to achieve his wicked ends; his research specialty is nervous disorders (particularly what he terms "absence of will, partial or entire" in women), and he had used his perverted science in this field to manipulate Mary Courtenay, to take control of her will, as it were, to direct her to carry out the murder of her husband. The destructive and culturally disruptive associations of Sir Bernard's criminal activities run wide and deep, impinging not just on the security of the upper-bourgeois *status quo*, but also on gender codes, the professions, essentialist readings of social class, and on the legal and law-enforcement establishments.

The Seven Secrets ends with a telling example of the upper-bourgeois world closing ranks and conspiring in a classic whitewash and cover-up. Le Queux arranges matters so that Sir Bernard (with "the brand of Cain upon him") suffers a convenient and fatal heart-attack moments after his exposure by Ambler Jevons. As Ralph puts it, "thus were the Central Criminal Court and the public spared what would have been one of the most sensational trials of modern times. The papers on Monday reported 'with deepest regret' the sudden death from heart disease of Sir Bernard Eyton, whom they termed 'one of the greatest and most skilful physicians of modern times'" (147). With this, of course, the law is excused the unpleasant duty of hanging a knight of the realm, and the upper-bourgeois establishment is off the hook, unexposed and protected. Knowledge of the disruptive truth is confined to Ralph, Jevons, and Ethelwynn (all of them, nevertheless, representatives of the upper-bourgeois order, with Ralph himself in line for a knighthood) and, of course, to the reader. The seven secrets of the novel's title will remain the privileged property of the trio, and the public will be none the wiser (the Courtenay murder mystery remaining 'officially' unsolved, it would appear). True to Le Queux's ostensibly conservative ideological agenda, the bourgeoisie has managed to police itself, to do the morally right and just thing, thanks only to Ambler Jevons, and in the process has also engineered a discrete and effective damage limitation. If the fractured world

of the upper-bourgeoisie has not exactly been purified, it has at least been put together again.

Opening with dire premonitions of imminent collapse and chaos and a fear of “impending evil,” *The Seven Secrets* comes full circle in a conclusion which restores the Edwardian bourgeois world to something like its former innocence and stability and which seems to reaffirm some of the ideological assumptions that the narrative itself had appeared to question. Sir Bernard may have been a scoundrel and a bounder, but the moral rectitude and social responsibility he was supposed to have stood for are still embodied in Ralph and Jevons, at a less exalted social level. Similarly, the masculine authority that Sir Bernard had criminally exploited will still be upheld by the pair, in their own fashion. Indeed, in any case, it seems quite likely that for Le Queux’s reading community (who were well-used to the predictable way in which his novels invariably flirted with disaster before restoring order) the uncertainties and confusions of the narrative could even have been interpreted as manageable and necessary elements in a kind of ritual of ethical cleansing required for society to progress. Be that as it may, the closure to *The Seven Secrets* leaves the surface of the Edwardian social order more or less unruffled, with Jevons returning to his tea business in the City and Ralph in the quiet rural practice that was always his ideal. “What is more,” Ralph says, “I have obtained in Ethelwynn a wife who is devoted to me and beloved by all the countryside—a wife who is the very perfection of all that is noble and good in woman” (148). And as if all this was not enough, not only does he get the girl, he gets her money, too. “The Courtenay estate is ours,” he declares at the close, making no secret of his satisfaction.

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Nazi Uniform Fetish and Role Playing: A Subculture of Erotic Evil

The word “Nazi” typically evokes thoughts of Anti-Semitism, war crimes, and the Holocaust. To be sure, war crimes and genocide were committed by some Nazis and this research is not meant as a defense of, or being in support of, those activities. Nor is this work an endorsement of the ideologies and activities of supremacist groups. Rather, this study is an empirical work on Nazi fetish and role-playing as an active and ongoing component within the bondage, discipline/dominance, and sadomasochism (BDSM) subculture. An analysis of BDSM subculture is consistent with the discipline of popular culture’s examination of “subcultures” and “emergent cultures” (King, 2012, p. 687). In detailing the history of popular culture as a discipline, Calweti (1976, p. 166) writes “popular culture as a phrase symbolizes an attitude ranging between neutrality and enthusiasm for the same kind of cultural products which would have been condemned as garbage by many earlier intellectuals and artists.” Scholars (Weinberg, Colin, & Moser, 1984; Weinberg, Williams, & Moser, 1984; Moser & Levitt, 1987; Sandnabba, et al, 2002; Richters, et al, 2008; Stiles & Clark, 2011) have examined this “cultural product” of BDSM and informed us of a vibrant and growing subculture. Such work expands our knowledge of popular culture and the present study accomplishes the same. We do so from a sociological perspective, one of the disciplines used in the analysis of popular culture, a “growth industry in the American academy” (Traube, 1996, p. 127).

In their comprehensive account of the analytic tools that have legitimized popular culture as a scholarly interest, Mukerji and Schudson (1986) note the contribution of Erving Goffman’s work on performances in understanding it as a “key form of cultural behavior.” They write, “performance is a kind of activity that is formally staged or an aspect of everyday life in which a person is oriented to and intends to have some effect on an audience” (Mukerji & Schudson, 1986, p. 56). We draw on the seminal work of Goffman to describe and explain how Nazi uniform fetishists and role-players actively manipulate symbols (i.e., to perform) in order to dramatize their own eroticism and thereby influence the perceptions of others (i.e., an audience). Role-playing is a performance and Calweti (1980) argues performances are an important aspect of popular culture. Performances establish societal archetypical roles, allow for a variety of expression of the human condition, and make accessible the complexities of said human condition. A social networking site dedicated to Nazi Uniform fetish and role-playing serves as the vehicle for examining the performances of these role-players. We consider demographic, role, and thematic variation among participants of the website and present the results of a content analysis of messages posted to that site. By exploring emergent themes and rationales for involvement, we elucidate how it is that members of this subculture engage one of the darkest sets of historical imagery and draw erotic pleasure from these evil images.

Conceptual Framework

References to erotic activities involving bondage, discipline, dominance, and submission can be found in ancient Egypt (Weinberg, Williams, & Moser, 1984). Evidence of the practice also exists in fifteenth century European literature (Moser & Levitt, 1987). In the eighteenth century, Marquis de Sade simultaneously shocked and enthralled with writings such as *Philosophy in the Boudoir* (2000) that depicted graphic scenes mixing pain with sex. During the 1800's, Sacher-Masoch penned *Venus in Furs* (2010) which portrayed complete sexual and mental submission of one to another with that submission involving pain.

The influence of both is seen in their names serving as the bases for the "S & M" in BDSM (Sade and *Sado*, and Masoch and *Masochist*). BDSM is the "collection of overlapping initials intended to identify three components of erotic power play." Bondage and discipline (BD) is "combining the restraint of movement with the punishment and/or control of the partner." Dominance and submission (DS) is the "umbrella term for the exchange of erotic power or control of one partner of another" and "does not require physical pain." Sadomasochism (SM) is "the consensual giving and receiving of intense erotic sensation" (Henkin & Holiday 1996, pp. 61 & 72). BDSM, as a sociological process, is a consensual role-play that follows a "script" in which the themes of power and control are prevalent (Weinberg, Colin, & Moser, 1984; Weinberg, 1987). The scenes are typically erotic in nature and may involve fetishes or pain. What occurs in a scene is consensual and negotiated among the participants and a scene can be stopped at any time by the use of a "safe-word" (see Miller & Devon, 1995; Moser & Madeson, 1998; Midori, 2005; Weiss, 2011, and Wiseman, 1998 for thorough discussions of BDSM ideologies and lifestyle). Generally, as compared to the larger population, those involved in BDSM are well-educated, affluent, and emotionally and psychologically well-adjusted (Moser & Levitt, 1987; Weinberg et al., 1987; Sandnabba, et al., 2002; Richters, et al., 2008; Stiles & Clark, 2011). BDSM is increasingly becoming integrated into popular culture. Fetish gear and dominatrix-inspired clothing have appeared on fashion runways (Moore, 2007). In addition, mainstream pop singers Rhiannon and Lady Gaga have incorporated, to various degrees, BDSM activities and fetish fashions into their videos and performances. The BDSM themed book *Fifty Shades of Grey* tops the *New York Times* bestseller lists in E-Book and paperback trade fiction (*New York Times*, 2012). Currently, the eyeglass company *Pearle Vision* is running a commercial featuring a "naughty librarian" who says in a sultry voice, "You have a lot of late fees mister, maybe someone should teach you to return your library books on time" (the subtext being the delinquent borrower is going to be punished). Although not yet mainstream, BDSM is on the cusp of acceptance as an erotic activity and is certainly on the minds of many.

Freud (1961) argued that the locus of a fetish lies in the male's unresolved belief in the mother's (missing) penis and castration anxiety over losing his own. The fetish serves as a substitute for the woman's penis, thus reducing the anxiety. Objects not phallic in nature that are associated with the mother can serve as the fetish. Common items are lingerie and shoes. Unlike Freud's focus on the unresolved crises over the sexualized phallic mother and castration anxiety as the impetus for an

object serving as a proxy for a mother's "penis," others view fetishes as variable (Gamman & Makinen, 1994; Sullivan, 2003). From this perspective, fetishism ranges from particular sexual practices and situations to the fetish replacing a sexual partner. Sex educator Midori defines a fetishist as "someone whose sensual and sexual arousal is greatly enhanced by objects, body parts and other elements not directly related to intercourse" (2005, p. 127). This perspective and definition allows for the inclusion of all types and manner of fetishes with sensitivity to culture, meaning, and historical context—such as Nazism. The study of Nazism within broader scholarly frameworks has experienced resurgence. Betts (2002, p. 552) writes:

While assessments of Nazi culture were once largely confined to painting, sculpture, architecture, literature and propaganda film, a generation of new scholars has begun to reconsider the significance of advertising, entertainment cinema, industrial design, television, autobahns, pop culture eroticism and other 'low culture' enterprises.

Nazi uniform fetish and role-playing can be categorized as an aspect of "pop culture eroticism" and the present study is consistent with the work of other scholars on related topics. For example, Frost (2003) fully develops the process by which Nazism (used synonymously with fascism) became eroticized as a mechanism of geo-political propaganda. She posits that a concerted effort was made by the Western allies during World I, and more so in World War II, to present Germans/Nazis as associated with sexual deviance (during those time periods BDSM was viewed as a form of sexual deviance/perversion). Parallels were made between the pathology and "violence" of BDSM and Nazism where the oppressed (i.e., bottom/submissive) was unwillingly compelled to engage in unpleasant sexual acts at the hands of the oppressor (i.e., top/dominant). However, this application was misplaced, for as Frost (2003, p. 32) argues:

This account of sadomasochism as a 'false pleasure' is unsatisfying for a number of reasons. First, it assumes that fantasies of violence and power are pathological—or fascist. Second, it uses 'masochism' and 'sadism' to denote simple characterizations of very complex relations (the 'masochistic masses' or the 'sadistic leader') and personality disorders ('the sadomasochistic personality type') without any precise definition of these terms or their actual applicability to fascist practices. BDSM is a diverse subculture involving various types of activities and forms of expression.

Applying Frost's (2003) analysis to the present study, Nazi uniform fetishists and role-players represent the diversity of BDSM subculture as it is a very unique activity with a specific form of expression. The most salient form of this expression is seen in the style and fashion of these fetishists and role-players. Style and fashion express autonomy, proclaims messages, establishes boundaries, and

generates definitions of a subculture (Hebdige, 1979). For uniform fetishists, the uniform creates a context for the BDSM scene. A Nazi uniform is just one type of uniform fetish. We suggest for these participants, they are attracted to Nazism as a movement steeped in violence and evil and the uniform is representative of this movement. BDSM practitioners use the term “scene” when referring to erotic power exchange and as such, Goffman’s dramaturgical analysis of social interaction is most appropriate.

Dramaturgical social action analysis of interaction has had a significant impact on sociology and related fields (Blumer, 1972; Collins, 1986; Williams, 1986; Burns, 1991; Chriss, 1993; Chriss, 1995; Chriss, 1996; Jaworski, 1996; Trevino, 2003; Smith, 2006; Jacobson, 2009; Menand, 2009; Brewster & Bell, 2010). Dramaturgy views social life as similar to theater life where societal members are much like actors on a stage assuming roles and playing them out to full effect (Elkin, 1958; Goffman, 1959; Manning, 1991). Goffman argues that it is in the interest of an actor to actively manipulate their performance so they will be viewed favorably by others (Guretitch, 1984; Batterstill, 1990). For those involved in Nazi uniform fetish and role-play, to be perceived as “evil” is the favored outcome and this performance is facilitated by the wearing of a Nazi uniform.

Methods

A social network website designed for those interested in BDSM and fetish was used as the data source. Consistent with Munt, Basset, and O’Riordan (2002), and in keeping with ethical guidelines as suggested by those scholars, the actual name of the public domain site is not divulged here. The postings used as data were public information readily available to anyone visiting the site. The use of such public information (including direct quoting) in scholarly research is akin to the use of other types of public media and poses no ethical dilemma (Basset & O’Riordan, 2002). This site has over 900,000 members and an Alexa ranking under 3,000. Alexa is a company that ranks websites based on popularity (<http://www.alexa.com/company>). The lower a site’s ranking, the more popular the site is. A ranking of under 100,000 is considered very good (Google is number one and Facebook number two). Based on the site’s Alexa ranking, it is a very popular website with a great deal of activity.

Within the site are various discussion groups based on interest. One of these groups is comprised of members interested in “Nazi Uniform Fetish and Role-playing.” The group’s creator states the forum is for discussion of “Nazi style uniforms, race charged psychological BDSM play, and exploitation film style imagery.” There are at least twelve other groups on the site about related topics, including “Females of the Third Reich” (114 members) and “SS [*Schutzstaffel*—Protection Squad] Uniforms and Those Who Love Them” (162). Nazi Uniform Fetish and Role-playing was selected not only because it is the largest of these (whether measured by number of participants, number of threads, or number of posts), but also because its postings entail the most thorough discussions of the use of Nazi uniforms as a fetish and in BDSM role-playing.

In studying coming out among lesbians, Munt, Basset, and O’Riordan (2002) conducted a quantitative survey to assess the demographics of their sample; a

similar method of recording is utilized in the current study. Frequencies were recorded for site members who indicated gender and BDSM role (e.g., top, bottom, switch, etc.). For more robust data, categories were collapsed based on role similarity. Top, dom, sadist, master, mistress, and sadomasochist were collapsed into "Dom." Slave, bottom, submissive, and masochist were collapsed into "Sub." Fetishist and kinkster were combined into "Fetishist." On the site, a "kinkster" is one interested in BDSM and fetish, but may or may not participate in BDSM scenes or practice/experience their fetish. Thirty-eight members of the discussion forum listed their BDSM identity as "unsure" or "undefined" and were excluded from the data resulting in a total N of 617. Data was placed into cross tabulations and subjected to a Chi-square test of significance. Content analysis was used to interpret qualitative data gleaned from posts and informative excerpts representing major themes identified.

Results and Discussion

Quantitative Data

A statistically significant difference exists between gender and BDSM role. The greatest contribution to the total X^2 value comes from the fact that there are more men that are dominant than would be expected by chance (146 observed versus 117 expected), more women that are submissive than would be expected by chance (77 versus 50), and more others that are switches than would be expected by chance (24 versus 13). These three cells alone contribute 31 (62.2%) to the total X^2 of 49.86 (7.2, 14.6, and 9.2 respectively).

Table 1: Gender and BDSM Role

Gender		Male	Female	Other	Total
BDSM Role	Dominant	146 (61.5%)	76 (32.1%)	15 (6.2%)	237
BDSM Role	Submissive	43 (32.7%)	77 (58.5%)	11 (8.4%)	131
BDSM Role	Switch	54 (43.2%)	47 (37.6%)	24 (19.2%)	125
BDSM Role	Fetishist	65 (52.3%)	42 (33.9%)	17 (13.6%)	124
Total		308	242	67	617

$X^2 = 49.86$

$X^2 .001$, where $df=6$ is 22.46, significant to $p < .001$.

Qualitative Data

Content analysis of posts found that members of Nazi Uniform Fetish and Role-playing discussed a variety of aspects of Nazi-related fetishism in more than 300 threads including more than ten thousand comments. For the most part, members discussed the uniforms themselves, including where to acquire them and pointedly disavowed white supremacy and anti-Semitism, emphasizing only the eroticism associated with the uniforms. Many posts commented on the sex appeal of the uniforms and fictional characters from the media (primarily films) that were

particularly sensual in their portrayal of Nazis. The excerpts below speak to the sensuality of power and control, cornerstones of BDSM. In response to a post asking, "What makes a sexy Nazi?" responses included:

A well cared for athletic, mature female body, subtly made up fair skin and hard steely blue eyes, long dark hair gathered up carefully in a high ponytail. She is very stylish and well groomed, a pristine women's tailored Black SS uniform laid out for her on the bed beside her as she sits gracefully at her dressing table in her delicate, demure lingerie and Fully fashioned seamed and Cuban heel Nylons leaning elegantly forward and to the side to pull up the zips on her gleaming almost mirror polished Black Leather 5" heel knee boots. Her visor cap, Black Leather Gloves, 4ft bull whip and SS officer's belt on her pillow along with the heavy Leather holster that shrouds her 9mm P38. The interest in Nazi role-playing and the Nazi fetish is for most people (I can't vouch for everyone), is a stimulating response to strong imagery, well tailored uniforms, and notions of power and fear.

Two characters from the film world were most often cited as epitomizing a sexy Nazi. One was the SS-Lieutenant Amon Goeth in *Schindler's List* (released in 1993). Participants spoke of his cold, evil good looks, ruthless coolness, and his impeccable style. The other character was the female sadomasochistic commandant of a prisoner-of-war camp in *Ilsa, She Wolf of the SS*, a 1975 campy sexploitation film. Ilsa personifies traits of the female dominatrix with her buxom figure, fondness for torture, violence, and the humiliation of men; all while wearing revealing SS-style uniforms. There is an element of fact to the aesthetic appeal (i.e., the sexiness) of Nazis as German designer Hugo Boss manufactured uniforms for the SS, SA (Storm Troopers), and Hitler Youth (*New York Times*, 1997).

As seen in Table 1, results for gender by BDSM role is consistent with what is generally found in the BDSM community: more men are dominant than women and more women submissive than men. In Nazi Germany, the role of the woman was to be submissive to men and to the State. According to the ideology of the Nazi leadership, the place of a woman was that of "mother, housewife, guardian of racial purity, transmitter of German culture, and supporter of national economic policy" (Rupp 1977, p. 372). The findings of the present study do not support this ideology as the number of females who identified as dominant (N=76) or submissive (N=77) was equal, less one. This finding is suggestive of the paradox of the Nazi woman. She has been represented and perceived as both powerful and subordinate. Richard Wagner has been credited with influencing Hitler's worldview (Kohler, 2001). His widow, Cosima, was instrumental in sustaining the Beyruth festival which featured Wagner's works and where Hitler was a frequent attendee. Houston Chamberlain, Wagner's biographer, wrote to her "one of the most wonderful manifestations of your strength of character is the way you mete out punishment where punishment is due" (Kohler 2001, p. 123). Conversely, Eva Braun, Hitler's mistress, is characterized as wandering around the Berghof "with dewy eyes and a

tortured expression... Hitler's circle saw her as a 'bird in a gilded cage' who as Hitler's bedfellow condemned herself to a life of self-denial" (Eberle & Uhl, 2005). The apparent contradiction of a strong, punishing woman versus the ideal German woman of the Third Reich may not be that much of a contradiction in BDSM. Cosima was imbued with the qualities of a Dominant while Eva possessed submissive characteristics and both roles are equally represented among women in the sample.

Participants are very careful and go to great lengths to establish that they are not anti-Semitic or supremacists, and are aware that confusion is possible as indicated by this participant:

People tend to automatically assume that someone who finds the uniform or the role-play sexy, is actually a Nazis themselves. Which I'm sure can be the case from time to time but couldn't be further from the truth for me. I'm actually the exact opposite.

Members recognize the connotations that the uniform inspires, and one called it "a foregone conclusion that to wear a Nazi uniform where it would cause offense is just rude and dumb." They thus report keeping their fetish private, even from family. The closest expression of anti-Semitism was a Jewish participant explaining that Jewish slurs excite her not only despite but in *opposition* to anti-Semitism. She stated, "I feel as though taking ownership of these words, and especially using them for my sexual gratification, is the biggest [derogation] I can give to real life anti-Semitism." In another post, the same participant wrote, "There are a lot of Jews in this group, like me. Except we're clever enough to know the difference between a fetish and actually committing racist acts." A different member noted that "the biggest fan of my ex's SS-uniform was a friend of ours who is Jewish." Self-identified Jewish members varied in their interest in Nazi role-play: One asserted that "Jews like to play Nazis and Nazis like to play Jews," another wrote, "I'm a Jew who likes to keep being a Jew in my Nazi torture role-playing." Not a single post expressed explicit anti-Semitism.

It is the violent nature of Nazism, not anti-Semitism, which motivates the self-presentation of one as "Nazi" among Nazi uniform fetishists. It is the *image* of violence that is being portrayed, more so than *actual* violence. For, as has been noted, BDSM play is highly controlled (e.g., consensual scene negotiation and the use of safe-words). It is not anti-Semitism that is the attraction, but other components of Nazism—namely, violence and power. For those involved in BDSM, (consensual) "violence" and power are erotic.

Conclusion

Nazi uniform fetish and role-play is just that, the playing of a role. The fetish serves to enhance the BDSM experience and has little to do with white supremacy or anti-Semitism. The world of BDSM is an erotically charged arena that incorporates a variety of interests, desires, and tastes. It is the association with evil that participants in Nazi uniform fetish and role-play find appealing. The self-presentation of erotic evil serves to contribute to the quality of the BDSM experience and allow

participants in this subculture a safe and accepting environment in which to explore and express their fetish. This suggests, as oxymoronic as it sounds, that evil isn't all that bad. The incorporation of evil symbols in a safe, non-harmful, consensual manner to enhance one's pleasure suggests some performances (i.e., role-playing) serve a purpose in popular culture; it allows us to be bad.

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Is “Fat” A Dirty Word?: Body Dismorphic Disorder and The Postfeminist Chick Lit Heroine

“For every feminist action, there was an equal and opposite beauty myth reaction”—Naomi Wolf

“Looks are a form of currency that aid not only one’s search for a mate but also one’s ability to secure that promotion, get that next job, and become a fully realised human being”—Alison Umminger

In *The Whole Woman*, Germaine Greer argues, “The further from the natural a female form, the more attractive it becomes. The further from the natural a female form, the more feminine it is” (Greer 29). She implies that the corporeality of women, the *body* which is the bearer of new life and thus an intimate manifestation of Nature, is victimized by patriarchal ideals of beauty and thinness. Contemporary chick lit novels which have been a commercial juggernaut for reflecting “how things really are” for young urban women, depict the struggles women undergo to coax and ultimately *force* their wayward bodies into obeying the dictates of beauty according to the fashion and beauty industries. Greer adds, “Women grow up with a Barbie doll—her long legs, tiny waist and huge breasts—it’s no wonder they want to look like that,” and a majority of contemporary women do suffer from low self-esteem because their bodies do not fit the ideal of feminine beauty conjured up by the plastic doll, itself descended from a German semi-pornographic doll called Lilli (Greer 32). This article will examine the devaluing of the postfeminist protagonists and their bodies in Helen Fielding’s *Bridget Jones’s Diary* (1996), Jennifer Weiner’s *Good in Bed* (2001), and Jane Green’s *Jemima J* (2001) because they do not conform to the beauty stereotype of patriarchal society, and how their internalization of this stereotype leads to deep unhappiness and lack of self-confidence. Each chick lit protagonist reveals herself to be what Weiner calls “a dedicated foot soldier in the body wars” (Weiner 14).

Naomi Wolf’s *The Beauty Myth* (1991) is a biting critique of women’s postfeminist disempowerment, and was published just five years prior to Helen Fielding’s *Bridget Jones’s Diary* (1996), which is usually hailed as the first chick lit novel. Postfeminism itself is a controversial issue and the term is used in different ways—sometimes contradictorily—to signify either ideological distance from the second wave feminist movement, or a backlash against feminism itself, or a historical move to third wave feminism.¹ While women had struggled to release themselves from the cult of feminine domesticity which had brainwashed thousands of women in the 1950s and 60s—a phenomenon adroitly captured by Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique*—the postfeminist sensibility trapped the next generation by what Wolf calls “the beauty myth,” where “images of female beauty [were] used as a political weapon against

women's advancement" (Wolf 10). Women who, as a payoff of the second wave feminism, could now develop powerful careers and identities of their own, were neglecting these impressive advances in women's positions by pursuing thin bodies and everlasting youthfulness. Wolf records that thirty-three thousand American women said to researchers that they would prefer to lose up to fifteen pounds rather than strive for a different goal (Wolf 10).

A central feature of what Diane Negra calls "the self-surveiling postfeminist subject" in *What a Girl Wants?* is the obsession with attempting to kowtow to the societal beauty ideal of the Barbie—the over-exercised, underfed female body—working on the (false) presumption that such beauty would be concurrent with the achieved self (Negra 119). In pursuit of this elusive ideal, Bridget Jones begins every journal entry with a careful catalogue of her weight and the number of calories from food and alcohol that she has consumed that day. She dry scrubs her body to reduce cellulite and constantly suffers from guilt for breaking every diet she attempts. In a similar vein, *Jemima J* begins with the sentence, "God, I wish I were thin" and Jemima then speaks of her secret hobby of studying the bodies of famous supermodels in glossy magazines and yearning to look like them (Green 1). Weiner's heroine, Cannie Shapiro, like Jemima and Bridget, obsesses over her weight and wants to make herself invisible. This Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD) is a patriarchal creation that most women are victims of and strive to overcome by stringent unhealthy diets, over-exercising, and even self-starvation.

At the beginning of *Bridget Jones's Diary*, Bridget announces that she weighs 129 pounds and lists the different food she ate that day before she gives the reader any detail of her life. Bridget Jones sets the tone for later chick lit protagonists by being overly critical of herself for her weight and in a constant state of guilt because of the diets she thinks she should be following but keeps failing to maintain. Bridget is relatable to the target women readers of chick lit because she embodies most of the obsessions which modern single working women are plagued with. Although she is a healthy woman, she is obsessed with her (completely healthy) appetite, trying to conform to the impossible dimensions of "beautiful women" as propagated by the mainstream media. When she finally does reach the target weight she has yearned for all her life, people tell her she looks tired and wan. This leaves Bridget nonplussed as the years of sacrifice and always being on a diet to achieve this perfect weight is dashed to nothing when nobody appreciates what should have been the new, improved, *thin* Bridget. Helen Fielding also ironically comments on the extensive processes of date preparation which women have to undergo to make themselves desirable. Bridget laments:

Completely exhausted by an entire day of date preparation.
Being a woman is worse than being a farmer—there is so much
harvesting and crop spraying to be done: legs to be waxed,

underarms shaved, eyebrows plucked, feet pumiced, skin exfoliated and moisturized, spots cleansed, roots dyed, eyelashes tinted, nails filed, cellulite massaged, stomach muscles exercised. The whole performance is so highly tuned you only need to neglect it for a few days for the whole thing to go to seed ... Is it any wonder girls have no confidence? (Fielding 27)

In order to be appealing and cut out the competition for the prospective Mr. Right, Bridget exercises and dry scrubs her naked body to reduce cellulite, although she knows that men should like women just as they are. She confesses, "I am a child of *Cosmopolitan* culture, have been traumatized by supermodels and too many quizzes and know that neither my personality nor my body is up to it if left to its own devices. I can't take the pressure" (Fielding 52). This "pressure" that modern postfeminist women feel is seen as a reaction against the progress made by second wave feminism, a retrosexist move where women are trying their best to be as feminine and "perfect" for men as they can force their bodies to be.

Although one of the main themes of chick lit novels is the search for the Mr. Right for each woman, *Bridget Jones's Diary* sets a theme which recurs in the majority of chick lit novels. The hyperconscious relationship which every protagonist seems to have with her body and the constant battle which she feels must be waged to master the body as well as the self-image surmounts the search for the perfect mate. A great example of the kind of mindset women have developed regarding diet and constant vigilance of their bodies is a conversation that Bridget has with her gay friend, Tom. Tom is surprised when Bridget tells him that women eat about a thousand calories when on a diet, when he had assumed that people needed two thousand calories just to survive. Bridget comments:

I looked at him nonplussed. I realized that I have spent so many years being on a diet that the idea that you might actually need calories to survive has been completely wiped out of my consciousness. Have reached point where believe nutritional ideal is to eat nothing at all and that the only reason people eat is because they are so greedy that cannot help themselves from breaking out and ruining their diets (Fielding 225)

Bridget then reveals to Tom that she instinctively knows the calorie counts of black olives and green olives, large and small bananas, and attributes it to "the pressures we women have long been subjected to [which have made us] insecure, appearance obsessed and borderline anorexic" (Fielding 225). Bridget's moods depend on her calorie intake for that day, and this often takes

on a somewhat moral dimension with her being a “good” or “bad” person on a given day based on whether she has stuck to the diet or not.

Bridget never quite manages to stick to a diet and it is an ongoing procrastination of starting a diet “tomorrow,” which is also an ongoing struggle with guilt and self-loathing because without the diet she is not being able to reach that golden weight and figure that she wants. Early in the novel, right after the Christmas holiday season, Bridget decides to lengthen the festive season for just one more night and ends up gorging on sparkling wine, chocolate, mince pies, Christmas cake and cheese. While she confesses her disgust for herself, she immediately attempts to bolster up her flagging spirits by thinking of the strict diet she can start the next day:

Now, though, I feel ashamed and repulsive. I can actually feel the fat splurging out from my body. Never mind. Sometimes you have to sink into a nadir of toxic fat development in order to emerge, phoenix-like, from the chemical wasteland as a purged and beautiful Michelle Pfeiffer figure. Tomorrow new Spartan health and beauty regime will begin (Fielding 16)

The next day does show a record of 700 calories, which is very Spartan indeed—almost to the point of starvation. The next ten days coincide with a reciprocated flirtation with her boss, Daniel Cleaver, with whom Bridget has been infatuated for a while. These ten days also show records of calorie intake that are less than or around 1000, and Bridget claims that “love had eradicated [her] need to pig out” (Fielding 19). From the eleventh to the twelfth day after she launched her Spartan diet, she jumps from 998 calories to 3879 calories and describes this hike in moral terms, going from “excellent, v.g. [very good], perfect saint-style person” to “repulsive” (Fielding 25, 27). The reason for the excessive calorie intake is Daniel cancelling a date Bridget had been looking forward to and had gone to lengths to prepare for. After having somewhat recovered from her disappointment, her immediate conclusion for Daniel’s cancellation is that he is “probably out with someone thinner” and she promptly goes to weigh herself (Fielding 28).

Weight is a mania with Bridget and she weighs herself several times in the span of a few hours. The journal entry for Tuesday, 7 March, starts with the usual record of her weight, calorie intake, and consumption of alcohol and cigarettes, but also lists every item of food Bridget eats that day for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and a snack. This entry begins with Bridget complaining about her weight at 9 a.m., but instead of one figure under weight, she has “130, 128 or 131 lbs.??” She complains:

Argh. How can I have put on 3 lbs. since the middle of the night? I was 130 when I went to bed, 128 at 4 a.m., and 131 when I got up. I can understand weight coming *off*—it could

have evaporated or passed out of the body into the toilet—but how could it be put *on*? Could food react chemically with other food, double in density and volume, and solidify into even heavier and denser hard fat? (Fielding 64)

After listing all she has eaten that day, she realises that she has followed four different diets—Scarsdale, F-plan, Hay, and Anti-Cellulite Raw Food—with “slight variations” made to each. This means that she had basically eaten whatever she wanted and tried to forcibly ascribe it to a fad diet; for example, the Mars Bar she ate for breakfast was a “slight variation on specified half grapefruit” (Fielding 65). She muses on her failure to stick to any proper diet plan while munching on a chocolate croissant, and swears to start a new diet the next day. It is a vicious cycle where Bridget wants to lose weight to get a boyfriend but overeats because of the anxiety of not having a boyfriend and ending up “all alone, half-eaten by an Alsatian,” which, in turn, gives her the added anxiety of going on a diet to lose the extra weight (Fielding 137).

Unlike Bridget, Jane Green’s protagonist in *Jemima J* actually starts out obese and with all the neuroses associated with it. This novel is a prime example of the search for the right man conflicting with the heroine’s struggles with her weight. The novel begins with the line “God, I wish I were thin,” and over the course of the novel Jemima develops a monomania for exercise by which she loses her extra weight—to become a beautiful thin woman and find a husband, of course (Green 1). Jemima begins the novel as a lowly paid writer who deserves a better position but is held down because of her obesity, and also due to the presence of her immaculately groomed, thin co-worker, Geraldine. Geraldine is easily able to take her pick of men and jobs based on her magazine-cover looks, and Jemima longingly says, “[she] may not have an ounce of talent, but the men love her ... [and] Geraldine is the woman I wish I was” (Green 7). Jemima actually has real talent when it comes to writing, but she would exchange her intelligence and skills for Geraldine’s looks in a heartbeat since appearance is ultimately what matters most when trying to get both a man and profitable work. Wolf asserts, “When women breached the power structure in the 1980s, the two economies finally merged. Beauty was no longer just a symbolic form of currency; it literally *became* money” (Wolf 21). In the lives of women like Jemima J, they have to accept the frustrating phenomenon of bosses favouring the brainless beauties who effortlessly secure promotions at work, whether they deserve it or not. Hence, Jemima must get a completely new, *thin* look so that she can compete with other women for what should be her due based on merit and irrespective of how she looks. The makeover paradigm that is represented in *Jemima J*, besides being a symptom of Body Dysmorphic Disorder, is a feature of postfeminism, and it is disturbing that this procedure seems to ascertain the “subjectification” of the woman; apparently, only when a woman no longer looks like the ugly duckling can she feel and act as the beautiful swan.

Jemima confesses that she buys glossy fashion magazines and then she says: "I sit and I study each glossy photograph for minutes at a time, drinking in the models' long, lithe limbs, their tiny waists, their glowing golden skin. I have a routine: I start with their faces, eyeing each sculpted cheekbone, heart-shaped chin, and I move slowly down their bodies, careful not to miss a muscle" (Green 1). When Jemima finally loses weight (for a man), the stylish Geraldine takes responsibility for giving her a makeover, and urges Jemima to use her credit card to buy designer clothes and get a great hairdo. After the makeover, Jemima and Geraldine walk down the town's high street as "two slim (slim!) blondes, laden down with fabulous goodies" (Green 174). In Western culture, fat people are visual embodiments of conspicuous consumption, fall guys of the ambivalence created by a society which actively encourages overconsumption, but punishes brutally when there are bodily signs of that overconsumption. While she is fat, Jemima does not spend any money on herself (except for buying a lot of food), but as soon as she becomes thin, she overspends on designer clothes, expensive haircuts, and gym memberships. Geraldine urges her to treat herself now that she is beautiful by subscribing to the consumerist thought process that all beautiful women should indulge themselves for having attained the golden bar of "beauty".² The underlying message seems to be that fat women should be punished for overconsumption, while thin women should be rewarded; visible signs of overconsumption in the latter case—Louis Vuitton and Prada bags—are approved of and not vilified. Jean Baudrillard comments on the implications of consumerism in contemporary culture in *The Consumer Society*, and argues that *womanly* women are encouraged

to gratify themselves in order to better be able to enter as objects into the masculine competition (enjoy themselves in order to be more enjoyable). They never enter into direct competition (except with other women over men). If a woman is beautiful—that is to say, woman is a woman—she will be chosen. If a man is a man, he will choose his wife among other objects/signs (**his** car, **his** wife, **his** eau de toilette) (Baudrillard 97)

These beauty treatments make women feel more confident about their place in the rat race to get the best man and the best job since the base criterion for success in any field is their beauty—physical appearance is the new BFOQ,³ a phenomenon which naturalises BDD in women.

As mentioned earlier, one key feature of postfeminism is the constant self-surveillance women subject themselves to in order to fit the perfect, supermodel thin myth of Woman perpetuated by the mainstream media and patriarchal society in general and leads to women in general being victims of BDD. The idea of the self-as-product leads to a connected problem in chick lit: the rivalry among women. When women become seen as objects in a

consumerist economy where there is competition to be the newest, thinnest, best-looking models that men will pick, there will always be denigration of the "inferior brands," i.e. fat and therefore ugly women, and the obese women will be jealous of the superior models, i.e. the thin and therefore beautiful women. Green informs the reader that when Jemima receives some of the sexual attention which Geraldine is used to getting, Geraldine "if she hadn't been going out with Nick Maxwell ... would have been green with jealousy" (Green 175). In a world where body image festers constant competition among women, Geraldine, so used to male attention and adoration, needs must be the centre of every man's attention or feel insecure otherwise. Naomi Wolf critiques our patriarchal society where women's identity should be founded upon their 'beauty' so that their self-esteem will be susceptible to external approval (Wolf 14).

The competition and antagonism between women that is encouraged by society to keep women insecure and prevent the development of womanly solidarity is displayed best in the affairs of the heart in novels where the beautiful, thin woman is paired off with the handsome, well-built man, while the overweight and thus ugly woman is left crying in the shadows—unless she has a makeover. In *What a Girl Wants*, Diane Negra expresses concern at "the rising social expectation for American women to adhere to an intense regime of personal grooming (waxing, tanning, manicures, pedicures, facials, Botox treatments, etc.) and at younger and younger ages ... [and how] contemporary beautification discourses place strong stress on the achieved self" (Negra 119). Throughout *Jemima J*, Green represents love as a very shallow thing which is shared between equally attractive people; something that puts down emotional connection in favour of physical fetishism. Naomi Wolf records how men are trapped by the beauty myth as much as women when she cites Simone de Beauvoir's quote that "no man is truly free to love a fat woman" (Wolf 174). She argues that this kind of fetishism can destroy man-woman relationships:

When men are more aroused by symbols of sexuality than by the sexuality of women themselves, they are fetishists. Fetishism treats a part as if it were the whole; men who choose a lover on the basis of her "beauty" alone are treating the woman as a fetish—that is, treating a part of her, her visual image, not even her skin, as if it were her sexual self. Freud suggests that the fetish is a talisman against the failure to perform (Wolf 175)

In the latter half of the novel, once Jemima starts looking glamorous and "like a made-it," she gets upgraded to first class on a flight based on her looks (Green 188). Brad, the man she is flying to California to meet is the wealthy, good-looking owner of a gym, a sort of local celebrity. They have a passionate two weeks together until Jemima finds out she is the social cover-up

for his personal fetish for fat women. Brad has been in a relationship with his secretary, Jenny for a long time, but since Jenny's fatness disqualifies her from being in the limelight as the girlfriend of a "successful man," he needs Jemima to fit the part of trophy girlfriend. Jenny has always treated her badly, and Jemima finally understands it is jealousy, not only for her looks as she had first believed but because Brad needs to hide Jenny's position in his life with Jemima. Jemima does not find love with her new looks but gets used for them. She has been in love with Ben, a dashing, handsome co-worker through the whole novel but he had never noticed the fat Jemima as anything beyond someone he worked with. At the end of *Jemima J*, her slim good looks finally get Ben to fall in love with her and marry her, and the epilogue tells the reader that Jemima becomes a "voluptuous, feminine, curvy size 10 who is completely happy with how she looks" (Green 373). However, the reader needs to remember that she is able to be this comfortable with her size and what she eats only after her previously model-thin body hooked the man who had heretofore completely ignored her sexual possibilities. Thus, the concept that thin is beautiful imprisons both men and women and leaves both sexes searching for genuineness. Jemima might feel good about herself after losing the extra weight, but she has the knowledge, and thus the insecurity, that her boyfriend loves her because of her appearance, and not irrespective of it. In "What's Really Eating the Women in 'Chick-Lit,'" Alison Umminger writes that chick lit often represents men as "far too superficial and shallow ever to love a woman for her imperfect self. In these fictional worlds no man is strong or deep enough to love an overweight woman, not publicly at any rate. Thus all the characters remain trapped (or willingly ensnared) by a culture that values surface first, substance second" (Umminger 249).

However, Jennifer Weiner's *Good in Bed* is a noticeable contrast to chick lit novels like *Jemima J* that seem to feature slim and pretty heroines. The female protagonist, Cannie Shapiro, is given more self-esteem and a more secure career than Jemima Jones, and her elevation from journalist to screenwriter occurs when she is fat and not when she becomes thin. Nevertheless, Cannie knows that she will be judged according to her weight by the people she encounters. When she is asked by her personal weight-loss trainer if her weight affects her performance at her job, she says:

Not really. I mean, sometimes, some of the people I interview ... you know, they're thin, I'm not, I get a little jealous, maybe, or wonder if they think I'm lazy or whatever, and then I have to be careful when I write the articles, not to let the way I'm feeling affect what I say about them. But I'm good at my job. People respect me (Weiner 41)

Although Cannie tries to charily navigate through the way her size would influence the way people behave towards her, she cannot protect herself

from the way people attack her due to her weight. Later in the novel, Cannie's surprising friendship with movie star, Maxi Ryder is strengthened by Maxi's having been an ugly duckling herself at one time, and she has never been confident with her body image after that. Geraldine in *Jemima J* is not alone in her insecurity—the age-old principle of divide-and-conquer encourages women to fear and be wary of each other's beauty in order to be isolated from each other, thus undoing the female solidarity strongly encouraged by the women's movement. Even a movie star like Maxi, thin and sexy now, feels discomfort because of her previous avatar and finds some kind of camaraderie with Cannie because Cannie is someone who can truly understand the unhappiness and lack of self-esteem caused by an overweight body.

Unlike *Jemima*, Cannie exercises agency in romantic relationships even when she is at her heaviest weight. It is her decision to break up with her boyfriend, Bruce, who reacts by publishing an article in a national magazine called "Loving a Larger Woman," a confessional detailing his relationship with Cannie (called 'C'), her struggles with her weight, and her lack of self-appreciation. He portrays her body as curvy and womanly: "Her shoulders were as broad as mine, her hands were almost as big, and from her breasts to her belly, from her hips down to the slope of her thighs, she was all sweet curves and warm welcome" (Weiner 14-15). After describing her body so affectionately, he moves on to say that his pleasure in her body was not enough:

Being out with her didn't feel nearly as comfortable. Maybe it was the way I'd absorbed society's expectations: its dictates of what men are supposed to want and how women are supposed to appear ... Loving a larger woman is an act of courage in this world, and maybe it's even an act of futility. Because, in loving C., I knew I was loving someone who didn't believe that she herself was worthy of anyone's love (Weiner 14-15)

Cannie understands the validity of Bruce's comments about her own lack of self-love, and aims to win Bruce back and make peace with her body by losing weight. At the beginning of the novel, Cannie says, "I wished I wasn't a reporter. I wished that my job was baking muffins in a muffin shop, where all I'd have to do was crack eggs and measure flour and make change, and nobody could abuse me, and where they'd even expect me to be fat. Every flab roll and cellulite crinkle would serve as testimony to the excellence of my baked goods" (Weiner 20). Cannie almost always refers to her plastic surgeon father when she speaks of her problems with Bruce, and calls her father "the author of all [her] insecurities and fears" (Weiner 305). She had always felt "like a walking affront, like a collection of things [her] father spent his days waging war against," and the psychological scars which her troubled relationship with her father left on her—he abandons her family to marry a better-looking woman and have prettier daughters—influences all of her relationships with other men (Weiner 105). In

daily life and relationships, she always feels “the truth in [her] bones, the Gospel according to [her] father: I was fat and I was ugly and nobody would ever love me” (Weiner 84). When Cannie finally meets her father after not having seen him for years, he barely acknowledges her and does not provide any kind of apology. She ultimately loses her excess weight in an extreme depression when she almost loses the daughter she had conceived when she had sex with Bruce during a short reconciliation. However, unlike Jemima and Bridget, a thin “hot” body is not the solution for finding happiness because Cannie’s thinness comes from what she calls her “Placenta Abruptio Emergency Hysterectomy Premature and Possibly Brain-Damaged Baby Diet” (Weiner 341). Cannie does not subscribe to the shallow concept of fatness being equivalent to shame. Cannie returns to her original weight after the baby recovers, and she finds love and happiness at a size sixteen.

“It is proved by surveys that happiness does not come from love, wealth or power but the pursuit of attainable goals: and what is a diet if not that?” (Fielding 16)

In *Consuming Innocence*, Karen Brooks writes that Barbie was created to “give girls the chance to imagine what it would be like, through play with a[n] [adult] doll, to have a womanly body, accoutrements and fashions,” thus laying the foundation for generations of women to suffer anxiety because they could not match up to the impossible dimensions which Barbie’s ostensibly “womanly” body seemed to set as the standard for femininity (Brooks 94). Women suffer from Body Dysmorphic Disorder every day and undergo stringent diets just in order to be young, thin, and beautiful forever. All to please men, the prize for being prettier than other women—this is a new spin on the idea of the survival of the fittest. Moreover, the word “fat” has become one of the biggest insults which can be applied to a woman, and sizes like 0 and 00 are being invented so that women can never really be thin enough. Women who felt like they had achieved the Mecca of perfection at a size 0 are made to feel insecure and dissatisfied as size 00 is the next big (or tiny) goal that they need to achieve. This debilitating process engineered by the patriarchal establishment “elects” who will belong to the clique of the beautiful, where the definition of beauty always excludes the fat people.

The postfeminist sensibility has a decidedly bodily quality, where femininity involves a regimen of self-discipline and incessant monitoring in order for women to achieve a sense of empowerment and individualism. The socio-cultural significance of this obsession with one’s physical desirability that is present in almost every chick lit novel is that being thin not only has romantic but also financial rewards. The pursuit of (attainable?) happiness through diets is Bridget’s way of coping with the demand for modern postfeminist women to be *impossibly* beautiful—Karen Brooks records that if Barbie were a real woman,

her dimensions would have been 40-18-32 (Brooks 93). *Jemima J* portrays how the accessibility to certain coveted jobs is directly related to how one looks. Also, chick lit shows fat women as undeserving not only of romantic love but also of familial love, as some books, *Jemima J* and *Good in Bed* for example, demonstrate the abandonment of fat daughters by their attractive fathers. This is testimony that men are as much a victim of the culturally prevalent idea of thin=beautiful, and breeds a basic distrust of men in general and their capability to look beyond looks. Only Jennifer Weiner's books are comparatively different from the general type of fat-duckling-to-thin-swan novels because she allows her heroines monetary success even when they shop in the upper dress sizes. Western society has a knack for seeking the unattainable, particularly when it comes to outward appearance. Many ads are digitally altered to further signify this desire for an "unflawed" physique. Due to these skewed perceptions, women resort to extreme diets in attempts of obtaining the inaccessible. It is imperative that we be conscious of the severe affects that media produces on our lives and its capacity to subliminally alter our perceptions.

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Notes

¹ In *Interrogating Postfeminism*, Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra note the contradictions present in the current understanding of "postfeminism," and observe that it is "characterized by a double discourse that works to construct feminism as a phenomenon of the past, traces of which can be found (and sometimes even valued) in the present; postfeminism suggests that it is the very success of feminism that produces its irrelevance to contemporary culture" (Tasker and Negra, 8).

² Tasker and Negra add insight to this phenomenon of consumption to "improve" oneself physically insofar as it pertains to the postfeminist woman when they say, "Postfeminism also perpetuates woman as pinup, the enduring linchpin of commercial beauty culture. In fact, it has offered new rationales for guilt-free consumerism, substantially reenergizing beauty culture ... and presiding over an aggressive mainstreaming of elaborate and expensive beauty treatments to the middle class" (Tasker and Negra 3).

³ Wolf argues that beauty is now being catalogued "as a version of what United States sex discrimination law calls a BFOQ (a bona fide occupational qualification) and Britain calls GOQ (a genuine occupational qualification), such as femaleness for a wet nurse or maleness for a sperm donor" (Wolf 27).

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A Historical Overview of Philanthropy In Rock from the 1950s to the 2000s

Introduction

Sometimes, the social and political involvement of rock musicians goes beyond simple songwriting or protest and instead takes the form of concerts, songs or televised events, for the purpose of fundraising and raising public awareness in social and global issues. Somewhat lost in these charity performances was the sense of rebellion, opposition, violence, or radical politics that have been associated with rock music by the public.

Even though rock music inherited the folk tradition of protest songs by making political commentary on topics such as war, poverty, religion, justice, civil rights, and the environment (Scheurer 170), the social activism in rock music might have reached a mainstream peak with the “Do They Know It’s Christmas?” single by Band Aid in 1984 and “We Are the World” by USA for Africa in 1985, but with a different sense than in the past. Though the two singles were not the first of their kind, they signaled the arrival of the philanthropic movement in rock music in a completely new way, showing that contemporary music can still carry compassionate and challenging ideals on a much higher level than anyone could have ever imagined.

While philanthropy from one field can have an impact on the other fields, the endeavors in rock music to help the welfare of others have often been overlooked in the field of academia. Rock music has historically played an important part in shaping the social, cultural, and political history of the second half of the last century, and it has constantly reminded us that it can help lead social changes (Haycock and Anderson 1).

This article presents a brief overview of rock music’s philanthropic efforts in the latter half of the 20th century. It illustrates how the philanthropic movement has developed and progressed over the course of time and offers a critical in-sight by detailing idealism, legacies, impact, influences, reception, and criticism, using a decade-by-decade breakdown. A key contention in this study is that rock music has worked to educate and enlighten the public to raise awareness over the course of its history and to present similar possibilities in the new millennium.

1950s-1960s: The Dawning of Charity Rock

Historically, rock musicians have tried to address social issues directly as commentary or as calls to action since the rock and roll’s emergence in the 1950s. Rock music and politics have often gone hand in hand, and this antagonistic relationship has resulted in some interesting results while other times been neglected. What is important is its persistence. As Garofalo said, “The eruption of rock and roll in the 1950s changed the popular music landscape permanently and irrevocably, signaling the advent of broader social change to come” (Garofalo “From Music Publishing” 336).

Whereas some songs or artists communicated through radical and subversive political messages, actual philanthropic events organized to raise money were rare occasions in the early to mid 1960s, and even if there were a few concerts held for charitable purposes, the usual festival coverage had been local newspaper accounts of the events. The only national news coverage came when riots occurred at jazz festivals or rock and roll concerts (Peterson 97-123). This is a clear example of rock music as a form of counterculture and threat to conservative America as late as the late 1960s. Also, it is important in this regard to consider the social relations of rock music with the mass media.

The late 1960s was the period that rock musicians established themselves as the agents of social change in the United States. Folk rock music's social and political conscience reached its summit, as such high-profile politically active musicians began to write and perform in what has become to be known as the protest. Berger argued that such protest music "voiced from a left-wing perspective" (57) and antagonized the powers-that-be, condemning and proposing possible solutions to social injustices. While music from this period and after did not always hint solutions, they functioned "to educate, motivate, and raise consciousness" (57). In this sense, the folk rock movement that promoted the Civil Rights movement shares its common thread with charity efforts in that it raised public awareness even if no fundraising for the cause took place.

The two concerts that showcased rock music's political involvement during the decade of the 1960s were the Monterey International Pop Festival in 1967 and Woodstock Festival in 1969. These festivals featured line-ups that struck a balance between artists from The United States and British Invasion bands, in addition to several from the Third World. These events not only "played an integral role in educating young adult participants in the counterculture and motivating them to act against social injustices and inequalities" (Haycock and Anderson 4), but also became two of the very first wide-scale non-benefit rock concerts of the era.

Although these two concerts did not employ charitable fundraising and are not generally regarded and understood as true charity events, they still provided an interpretive history of the rise and decline of the 1960s counterculture spirit and serve as a prelude to the culture that would emerge in the 1970s and 1980s. It is especially true for the Monterey International Pop Festival and Woodstock because they constructed the phenomenon of the rock music concert in the late 1960s, setting the stage for the future.

From a commercial standpoint, it is intriguing to note that most of the major music festivals of the 1960s—The Monterey International Pop Festival (1967) and Woodstock (1969), and even the infamous Altamont Festival (1969)—have been captured on either films or albums (or on both media), and as Kitts noted, much of what we know and think about these festivals comes from the films and recordings, which soon became a marketing pattern for the future philanthropic events to follow (715). The television and recording industries have packaged these events as historical commodities that competed with other cultural products on the market.

Grossberg wrote that "The history of rock and roll—if not rock and roll itself—is largely a set of images: musical and visual, live and recorded, personal and

public, of performers and fans, of youths and adults, of fun and rebellion” (175). This means that free from commercial profits earned from the films and albums, these products also work as historical artifacts, capturing enthusiastic, clamorous audiences engrossed in their music. Also, as Schowalter contended, these documents help explain how contemporary attacks on popular music might continue to resonate with the larger public (87).

The music festivals of the 1960s were meaningful social and cultural experiences, they were also marketplaces that offered immeasurable promotional opportunities not only for the involved artists to raise their name values but also for the purveyors of a variety of products and services for the audience, including the media. From the philanthropic point of view, while none of the events was largely heralded as a charity concert, the idea of non-profit concerts came into being and set the tone for the next decade to take note, the decade we can call a true beginning in charity rock.

The 1970s: A True Beginning

In the 1970s, the rebellious edge of rock music in the previous decade diminished, having been promoted and produced as “an acceptable commodity and purchased into the mainstream by the maturing baby-boomers” (Haycock and Anderson 4). It may have had to do with the state of society in the early 1970s, which saw the conclusion of the Vietnam War and decrease in rock music’s involvement in political activism. By the mid 1970s, the political involvement and consciousness that had popularized the counterculture movement receded (Bugliosi and Gentry, 1994).

In the decade which saw the rise of disco, glam rock, art rock, and mainstream rock, the revenues from the international sale of recorded music had surpassed US \$10 billion by 1978, the figure that was just over US \$2 billion in 1969 (Garofalo "From Music Publishing" 340). This was the decade that rock music, which originally developed and served social functions, became a commodity and was “packaged and sold to the world as entertainment” (340). This clearly demonstrates that the increasing influence of Western culture and technology exerted a transformative influence across the globe, transpiring rock music to become a part of global system by itself.

There was a new social and global cause in the dawning of the 1970s that inspired a number of musicians. According to Mohaiemen, the widespread global peace movement after the Vietnam War spawned the support for world crises and called out for humanitarian actions of rock musicians (36). Whereas rock music was a mere sub-genre of popular music in the 1950s and 1960s, with a number of musicians integrating political and social statements in their music and highlighted political activism, the 1970s saw a different kind of social awareness and introduced the ideas of philanthropy and humanitarianism. As the music grew mature, rock music was not about rebellion against social and political norms.

George Harrison’s Concert for Bangladesh in 1971 became one of the concert highlights of the decade and ignited the philanthropic movement in rock music throughout the decade. De Curtis said that the event was “rightly enshrined in

rock history as the model for every other superstar benefit concert of the last three decades" (98). It also showed the world that Harrison was "more than willing to go out on a limb for a cause in which he truly believed" (Giuliano 131). Despite skeptical views, Harrison, one of the most spotlighted artists of the time, pulled out one of the greatest moments in rock music history with a tremendous display of humanitarianism that stemmed from the concern for others. The event spawned a synergy effect uplifted by one of the most popular artists of our time and the audience from all around the globe answering the call.

With this major event spearheaded by the ex-Beatle, several important patterns have emerged throughout the 1970s when it comes to the involvement of rock music in philanthropy is concerned. It was not just the changes within the music industry that led to the prominence of charity concerts during the 1970s. Rather, it was a combination of different social and cultural factors interwoven together.

First, the super-star format featuring some of the most well-known performers of the era helped charity concerts and recordings become a new trend. This is evidenced in several major events discussed in the chapter. For instance, *The Concert in Bangladesh* featured a group of performers like Eric Clapton, Billy Preston, Bob Dylan, Leon Russell, Badfinger, Ringo Starr, and, of course, George Harrison, who made the first concert appearance since the break-up of The Beatles. The successful "superstar" format of *The Concert for Bangladesh* was replicated in *The Music for as No Nukes Concerts* (1979), featuring Crosby, Stills, and Nash, James Taylor, Carly Simon, Bruce Springsteen and the E. Street Band, Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, and The Doobie Brothers. It was followed by *The Music for UNICEF Concert* (1979), featuring ABBA, Bee Gees, Olivia Newton John, John Denver, Rod Stewart, Earth, Wind & Fire, and Donna Summer.

Second, these events also serve as a commodity but also a piece of history, ultimately extending the cultural reach of the event while boosting overall revenues on a long-term basis. *The Concert for Bangladesh* was made available as a triple-LP box set and then as a film version for everyone to enjoy. With music sales still growing in the early 1970s, the record box set and the film were both critical and commercial success. Ouellette and Cohen also posited that the star-studded package "holds up well as a live greatest-hits collection" (70). More importantly, the success of the album and the film which raked in "millions of dollars for UNICEF and raised awareness for the organization around the world, as well as among other musicians and their fans" (De Curtis 98), helped people around the world become familiar with the devastating situation in Bangladesh and join the cause.

Third, the causes for aid and help expanded over the course of the decade. What first began with a small concern for the crisis in Bangladesh later branched out to other concerns ranging from environmental issues to children's welfare, and human rights in general. Many issues were high on the rock musicians' activism agenda from this point on, and they were active from local to global issues, as evidenced by *Rock Against Racism* (racism), *Musicians United for Safe Energy* (environmental issues), and *The Music for UNICEF Concert* (children's welfare).

The 1980s: The Epitome of Charity Rock

The predominant forms of popular music in the decade of the 1980s, spearheaded by light-hearted lyrics and pompous synthesizers posed little political threat overall. Given the political economy of rock music, the main audience of rock music shifted from the socially conscious baby-boomers to early Generation Xers that grew up in a historical span of relative geopolitical peace in the western world (Stephey par. 5). This might have resulted in the lack of their political activism during the 1980s unlike the baby-boomers who had gone through social and political upheavals in the 1960s and 1970s.

As far as the music industry is concerned, the highly political punk rock subculture that expressed youthful rebellion and characterized anti-authoritarian ideologies in the late 1970s finally died out (Sabin 5). Still, there were still some signs of the social and political engagement by rock musicians in the 1980s. Haycock and Anderson contended that in an increasingly globalized and interconnected world, many international mass media events construct and manage "the flow of images and messages that shape the perceptions and consciousness of consumers" (1).

In other words, the 1980s was a crucial decade that demonstrated a shift in media landscape with the concept of global village becoming more prevalent than ever. Besides MTV, such alternative multicultural media have become both "fashionable and more visible in the 1980s" (Ginsburg 92). From an international perspective, the concept of global village was most dramatically realized with a series of socially conscious international concerts and all-star performances, which Garofalo dubbed "charity rock" (Garofalo "Rockin' the Boat" 275).

Dettmar said that in the 1980s the rock benefit events became "its own self-promulgating industry that has continued to this day" (204). He noted that the outpouring of creativity during this era meant that it was only a matter of time before musicians and audience members began to ask whether that energy could be put into good use. The apparent influence of the media and shaping of the public changed in the 1980s with the extensive coverage of tragedies and crises across the world. The information flow between the Third World and the West and the mediating character of news values and priorities have changed the way we perceive the world and helped us share the pain and sorrow from the other side of the world.

The three events organized by these two distinctive humanitarians—USA for Africa's "We are the World" (1985), Band Aid's "Do They Know It's Christmas" (1984), and the mega event known as Live Aid (1985)—have provided us of important examples of what it means when we talk about the power of the media. The global popularity of Michael Jackson, responsible for the worldwide success of "We are the World," transcended traditionally distinctive boundaries like age, gender, nationality, race, and even culture. The two charity singles ultimately led to another global and cultural extravaganza, Live Aid, on July 13, 1985, a cross-continental benefit music concert for Ethiopia. Ullestad stated that Live Aid is generally regarded by many music fans as the first and foremost global music media event of the highest order. He said that in Live Aid "the music and the musicians were rather secondary to the event itself" and that it was a unique opportunity that

allowed us to reach out from our rooms to the world and “made it legitimate to care and called on us to act” (72).

The 1980s was the epitome of charity rock in many different aspects. As Cloonan and Street said, the rock stars became part of show business and “transferred the conscience that was part of rock to the worthy enterprise of fundraising” (232). This is the power of “togetherness” and “belonging” in the age of globalism. The African crisis has affected millions of people in their ways of thinking, and one unique quality about Live Aid, Band Aid, and USA for Africa is that they all enlisted the efforts of celebrities and musicians commonly associated with rebellious attitudes and self-indulgence but not necessarily with fundraising and caring.

Many more charity efforts ensued and the trend peaked in the mid and late 1980s. Following the Live Aid’s US \$150 million fundraising efforts, the second half of the 1980s saw some identical charity ventures. While this endless array of projects of the decade could easily be accused of trivializing human crises, it also opened up possibilities for cultural politics that were previously unmatched. The projects such as Dionne Warwick and Friends (1985), Artists United Against Apartheid (1985), and Farm Aid (1985) all succeeded in drawing in the international audience, following the mega-success of Live Aid.

On a similar note, the proliferation of philanthropic music events catalyzed a response from virtually every sector of the music industry, including managements, promoters, record-labels, and producers. More importantly, it was the musicians and audiences from all around the world that worked together for the causes at issue. I assert that the all-star format of these events, which featured arguably some of the most popular acts of the 1980s, if not of all-time, was a crucial factor that made many of these events such a massive worldwide success.

The longevity of such successful projects aforementioned—all of which saw the resurrection of the original events in one way or another in later years—transcended generation, space, culture, and nationality. These events demonstrated the rock music’s staying power, and its power goes beyond the music itself. Considering that any form of low culture, including rock music, has historically been “regarded by the dominant position in the cultural field as inferior and non artistic” (Regev 98), the global mass appeal of charity events in the 1980s was a triumphant moment in our history. When it comes to the involvement of rock music in charity, the emotional appeal of the decade is perhaps best exemplified on the DVD package of Live Aid. The line reads, “This DVD saves lives.”

The 1990s and 2000s: Shifting Gears

In general, the last two decades were characterized by a combination of many different social, political, and cultural factors. They include the new media such as the Internet, the dissolution of communism, and the stable economy. The theme of globalization continued to impact the world, and the end of the Cold War signaled the beginning of a new era, as the contest between capitalism and socialism came to an end. Also, there has been a series of uncontrollable and unexpected

events threatening the welfare of the humankind, such as terrorism, natural disasters, global warming and energy crises (Gordon and Meunier 9).

After its early stages of mainstream use in the 1980s and 1990s, the last two decades witnessed a great leap in technology. New technology became widely accepted by the most of the world, but simultaneously, it also gave rise to concerns about stress and antisocialism, including the overuse of the Internet. Castelles defined the new media as the cultural creation that “affect the consciousness of society as a whole” (141).

In the music industry, the economic issues and trends in rock music have shifted in the 1990s. Some of the changes include ticket price increase, copyright protection, unprecedented mergers of major labels, and technological advancement among many. Into the new millennium, the record industry constantly failed to respond to warning signs and to accept the obvious shift in technology, as evidenced by the MP3 and file-sharing (Knopper 123).

In the 2000s, music consumers benefited largely from the technology with which music could be shared, either over the Internet or by the exchange of physical products. This has resulted in giving consumers unmatched and unprecedented choices in music experiences and has opened up the marketplace to musicians in which they previously had little or no place. At the same time, it has created controversies in copyright issues and sharp decline in music sales (Kusek and Leonhard 10).

As if to define the characteristics of the Generation X—the main audience and consumers of music during this time period—the 1990s and the early 2000s saw little effort when it comes to charity concerts or recordings, in contrast to the omnipresence of “charity rock” in the previous two decades. Although Generation X is “often labeled by historians, novelists and journalists in an attempt to capture the spirit or essence of an era” (Brinkley 1), a lack of charity work may have to do with the informal way Generation Xers manage problems.

The prototypical and historical definition of “rock music” in general, which seemed to go together with social and political activism, was no longer the case in the 1990s and the 2000s, as the music branched out to many different sub-genres that were rarely associated with social or political awareness. For example, a few well-known concerts or tours during this time were rather commercially driven, such as Woodstock '94, Woodstock 1999, Lollapalooza, and Ozzfest. They were conceived and marketed as commercial ventures and they were “heavy with corporate sponsorship” (Laing 3). In the two decades defined by teen pop, electronic dance music, hip-hop, in addition to alternative rock, there was little sense of social consciousness, not to mention philanthropy, until the second half of the 2000s when a series of charity events surfaced. Still, most of those events were considered politically motivated than emotionally driven with humanitarian pulse.

The two decades also saw a number of charity rock events emerge in line with their anniversaries in one way or another. In addition, the increased concerns in environmental issues and terrorism resulted in somewhat politically charged events, as in Tibetan Freedom Concerts (1996), The Concert for New York City (2001), and Live 8 (2005). These political concerts focused more on governments, world leaders,

fear of terrorism and environmental concerns than on the poor or the dying, eventually leading to the display of political activism than humanitarianism.

One major pattern that developed during the second half of the last decade is the resurgence of the charity events and recordings from the 1980s in a recycled format, such as Band Aid 20 (2005), Live 8 (2005), and Artists for Haiti (2010). Rob Tannenbaum, senior reviews editor for the music monthly, *Blender* also said, "We digest culture in 20-year cycles" (Leopold par. 6); he contended that we can use 20 years as a marketing device and as a nostalgic cycle. These examples lead us to some clues as to why the 20-year cycle might work.

The importance of a certain cause can help people to set aside disagreements and opposing views and join the cause together. More recently, it has been with natural disasters, deaths, poverty, and hunger that brought people of the world together. With "We Are the World 25 for Haiti" by Artists for Haiti (2010), it seems the philanthropic movement in rock music is back where it belongs, but with a new twist. The song showed the entire world that rock music can be an agent of social change, especially in times of hardships and disasters, but also it can empower the next generation of rock music fans with the power of social media, another new chapter in media technology.

Conclusion

This article has not attempted to disentangle all of the nuances and complexities of philanthropy in rock music because it is more about history and less about philosophy. It has focused on illustrating how historical and social circumstances and changes may have helped rock music to generate a series of charitable events and how such dynamics may have contributed to the development and the growth of broader and more integrative philanthropic work over time. Because of the attendance in concerts, strong sales figures of records, massive airplay on the air, and satellite transmission, these events succeeded in drawing global actions from the countries linked by the consumption and production of rock music because it was much easier to attempt a global solution than it would be in other industries.

Rock music's involvement in philanthropy is still a fledgling (or perhaps overlooked) historiography in academia, with little notable scholarly research and with a tendency to focus on existing knowledge in rock music's relations to politics and society rather than serve new knowledge in rock music's relations to humanitarianism. I hope that this historical overview will be useful to a great diversity of scholars, and a variety of disciplines. Lauded for its humanitarian concern and fundraising potential and lambasted for trivializing important issues, the marriage of rock music and philanthropy may have been controversial and questionable from the moment it began, but at the same time, charity rock opened up spaces that were unthinkable in any other popular culture form, transcending time, place, nationality, age, and race.

It is only natural to be cynical about benefit and charity concerts and recordings. As a matter of fact, when there have been so many charity efforts by rock musicians over the course of history, it is probably reasonable to be skeptical or

dismissive because we still have not actually fed the world, saved the dying, or kept natural disasters from happening. Still, there remains some unexplainable mysterious aura that these events have over our imagination. What matters is, though, rock music has become an instrument of change, despite all the skeptical voices.

In the age of global village and media technology, the goal of making a better world requires mass movements, which can reach out to masses of people. In this sense, mass cultural forms and technologies hold out unlimited possibilities, and rock music is no exception. For better or for worse, there will continue to be worldwide interest in promoting the development of institutions and practices that contribute to a better world through rock music. Models for charity rock have drawn exclusively from the experiences of the philanthropic events illustrated in my study, and there will be more endeavors to come. History, after all, repeats itself time after time.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Metal Rules the Globe: Heavy Music Around the World

Edited by Jeremy Wallach, Harris M. Berger, and Paul D. Greene
Duke University Press, 2012

At its title clearly indicates, *Metal Rules the Globe* aims to explore the heavy metal music phenomenon from an international point of view and present the production and reception of the metal genre in a variety of geographic and cultural contexts, which include China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Nepal, Brazil, Japan, Norway, Malta, Easter Island, Slovenia, the United States, Canada and Israel. Each essay is well-documented and highly informative of the state of heavy metal music across the world, and this is probably the greatest merit of *Metal Rules the Globe*, for it demonstrates by its mere existence that serious scholarly attention can be fruitfully devoted to popular culture works and genres. Heavy metal music fulfills very definite social and artistic functions within our increasingly globalized society and although its materializations may vary according to specific countries and cultures, as shown by the different essays that compose this collection, it remains a worthwhile corpus of study which deserves further attention. *Metal Rules the Globe* is hence an important step into the re-evaluation of our academic preoccupations and endeavors.

The collection includes fourteen essays thematically distributed in six chapters: chapter 1, "The Global Spread of Heavy Metal" presents an overall theory of metal music globalization; chapter 2, "Metal, Gender, Modernity" introduces and discusses the notions of gender and masculinity applied to heavy metal in China, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore; chapter 3, "Metal and the Nation" approaches the Nepalese and Brazilian metal scenes from a sociological point of view, and identifies heavy metal music as a vector of transgression and empowerment both socially and artistically; chapter 4, "Metal and extremist ideologies" delves into the political ramifications of heavy metal and its ambiguous fluid ideological positioning, which includes, in the case of Norwegian black metal, a return to Scandinavian mythology; chapter 5, "Metal in the Music Industry" presents the transcultural rise and expansion of Occidental heavy metal throughout the seventies, and its current status in Japanese culture; and finally chapter 6, "Small Nation/Small Scene Case Studies" tackles three specific instances of the appropriation and adaptation of heavy metal music in foreign countries, namely in Slovenia, Malta and Easter Island, to illustrate the on-going negotiation between globalized modernity and cultural tradition.

In the first chapter ("The Global Spread of Heavy Metal"), the editors go to great lengths to theorize the heavy metal phenomenon on a global scale, an understandable position given the current lack of academic credibility of their subject, but which, in the end, might prove somewhat counter-productive, for it prompts debatable generalizations. For instance, on page 13, it is stated that by using heavy distortion and very high volume, metal music represents "extremes of human expression, gesturing towards escape, empowerment or transgression." Whereas this is undeniably true, it is not however exclusive to metal and could very well apply to other genres such as hard rock or punk rock; even the Rolling Stones, in the cultural context of the sixties, could be seen

as “gesturing towards escape, empowerment or transgression.” The use that the editors make of the concept of volume, as triggering a primal, visceral feeling that characterizes the genre of heavy metal, is as well a tad puzzling, for they do not take into account the scientifically well-documented effects that excessive decibels have upon the synaptic flow, not mentioning the very serious hearing damage that they cause; an overly loud sound has the capacity to paralyze some neuronal functions, and this goes a long way in explaining the trance-like state an excessive loud heavy metal concert might provoke in the spectator—not unlike that of a football stadium—in term of primal, visceral communion. Furthermore, most popular music is played today at very high volume, be it techno or hip hop; excessive decibels are hence not the trademark of heavy metal music. Similarly, Weinstein’s notion that “extreme metal is a key music of the global proletariat” (16), referred to—perhaps a tad pompously—as the “Weinstein hypothesis” throughout the introduction, is questionable, for the very concept of “global proletariat” remains quite undefined; in the case of the United States, we should then deduce that African Americans, who favor funk or hip-hop over metal, or Hispanics, who tend to prefer Latin rhythms, cannot be part of “the global proletariat.” The same could be said regarding the strong Arab minority in France, who choose hip hop and R&B over metal, or about the Gypsy community in Spain, who is still loyal to the harmonic principles of flamenco music—both tend to be economically under-privileged groups who might not deserve to be automatically excluded from the “global proletariat” category simply because they do not consume heavy metal music. The “Weinstein hypothesis,” which is contradicted in the last essay of the book that deals with the metal scene from Easter Island, appears hence musically and culturally too ethnocentric to be scientifically viable.

In spite of its few shortcomings, mostly confined to its theoretical ambitions, *Metal Rules the Globe* remains a very instructive read that directly addresses the quickly changing landscape of Cultural Studies, and answers a very real and current need in Popular Music studies.

Daniel Ferreras Savoye, West Virginia University

Sled Run

Ross Talaroco

New York: Bordighera Press, 2012

The novel *Sled Run* by Ross Talarico is a coming-of-age story set in Rochester, New York during the late 1950’s, 1959 to be exact. The novel tells the story of an Italian-American boy of working-class background whose life revolves around family, neighborhood friends, and his own sense of destiny. The novel, which is autobiographical, chronicles the struggles of Rosey, the protagonist, with allegiance, self-esteem, and young love.

Rosey, later called Ross, is a sensitive teenager who is attracted to the flash and cash of the young neighborhood Mafiosi. Early on in the novel, we learn of Ross’s group of friends, Cosmo, Danny, Billy, and others with whom he attempts exploits of

machismo, daring, and even callousness — all in the name of bravado and camaraderie. For young Rosey and his childhood cohorts, maleness is toughness, and toughness is defined by brawn, not brains. Yet Rosey has brains, enough to earn the nickname, “Bright Boy” from Carm Carlotta, one of the leaders of the neighborhood tough crowd. Carm is a twenty-something young tough, and the owner of a bright red, Mercury convertible which makes him the envy of Rosey’s group of friends. They all idolize Carm’s tough charm and way with women. This strong bond between Rosey and his friends is pitted, at times, against allegiance to Rosey’s own family, particularly the teachings of his father, an Italian-American male character of memorable dimensions.

Sled Run takes on a number of enduring themes, for while it is a *bildungsroman*, it is also a working class novel which addresses the lure of the American Dream, as well as definitions of masculinity, and incidents of racial tension and homophobia. Early on in the novel, there is a passage which speaks to the heart of the novel: “Acceptance of the world is at the heart of our most worthy dreams” (17).

It is a statement uttered by Sam, the father of the protagonist, in response to Rosey’s school assignment, “What is your vision of an ideal world?” Clearly, for Rosey, acceptance of the world he has been given is at the heart of his quest. Rosey’s initial goals seem to be acceptance by others—the neighborhood toughs and the lovely Leona, the girl on whom he has a crush. It is Leona who names him “Ross.” His given name is Rosario, which his family has shortened to Rosey, but it is Leona who decides to call him Ross, a shortened version of his given name because, she notes, it “sounds like another country” (40), suggesting that there is that quality which distinguishes Ross from his neighbor friends, his peers.

One quality which distinguishes Ross is the model of manhood offered by the character of his father, Sam. Of Ross’s father, the narrative notes:

Later on in life I would call him an intellectual — and certainly, of course a poet. But there in the fifties and sixties among the hardworking, vivacious Italians in a poor but happy neighborhood in the northeast corner of Rochester New York he was just sort of smart, a little quiet and offbeat to some of my belly-minded relatives who worked with him in the shoe factory — but always, a nice guy (17).

Rosey is also a “nice guy,” trying to fit in and find himself amidst his outwardly more “masculine” peers. He is thus bothered by some of the deeds of the gang, such as playing with guns, bullying a young, gay teen; and stealing — in particular, the stealing of toys and games as part of the annual “sled run,” the annual adventure of altruistic thievery on the part of Carm and his cohorts, during which they rob local warehouses, procuring gifts and toys to give to local orphanages.

The character and image of the hardworking, honest, artistic Sam is in opposition to that of the more “traditional” Italian-American male figures in the novel. Much of the novel’s deep richness lies in this depiction of alternate visions of male toughness — one which is loud, boisterous and all brawn; and another, which has at its core, enduring loyalty, commitment, and poetic imagination. Sam is a poet, one whose poems have been closeted away from his family for years. Without spoiling the story for readers, I will simply say that the portrait of Sam’s selflessness is both meaningful and touching.

Talarico’s *Sled Run* is a novel of friendship and love — friendship born of heritage, social class, and gender. It is particularly poignant for its depiction of a teenaged Italian boy’s neighborhood and family. There are numerous images of family within this

work — some of them tender and heartening; others, abusive and disheartening. Yet, it is the image of familial love — the protagonist's haven and guide as he struggles and matures — which commends this novel as most memorable.

Frank E. Dobson, Jr., Vanderbilt and Fisk Universities

Genre, Reception, and Adaptation in the “Twilight” Series

Edited by Anne Morey
Ashgate, 2012

This new thirteen-chapter collection not only adds to, but enhances the existing body of *Twilight* critical scholarship. Attempting to deconstruct elitist notions concerning this young adult series, Editor Anne Morey brings together essays exploring the three respective categories indicated by the volume's title: genre, reception, and adaptation. Despite the varying degrees (including lack) of fandom expressed by the fourteen contributors, the *Twilight* saga is discussed critically, albeit respectfully. Several of the articles not only acknowledge the series' perceived faults, but actively attempt to account for them, and/or to examine the ways in which diverse audiences have responded to them. A familiarity with Meyer's novels, as well as with the films adapted from them, is assumed throughout; although, several succinct summaries have been provided in places where they appear particularly necessary to the individual authors' assertions. Furthermore, despite referring to one another on points of both critical divergence and similarity, the chapters do not overtly build upon one another and could be read separately. This, combined with their generally limited length, explanations of relevant theories, and accessible prose, would make them readily teachable.

While it may prove tempting to view several of the chapters, most especially the first four, as repetitive — due to their centering upon similar content, combined with their propensity for citing the same textual passages — the entire collection proves remarkable for its ability to repeatedly treat closely related material from such a multiplicity of perspectives. The first four chapters, though each deal with issues of intimacy, romance, and sexuality within the saga, manage to explore these issues through differing critical lenses; moreover, they consequently reach separate, if not always unrelated, conclusions as to the implications associated with the presentation of these elements.

Facilitating a smooth transition between discussions of genre and those concerning reception, Hidalgo's chapter, “Bridges, Nodes, and Bare Life: Race in the ‘Twilight’ Saga,” makes two notable contributions to *Twilight* studies. Her article emerges beyond the potentially reductive nature of much existing scholarship, which limits considerations of race within the series to critiquing the contrasting depictions of the privileged, white Edward, versus the poor, Native American Jacob. Hidalgo not only expands her examination of race to include the representation of other minorities, but she also distinguishes that the problem with Meyer's portrayal of Native Americans is not that they are poor, but that they are poor and do no work — that is, that they do nothing

to address their poverty. However, her article is still more significant in light of its central focus upon the operation of *metaphorical* race (i.e. human, vampire, and werewolf) within the saga.

The section on reception follows the pattern set by the first, presenting numerous chapters on *Twilight* fandom that nonetheless treat the matter from diverse perspectives and through varying psychological, cultural, and reception theories. DuBois' article utilizing Freud's concept of the "death drive" is particularly interesting in its attempts to deconstruct the emotional "trauma" experienced by readers of the series' concluding novel. However, Driscoll's exploration of *Twilight* as a choice between different modes of "being a girl," as well as Hills, Goletz, and Gilbert's respective chapters on inter-fandom, anti-fandom, and Twi-haters prove equally compelling, especially through their combined efforts to provide a more inclusive definition of fandom. This section stands out as the strongest within the collection.

The final section, on adaptation, though interesting, contains only three chapters, leaving it underdeveloped alongside the preceding explorations. Still, the articles on the *Twilight* films provide astute, in-depth analysis. In some ways more appropriate to the second section of this collection, the final chapter, on Korean reception of the franchise, nicely concludes the volume. Demonstrating that the series has been received similarly in both Korea and the United States, this chapter concludes that in Korea, it has nonetheless been relegated to inferior status due to its specifically female marketing. However, the authors stop short of overtly acknowledging the possibility that this may further link the saga's reception in both cultures.

The collection's thirteen entries offer fresh approaches to *Twilight* criticism, which though related, prove distinct even from one another. Moreover, many, if not all, of the chapters refer to the contradictions inherent within not only the series itself, but within its fandom, creating an unspoken cohesion that transcends individual articles. However, the introduction does not appear to acknowledge this cohesion, leaving the collection's abrupt ending without a formal conclusion to diminish the overall sense of unity. Aside from this lack, the collection's greatest failing is a reductive general tendency by the majority of the contributors to assume that *Twilight* fans are universally female.

Sarah Pawlak, University of Nevada Las Vegas

The Meaning of Superhero Comic Books

Terrence R. Wandtke

McFarland Publishing, 2012 (mcfarland.com)

At the risk of sounding hyperbolic, Terrence R. Wandtke's newest book, *The Meaning of Superhero Comic Books*, is a must read. His understanding of superheroes, especially the way they developed within the pages of comic books, manifests throughout. He is adept at describing vital scenes from comics and film and presents some very complex ideas throughout the book. Though there are flaws in *The Meaning of Superhero Comic Books*, it is vital reading for those who study the superhero and extremely valuable to those who study comics and popular culture in general.

The main premise of the work is to present the idea that superhero stories have more in common with ancient orality than with modern ideas of literacy. He suggests that secondary orality, or new traditionalism, reawakens "traditional culture in a form experienced more fully in America and the postindustrial world than it has been in centuries" (27). Rather than seek to defend superheroes by pointing out their literary merits, as many have tried before with varying degrees of success, Wandtke argues that superheroes serve a different sort of function, tied resolutely to the way we should be looking at epics like *Beowulf* and Homer's works. As he develops his ideas, he cycles again and again back to the first superhero, Superman, and his various incarnations throughout the development of the superhero. He draws heavily on the writings of Walter J. Ong and others who study preliterate cultures and the way they experience stories through oral presentation.

Through theory dense passages, Wandtke posits a sort of new traditionalism that favors communal and outward turning development of stories and variform story experience rather than the more introspective and linear methods of typical literature. In part because he is developing some new theoretical ground, these passages require care in order to parse out their meaning. Wandtke admits that there is more to be done with his theory and I expect that as the theory is developed, it will become more articulable. Unfortunately, this difficulty is exacerbated by not infrequent errors in copyediting. The most egregious is in a footnote from the first chapter in which Wandtke articulates how he defines the superhero. The footnote is obviously and unsatisfyingly incomplete.

The basic premise is that superhero comics have become the source of the best example of intentional orality, or new traditionalism, in our culture. From corporate ownership of the characters, to the influence of letters to the editor, to the fatuous testimony of Fredric Wertham and the comic code, Wandtke argues that superhero comics are to American culture what storytelling was to pre-literate cultures. He also goes to great lengths to posit that there is no real privileging of terms between pre-literate, or traditional, cultures and literate cultures. In fact, he goes to some length to argue that we should see them as different ways of reading and move away from the idealization our culture has manifest in literary structure. This is a move drawn from other theorists he cites that opens up new ways of looking at the way our society interacts with texts, more especially electronic texts and new forms of media. There is an interactivity inherent in reading texts in a new traditional way that Wandtke argues becomes more prevalent in new media.

Wandtke's close reading of superhero comics and film is at times brilliant and insightful. The writing seems to be at its best when he applies his theory to the texts themselves. Especially fascinating is the way he credits different creators and writers with accessing the theory he presents as an organic part of the making of superhero stories. This is in contrast to the passages of straight theory which, as previously mentioned, are dense and sometimes unclear in their intent. When the two types of writing are juxtaposed, as happens in later chapters, it can be a bit jarring.

Ultimately, the book stands as a work with a great amount of potential to change the way we talk about superheroes as well as modern methods of interacting with story and text.

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Popular Culture Review

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Studies in Popular Culture

Studies in Popular Culture, the journal of the Popular Culture Association in the South and the American Culture Association in the South, publishes articles on popular culture and American culture however mediated: through film, literature, radio, television, music, graphics, print, practices, conditions of life. Its contributors from the United States, Canada, France, Israel, and Australia include distinguished anthropologists, sociologists, cultural geographers, ethnomusicologists, historians, and scholars in mass communications, philosophy, literature, and religion.

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All manuscripts should be sent to the editor care of the University of Louisville, Department of English, Louisville, KY 40292. Please enclose two double-spaced copies and a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Black and white illustrations may accompany the text. Our preference is for essays that total, with notes and bibliography, no more than twenty pages. Documentation may take the form appropriate for the discipline of the writer; the current MLA style sheet is a useful model. Please indicate if the work is available on computer disk. The editor reserves the right to make stylistic changes on accepted manuscripts.

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