CORPUS

VOL. II

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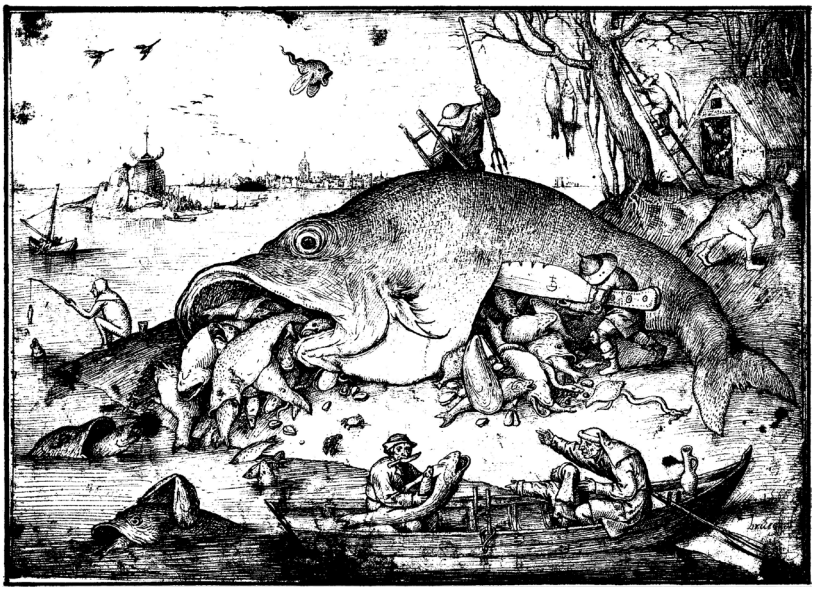

CORPUS

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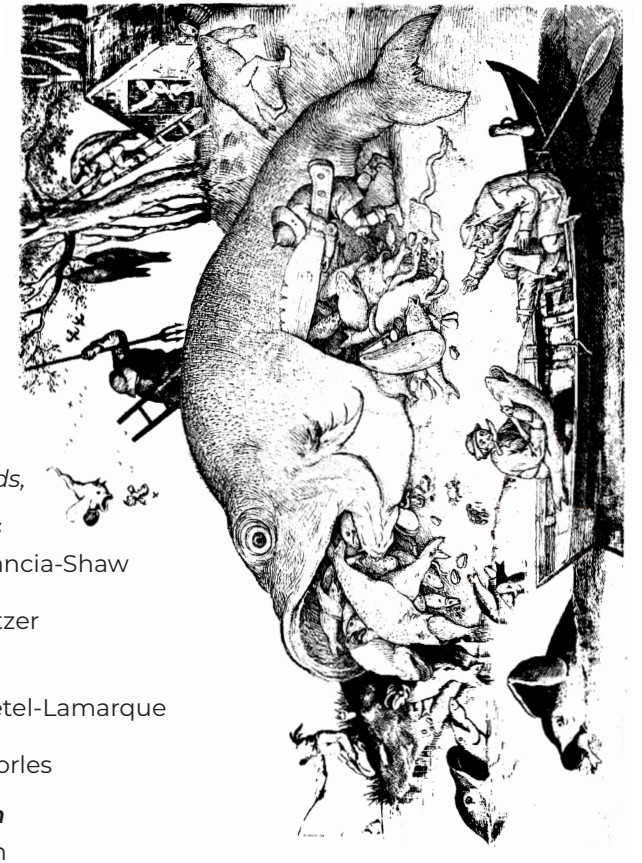

fond regards,

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Reconnaissance territoriale
Territorial Acknowledgement

Nous aimerions reconnaître que le journal *Corpus* est publié en territoire autochtone, lequel n'a jamais été cédé. Nous reconnaissons la nation Kanien'kehá:ka comme gardienne des terres et des eaux sur lesquelles l'Université Concordia est située. Tiohtiá:ke / Montréal est historiquement connu comme un lieu de rassemblement pour de nombreuses Premières Nations, et aujourd'hui, une population autochtone diversifiée, ainsi que d'autres peuples, y résident. C'est dans le respect des liens avec le passé, le présent et l'avenir que nous reconnaissons les relations continues entre les Peuples Autochtones et autres personnes de la communauté montréalaise.

We would like to acknowledge that the *Corpus* journal is published on unceded Indigenous lands. The Kanien'kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters on which Concordia University is located. Tiohtiá:ke/Montreal is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations. Today, it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples. We respect the continued connections with the past, present and future in our ongoing relationships with Indigenous and other peoples within the Montreal community.

Principal's Note

It is with pleasure and pride that LAC welcomes the publication of the second volume of *Corpus*. The essays and creative works published here, all written by College students, demonstrate the diversity of interests, the creative energy and ambition, and the commitment to excellence that has animated our intellectual community for the past forty years. While proudly looking back on these, *Corpus* is a testament to the fact that LAC, and the students who comprise it, continues to be an exemplar of the purpose and value of a liberal arts education. We have much to celebrate and extend our congratulations to the editors, all the contributors, and everyone involved in the journal's production. And, of course, we look forward to a good read!

Mark Russell

Principal, LAC

Pre.´.face

Che.`.r.e lect.eur.rice,

Nous sommes heureu.x.ses de vous présenter le deuxième numéro du journal *Corpus*. Vous y trouverez treize travaux écrits par des étudiant.e.s du Liberal Arts College. Ces écrits survolent une multitude de sujets, d'optiques et de genres. Ils ont été choisis parce qu'ils démontrent de la rigueur et de l'originalité emblématique du collège et de ses étudiant.e.s.

Corpus met en valeur la réussite académique et la créativité dans un climat qui donne rarement voix aux travaux des étudiant.e.s au baccalauréat. Nous sommes fie.`.r.e.s d'être les héritie.`.r.e.s de quarante années de publication étudiante et nous sommes enthousiastes de faire briller la relève du collège.

Nous aimerions remercier tou.te.s ce.ux.lles qui nous ont proposé leurs travaux cette année, et nous espérons recevoir de nombreuses soumissions pour nos prochaines parutions. Un grand merci à Brianna, l'artiste derrière la couverture, et à notre cher Nelson qui a su donner une nouvelle vie au journal étudiant.

It is our pleasure to present this second issue of the *Corpus* journal. Within these pages, you will find, dear reader, thirteen works by students of the Liberal Arts College that span a multitude of topics, fields, perspectives, and genres. These works were chosen because they embody the rigour and originality that is emblematic of the LAC and its students.

Corpus showcases the LAC's academic achievements and creative output within an institutional ecology which rarely gives voice to undergraduate research. We are proud to inherit a forty-year legacy of student written output at the LAC and to promote new work.

We would like to thank all who submitted to this year's issue. We encourage you to submit to future issues of *Corpus*. Special thanks to Brianna who designed the hand-drawn cover and to our beloved Nelson who provided indispensable help in reviving the LAC's student journal.

Happy reading!

the editorial team

56	38	36	7
24	19	79	15
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big ups to dima

Rêveries sur rail

Eloïse Armary

Paris, Métro Mabillon, un mardi à l'heure de pointe

Un manteau long, une pipe de bois. Un personnage de Jules Verne, dans mon métro ?

Nonchalant, il se tient très droit dans ce wagon tremblant. Un pantalon noir pur fait ses plis au milieu du tissu, se roulant légèrement sur ses chaussures cirées brillantes. Une ceinture du même teint tient à sa taille. Une chemise propre et lisse comme le verre se glisse sous son pantalon. Un manteau en feutre bleu bien ajusté donne de l'allure à ce corps sans spécificité. Ses joues sont rasées au poil près, sa pipe abaisse légèrement sa lèvre inférieure.

Je sens son regard posé sur moi. Mes yeux se lèvent et regardent les siens. D'un étonnant bleu profond et soutenu, ils me chuchotent « je te vois ». Mes joues s'empourprent mais je n'ose pas me détacher de ce tableau.

À la prochaine station, il s'échappe de métro avec majestuosité, ses pas lents coupés de ce monde accéléré. Je reste entre parenthèse dans le train en course. Les secondes timidement osent de nouveau se succéder. Je me ramène dans le présent, l'image de ce monsieur à la pipe se floute progressivement.

Portait-il un chapeau ? Ses cheveux sont-ils blonds, longs, blancs, bouclés ? J'ai été suspendue par ses yeux. Ces détails m'ont échappé.

Paris, Métro Vaugirard, un jeudi après-midi

Dans cette masse d'individu, sans visage ni beauté, il est là. Je le vois sur le quai. Je sais qu'il m'a vue, je sais qu'il sait que je l'ai vu. Pourtant rien n'y fait, on s'évite.

Pourquoi le croiser, là, maintenant ? J'aurais pu reposer mon magazine plus tôt et partir de la bibliothèque. J'aurais pu ne pas prendre de café. Ou j'aurais pu rester plus longtemps, manger un autre gâteau. Dans cette concordance de mouvements, je l'ai croisé. À un endroit où je ne vais jamais, je n'aurais pas soupçonné sa présence.

Cette rencontre m'angoisse. Elle me renvoie à un passé non résolu, une relation inachevée, un adieu trop abrupt. Je suis coincée à le laisser filer, accepter ce mirage du passé faire intrusion dans ma réalité. Des milliers de morceaux de souvenirs

remontent dans mon ventre et me donnent la gerbe.

À travers la vitre, au milieu de cette gelée d'humains, je le vois. Les boyaux qui se tordent, je descends de ce train du passé.

Paris, RER Saint Michel-Notre Dame, un lundi soir de janvier

La journée a été longue, il est tard. Je m'avachis sur la banquette comme sur mon canapé. Un homme qui rentre du travail s'assied devant moi. Je range mes jambes et lui laisse de la place. Il mange des chips et regarde des vidéos.

Je baille. Il baille. La fatigue est communicante.

Les stations défilent, mon regard se perd sur les tags souterrains, j'observe les quelques personnes qui nous rejoignent dans ce voyage et ceux qui sont arrivés à destination.

Je me lève, il me sourit la bouche pleine de chips, on se salue sans un mot.

Le lendemain, dans un même mouvement, je m'assois avec lourdeur dans le métro. Quelques minutes plus tard, il monte et s'affale à la même place. Je le retrouve plus cerné que la veille, une bière à la main. La journée a dû être pesante.

Nous avions rendez-vous chaque soir, comme une même scène qui se répète en boucle, le temps qui n'ose pas aller de l'avant. Nous échangions des sourires, des bâillements, puis des marmonnements, des gâteaux quand on en avait.

On se retrouvait le lundi soir à vingt et une heure huit, partager une demi-heure de notre journée, jusqu'au vendredi soir, où le week-end nous séparait.

Ce soir, il n'est pas venu. Je suis de nouveau rendue seule à moi-même, à observer les souterrains de Paris et à lutter contre le sommeil qui veut clore une journée trop fatigante. La bulle poétique que m'offrait ce rendez-vous quotidien a éclaté.

A Freudian Framework for Liminal Identity in Kafka's *A Report for an Academy*

Callum Boog

The twentieth century prompted an epoch of anxiety about the nature of human identity in an uncertain world. Art, literature, and fields of scientific pursuit turned to matters both existential and empirical in the search for meaning. Franz Kafka's 1917 short story *A Report for an Academy* reflects a similar preoccupation with the nature of human identity situated in the both the natural and constructed worlds. Although it precedes Sigmund Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1929) by over a decade, Kafka's short story mirrors the Freudian psychoanalytic conception of individuals and their relationship with the society in which they live. Both texts suggest that individuals must actively counter their primal nature in order to assimilate to human civilization. Consequently, as such, Kafka's human-ape character in *A Report for an Academy* demonstrates the acquired character of civility and the inherent limitations of performative identity.

Peter's liminal position as a human-ape troubles the nature of identity: if a chimp can live as human, what then might be said of the human experience as something distinct from the natural world? In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud characterizes civilization by its "esteem and encouragement of man's higher mental activities – his intellectual, scientific and artistic achievements."[1] By these parameters, Peter is fully civilized: he speaks, acts, performs, and engages with the world as a human does. Indeed, his characterization highlights the manner in which he acquires civility through observation and learning. In Kafka's imagination, the ability to exist in the world as a being with moral, rational, social, and cultural capacities is not limited only to *Homo sapiens*. In fact, the academics' fascination verges on admiration when one man commends Peter on his "terrific achievement" of "gallop[ing] through the whole evolution of mankind."[2] Certainly, *A Report for an Academy* takes place in a universe familiar with Darwinian evolutionary theory. Kafka thus situates his story in the modern framework of the extraordinary advancements taking place in the fields of natural and technical science during the early twentieth century. However, Kafka's evolutionary model is only parabolic in character; Peter does not pose a direct problem in the sequence of human evolution because he does not *become* human. He merely acquires civility and performs it convincingly enough that humans accept him as such. This is most apparent in his interaction with one of the academics in the second fragment of the story, in which the man exclaims, "When I sit opposite you like this listening to you talk […] I really and truly forget […] that you are a chimpanzee."[3] Physically (or more precisely, biologically) Peter is still an ape. Peter's human identity relies entirely on his capacity for rational thought and acquiring spoken and written language, which blurs the categories of identity between ape and man. Kafka nevertheless implies that this an uneasy collision of mixed identity for Peter, as he describes having "contracted" human

smell and that it "mingles with the smell from [his] native land."[4] Moreover, Peter reminds his audience of their own primitive beginnings and further alludes to Kafka's evolutionary parable: "Your life as apes, gentlemen, insofar as something of that kind lies behind you, cannot be farther removed from you than mine is from me."[5] Peter perceives his process of conquering his 'apehood' and replacing it with a more civilized identity as a Freudian mirror to the evolutionary journey of human beings. In *Civilization and Its Discontents,* Freud describes a similar concept wherein he presupposes that civilization is built upon the renunciation and sublimation of instinct.[6] Humans must constantly sublimate their sexual inclinations and propensity toward aggression in order to participate in and maintain cultural development.[7]

Consequently, Peter's active decision to reject his apehood in favor of human identity further exemplifies what Freud describes as the "intention of making oneself independent of the external world by seeking satisfaction in internal, psychical processes."[8] Freud argues that the pleasure derived from the pursuit of intellectual and psychical work is second only to the sating of the same crude and instinctual impulses sublimated in the development of civilization[9] — in Red Peter's case, he accomplishes both at once. Through observation, he slowly learns to mimic human behavior, which in turn spurs his "enchantment with [his] gradual enlightenment."[10] The ability to understand the men onboard pleases Peter, though his mimicry is not immediately successful. He recounts a great many difficulties in his encounters with the other men, but also describes himself as wildly eager to learn, a "student of humankind [that] no human teacher ever found on earth."[11] He demonstrates an intense desire to "overwrite" his instinct as an ape and successfully assimilate to the civilized world. Peter's efforts reflect what Freud might categorize as an attempt to control instinctual life as a means to alleviate suffering:[12] if indeed the "place for apes [is] in front of a locker," Red Peter thinks, "well then – I had to stop being an ape."[13] Eventually, Peter masters his instincts enough to gain opportunity to explore increasingly intellectual pursuits: he eventually describes himself as an "artistic performer"[14] and begins to use human language to communicate. This is evidence of the metapsychological aspect of satisfaction that Freud describes[15], and which, for example, comes as a result of "an artist's joy in creating."[16]When Peter points out that he "did not think things out in this human way, but under the influence of [his] surroundings, [he] acted as if [he] had thought it out"[17] he demonstrates that the process of integrating into the human world (i.e., civilization) necessarily engages his capacity for observing, learning, performing.

It is precisely his ability to perform so well that affords Peter his "passing" identity as a human. He tells the men of the academy, "As I spurred myself on in my forced career […] I felt more comfortable in the world of men and fitted it better."[18] As Peter learns more about the customs and habits of humans, his performance improves. The incident with the schnapps bottle demonstrates that Peter's identity relies entirely on his ability to emulate human behavior, at least in appearance. "My worst trouble came from the schnapps bottle," Peter admits, and "this inward conflict, strangely enough, was taken more seriously by the crew than anything else about me."[19] Alcohol is surely a puzzling concept to Peter because his limited experience in the human world dictates that he cannot yet understand the nature and purpose of consuming intoxicating substances. In *Civilization and Its Discontents,* Freud describes chemical intoxication as one of the most common methods used by those seeking an avoidance of displeasure.[20]

Moreover, Freud writes that humans enjoy intoxication not only for its pleasurable qualities, but because it affords "a greatly desired degree of independence from the external world."[21] Up until the moment of his capture, Peter has no concept of his selfhood or identity outside of his life as an ape; unaware he has always lived in Freud's "external world", he takes no issue with it. Peter has little understanding of the kinds of displeasures that human beings long to escape, simply due to his lived experience in the wild. This is also why Peter's experience with alcohol so intrigues one of the sailor: "He could not understand me," Peter reveals, "he wanted to solve the enigma of my being."[22] The man is at first unconvinced by Peter's performance and does not appreciate that Peter only mimics the actions in the drinking ritual without understand its true purpose of alleviating unhappiness and suffering. He is unimpressed when Peter remarks that he "did not forget, even though I had thrown away the bottle, to rub my belly most admirably and to grin."[23] Kafka employs the language of "sorrow" and "dissatisfaction"[24] to describe the sailor's frustration with Peter's performance, which rings especially true to the manner in which Freud describes one of the basic struggles of human existence: disappointment. Despite the incredible progress in "the natural sciences and their technical application [….] the subjugation of the forces of nature, which is the fulfillment of a longing that goes back hundred of years, has not increased the amount of pleasurable satisfaction which [people] expect from life."[25] Unconsciously, the sailor is grappling with his own existential unhappiness as he tries to force Peter – who represents the natural world and all its primal forces and energy – to behave in an increasingly human way. Peter's training process with the sailor on-board the ship functions as a microcosm of the primary developmental process of civilization: exercising psychic control over the instinctive behavior innate to the natural world. The only difference is that in Kafka's evolutionary parable, ape nature is fully capable of undergoing the same process as that of human nature. This is why Peter's performance is at first unconvincing – both Peter and the sailor realize that in order for the ape to properly assimilate, he must complete the enormous task of fighting "against the nature of apes."[26] Otherwise, an ape who only crudely mimics and does not understand the implicit pleasure and escapism of drinking is only an especially entertaining circus animal.

When Peter finally marshals his disgust, he breaks the final barrier separating him from the human world and greets the sailors in English: "Hallo!" Peter exclaims, either drunk or ecstatic. In any case, in Freudian terms Peter has succeeded in "influencing [his] instinctual impulses."[27] The more significant distinction is that Peter has mastered not only the art of performance, but he also understands that the sailors are looking for an element of recognition and of self-identification in order to accept him into their community. He does not necessarily enjoy the schnapps any better than in his previous attempts to drink, but he *acts* as though he does—and the sailors can tell no difference. Before his rapt audience, Peter sets the bottle to his lips "without hesitation, with no grimace, like a professional drinker",[28] and the sailors gladly receive his performance as evidence of civility. Notably, Kafka deliberately avoids Peter describing himself in the language of "becoming human", both in this instance and afterward – instead, Peter's transformative process is best understood as a more convincing performance. The process of taking a sip from the bottle of schnapps has not changed drastically from his first meagre attempt. Instead, Peter's capacity for self-mastery and self-perception allow him to assimilate among the other men.

Kafka characterizes Peter as the only an animal who has deliberately

acquired civility, and so the rest of the narrative hinges on the expectation that Peter will discuss the difference between his human identity and his past life as an ape. The set-up of this particular academic inquiry reflects an early twentieth century preoccupation with humankind's place in nature positioned against rapidly shifting scientific, religious, and existential landscapes: the men of the academy wish to understand what, if anything, an assimilated ape can tell them about the exceptionality human identity and experience. Ultimately, their endeavour proves impossible, since Red Peter is *not* an ape – at least not insofar as he perceives his own identity—and he can no longer speak to the experience as such. "It is now nearly five years since I was an ape," he informs his audience, and he clarifies that he no longer clings stubbornly to his primal origins. His new identity in the civilized world retroactively erases his previous life as an ape; "what I felt then as an ape I can represent now only in human terms", Peter tells the academy, "and therefore I misrepresent it."[29] Evidently, Peter feels that his fluctuating identity between the natural world (as ape) and the civilized world (as human) are incommensurate and cannot account for one another. He exists as both not-human and not-ape, civilized but never fully immersed in the human world due to his physical appearance. Memories of Peter's life in the wild are reduced to a "tickling at the heels."[30]

Aside from donning clothing, Peter's transformation from wild ape to human-ape is entirely noetic. Kafka uses the motif of freedom to best illustrate the distinction between Peter's two identities. Peter describes an acrobatic trapeze show he witnessed some years previously and scorns the way that human beings conceptualize the highest degree of freedom as "self-controlled movement."[31] The whole thing strikes Red Peter as a "mockery of Holy Nature"[32] because human trapeze artists imitate, in both form and concept, the exact kind of dextrous agility innate to apes. Effectively Peter does not believe that being human entails freedom, because he has already conceptualized freedom in his previous life as a wild animal. His desire to be free from captivity has little to do with what human beings would consider freedom, and indeed Peter clarifies that he "deliberately [does] not use the word freedom"[33] to equate his desire for "a way out."[34] Even as his identity shifts from that of an ape to that of a human, Peter's conception of freedom never changes. "I repeat," he reminds his audience at the academy after detailing his experience with the bottle of schnapps, "there was no attraction for me in imitating human beings; I imitated them because I needed a way out and for no other reason."[35] This is perhaps also evidence of longing for the primal sense of justice that Freud discusses in his description of justice as a fundamental undergirding principle of civilization. He describes "a rule of law to which all – except those who are not capable of entering a community – have contributed to a sacrifice of their instincts, and which leaves no one […] at the mercy of brute force."[36] Peter does not want to spend the rest of his life as an imprisoned ape, and so he makes a conscious decision to sacrifice his primary, natural instinct in favor of a human identity that affords some measure of mobility and community - in other words, a way out. Freud acknowledges, however, that the sort of "liberty of the individual"[37] - which in *Civilization and Its Discontent*s primarily concerns communities and their cultural development, but also speaks to the kind of "liberty" which Red Peter struggles with in human identity - is no gift of civilization. Rather it is an enforced set of "restrictions."[38] In other words, in human existence individual freedom functions as a kind of necessary evil – a price to be paid in exchange for community, civility, and relative stability.

Peter recognizes these limitations regarding the human conceptualization of freedom because he also understands (and ultimately rejects) the role that the humans expect him to fulfill: "As far as Hagenback was concerned," Peter reflects, "the place for apes was in front of a locker."[39] Again, this exhibits Peter's desire to be released from his painful, forced confinement onboard the ship. He subsequently turns to his "only clear train of thought"[40] and does his best to stop being an ape. Importantly, Peter assumes that he "must have constructed [the thought] with [his] belly, since apes think with their bellies."[41] This further highlights his journey away from his more his primal thoughts and instincts to toward a more "human" mode of operation – that of reasoning. "A lofty goal faintly dawned on me," Peter says, though no man has promised nor explained anything to him, and suddenly "[…] it [is] so easy [for him] to imitate these people."[42] Through intentional performance, and sublimation of what is basically a primal urge to be free from subjugation and control, Peter deduces a strategy to escape confinement.

At the end of his report to the academy Peter declares that his strategy, or rather his "special way out" is, in fact, "the way of humanity."[43] Kafka follows up with a rather Freudian amendment: "There was nothing else for me to do, provided always freedom was not to be my choice."[44] Kafka's story reflects a similar inability for human identity to account for the true freedom experienced in the primal state of nature. This largely mirrors Freud's understanding of the urge for freedom "as directed against […] civilization altogether."[45] As a civilized ape living on fringes of society, Peter will always conceptualize freedom as "a way out."[46] That Peter recognizes the human conception of freedom of different from his own implies that the human identity Peter deliberately acquires has not fully replaced his instinctual, animal identity. This does not nullify his civilized, performed identity as a human however. When Freud describes the manner in which civilization is built upon the renunciation of it instinct, he also adds that this "presupposes precisely the non-satisfaction (by suppression, repression, or some other means) of powerful instincts."[47] Peter's characterization highlights an element of compromise present in both Kafka and Freud's understandings of identity: civilization demands of its members (human and ape alike!) a measure of primal renunciation. In effect, Peter's complicated identity as an ape living in the human world attests to the fact that the process is never total.

Finally, Kafka ends the first segment *A Report for an Academy* on a somber note that reminds the reader of the kind of implicit absurdity of constructed identity. While Peter reflects on the banality of his life as a performer, he mentions that he has sexual intercourse "as apes do [with a] half-trained little chimpanzee."[48] This does not necessarily satisfy or please him in anyways; in fact, Peter says that he "cannot bear to see her; for she has the insane look of the bewildered half-broken animal in her eye."[49] Freud writes extensively about the restrictions civilization places upon human sexuality,[50] and of course does not offer any insight into the sex lives of chimpanzees. With regard to instinct and progress in the state of nature, however, Freud writes that in the case of other animal species, "it may be that a temporary balance has been reached between the influence of their environment and the mutually contending instincts within them and that thus cessation of development has come about."[51] In Kafka's story, the female chimpanzee comes from Freud's natural world of temporary balance, and so she is fully "ape". Conversely, Peter now exists in the human world, in which the sexual lives of civilized people are severely impaired. Indeed, Freud

admits that "one is probably justified in assuming that its importance as a source of feelings of happiness, and therefore in the fulfilment of our aim in life, has sensibly diminished."[52] Thus Kafka's brief mention of Peter's sexual proclivities during his post-ape existence and his revulsion regarding the untamed (i.e., uncivilized) female ape reveal that his civilized nature alienates him from both other men, and other apes as well.

Freud and Kafka share a strange kind of pessimism of about the nature of human identity in the modern world. "We shall never completely master nature," Freud laments in his enquiry concerning happiness, "and our bodily organism, itself a part of that nature, will always remain transient structure with a limited capacity for adaptation and achievement."[53] This passage could just as well describe Kafka's character Red Peter – an ape who will never be truly free from his primal origins and whose body will never allow him to assimilate seamlessly into the world of human beings. As such, both *Civilization and Its Discontents* and *A Report to an Academy* address the enormous anxieties of identity and assimilation in the context of modern society. The modern epoch was a period of such intense cultural change that it in retrospect it seems almost inevitable that it would also usher in a widespread sense of identity crisis. It is difficult to situate oneself against historical and cultural history, especially when new technology and information constantly holds our understanding of the world, and of ourselves, in a state of constant flux. If a Freudian framework characterizes twentieth century civilization, then perhaps a Kafkaesque approach to understanding liminal identity addresses the personal effect of its discontents.

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End Notes

1 Freud 47
2 Kafka 261
3 Ibid 260
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6 Freud 52
7 Ibid 50
8 Ibid 30
9 Ibid
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19 Ibid 256

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38 Ibid
39 Kafka 253
40 Ibid
41 Ibid
42 Ibid 255
43 Ibid 258
44 Ibid
45 Freud 50
46 Kafka 254
47 Freud 30
48 Kafka 259
49 Ibid
50 See sections V and VI of *Civilization of Its Discontents*.
51 Freud 83
52 Ibid 76
53 Ibid 37

Queering Saint Wilgefortis, Patron Saint of Possibility

Callum Boog

Saint Wilgefortis is the patron saint of trials, tribulations, and beards. She also happens to be a woman.

Concurrently with my studies at the Liberal Arts College, I am also pursuing a Minor in Religion and Cultures. I also happen to be transgender. I mention these things in tandem only because I am well used to funny looks when folks ask me what I study. Implicitly, I understand that many people assume that my queerness and my interest in religion are inherently at odds. But if the world in which we live is shaped and easily understood by way of binary opposition and dichotomies – men/women; homosexual/heterosexual; science/religion, academic/practical – I have always drifted somewhere in between. For a long time, I didn't know quite what to make of it.

Two years ago, I was struggling deeply with my own identity. My parents, already worried that they would soon have to introduce their daughter as a butch lesbian nun, were even more dismayed when I tried to explain that my queer identity was exactly what piqued my interest in the ways in which people choose to shape their lives around particular beliefs, rituals, and traditions. My father, concerned almost always about matters of practicality and application, wondered aloud at the utility of all "that feminism and lesbianism stuff" I brought home, especially at work in a world where religion was clearly on its way out.

My response was twofold. Religion is not dying, dead, or even on its way out – the postmodern world posits questions about identity and existence and belief just as vigorously as it did, for example, in the fourteenth century, when Saint Wilgefortis prayed to God to be made repulsive so that she might avoid marrying the king of Sicily. When God acquiesced, she sprouted a beard, and her irate father crucified her.[1] In the two centuries preceding the Protestant Reformation, Saint Wilgefortis' martyr narrative generated a great deal of folk popularity, particularly among women who sought to be "disencumbered" from their abusive husbands and sought refuge under her patronage.[2] Any good student at the LAC will tell you that over the course of six hundred years of history, the world has borne witness to an immeasurable amount of change, revolution, and reform – and yet my zeal for queer politics and desire for belonging felt no more unique to me than the experience of this strange, androgynous woman from medieval Portugal.

Perhaps I should have taken it as a greater sign when I first encountered Saint Wilgefortis on the cover of a course textbook and felt a twinge of envy.[3] I admired the long flowing beard, especially impressed by this saint's commitment to such drastic measures. Soon enough I learned that she had died a virgin martyr, and rose to prominence as a popular devotional figure for Christian women in the middle ages.

In England, she was called *Uncumber*, or one who avoids suffering. In Spain, she was called *Liberata;* the French knew her as *Débarras*[4] – in all cases, her name carried connotations of liberation, freedom, good riddance. "Wilgefortis" in fact derives from the Latin *virgo fortis*, or courageous woman.[5] I was nineteen, and, newly incensed by the likes of feminist theologians such as Mary Daly and Rosemary Radford Ruether, mostly intrigued that a female saint could be afforded such an estimable presence among the ranks of so many other male Christian saints.

Although much of her artwork and devotional imagery has been lost to time, misogyny, and a general resistance against gender ambiguity in historical art, Saint Wilgefortis' narrative offers a compelling challenge to normative ideas about gendered bodies and sexuality.

When I started growing facial hair six months into testosterone hormone replacement treatment, my father did not crucify me. Yet I began to understand better that desire, identity, bodies, gender, and performativity are essential and deeply complicated aspects of being human and embodiment within religious and non-religious contexts. Wilgefortis' iconography (that which remains interchangeably depicts her as a virgin, martyr, mystic, heretic) cemented to me the notion that the multiplicity of identity is not unique to the postmodern world.

The popularity of Wilgefortis' narrative, as well as the frequency with which her artwork and votives have been systematically destroyed throughout the history of Christianity, demonstrates that her differently gendered body frequently stands in as a canvas on which women and others with nonstandard experiences of sexuality, gender, and desire make sense of their own bodies and experiences. In the medieval world, a beard on a woman was considered a disfiguring feature and was thought to have been granted by God in order to protect female virginity; it was also held as gift of grace of that enabled Christ's female followers to more closely resemble him.[6] Queer minister and scholar Tricia Sheffield argues that ambiguously gendered bodies are in active pursuit of identity as a transformative exercise.[7] Despite being a half a year removed from coming to terms with my own identity as a trans man, I was nevertheless compelled by a kinship I recognized in Saint Wilgefortis' six hundred year-old agency and androgyny.

Following Sheffield's argument, the depiction of a gender-ambiguous or feminine crucifixion shifts the focus to a different dimension of identification. Traditionally within the Christian tradition, women have been pejoratively associated sexuality. This is a direct result of much of the historical-cultural interpretations of the creation stories in the Hebrew Bible, which have long since cast Eve's transgression as a universal female paradigm and significantly limited the social and performative roles afforded to women. But as scholar Caroline Walker Bynum suggests in her book, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (1991) images of Jesus Christ were sometimes cross-dressed to become Saint Wilgefortis and venerated as a completely blended symbol, Christ and a virgin martyr cohabitating within a single body.[8] This gendered transformation of Christ proved especially compelling for women: instead of focusing on definitive visual markers of gender distinction, a female observer might instead examine problems resulting from human relationships, especially in areas of love, intimacy, or sexual dilemmas.[9] Indeed, the image of a crucified female martyr might address a range of concerns, especially for afflicted women of the middle ages—namely in relation to issues such as fertility, status, and protection.[10]

This idea also provides context insofar as iconography played an integral role in popularizing Saint Wilgefortis her role as a Christian devotional. Visual imagery provides a helpful link between views of human corporeality and the acceptance of alternative expression of spirituality. Historically, texts and images served as didactic devices in promoting the cultivation of ascetic, even self-mortifying practices, whereby the intention was not only to generate compassion for Christ, but also to permit personal identification with his suffering.[11] Artistic depictions of crucifixions, as well as the spiritual disposition of crucifixion piety, are two such examples within the Christian tradition of the ways in which women explored modes of self-discovery and self-expression directly tied to spirituality. The Christian theological concept of *Imitatio Christi* is especially relevant to Wilgefortis' narrative: men and women could envision themselves as both imitating and becoming one with Christ by deliberately imitating his bodily and spiritual suffering on the cross.[12] Notably, between 1200-1500 CE, the human body acquired an increased amount of religious significance, and the distinction between male and female was not absolute.[13]

This is especially evident in the image of Wilgefortis from a Flemish Book of Hours from the late fifteenth century CE[14], in which Wilgefortis dons long flowing robes but also sports a full beard, rendering her gender ambiguous.[15] Indeed, many scholars recognize Wilgefortis as one of fifteen "transvestite saints"[16] because in art she usually dressed in male-coded robes. In the image taken from the Flemish Book of Hours, Wilgefortis sports a blue robe, tied at the feet. The drapery hides her figure; she has no traditional identifiers such as breasts or curves. The robe draped over shoulders is even less suggestive of femininity. Her clothing here is ambiguous—interpretation could go either way. This "transvestite clothing" in which Wilgefortis is deliberately clothed may demonstrate a purposeful effort to transform the crucified figure of Christ into a more universal and gender-inclusive symbol, thereby deconstructing the fixed binary opposites of male and female.[17] Significantly, the deliberate effort to clothe Wilgefortis in male clothing likely also came directly from the efforts of women: scholar Lewis Wallace writes in his article *Bearded Woman, Female Christ: Gendered Transformations in the Legends and Cult of Saint Wilgefortis* (2014) that women played a role in "almost all late-medieval ritual dressing, in that they were responsible either for making the clothes used in the rituals, donating clothes they had worn themselves, or in some cases actually dressing the statues in question".[18] In Wilgefortis' dressing, then, there is evidence not only of women's participation in the feminization of a Christ-like figure, but also as active producers of theological symbols and imagery directly pertaining to femininity. This follows a trend especially noticeable in Wilgefortis' iconography wherein visual markers attempt to bridge the gap between male and female bodies in tandem with the gap between corporeality and spirituality.[19]

Ilse Friesen argues that this kind of gender inversion carried no practical implications historically, but instead functioned as a means to increase personal sanctification or to transcend certain social boundaries and earthly limitations: "Christ's body was the arena where social identity and gendered bodied were negotiated, where the relationship of self and society, subjectivity and social process found a point of contact and conflict".[20] Indeed, female martyrs often described their radical commitment to Christ in terms of "becoming male".[21] Gender transgression thus necessarily entails a great deal of courage, and speaks to notions of conscious choice and self-possession –traits perhaps inaccessible to early Christian women otherwise. So compelling were such images that more feminine

depictions of Christ on the cross were gradually supplanted by depictions of the unmistakable female Saint Wilgefortis.[22]

In *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (1993), Rosemary Radford Ruether posits that androgyny in the Christian iconographical context often assumes a "gender binary that demonstrates […] the female as a secondary part to the assumed male subject".[23] Commonly, Christian iconography depicts Jesus as hyper-masculine. Rarely, artists add female identifying markers, but in most artistic renderings of Christ seek to re-inscribe the notion that men function as the natural and primary gender.[24]

This is evident in the case of Saint Wilgefortis as well. Her body is often described as "becoming more like Christ".[25] There is no question that there has been a persistent historical trend of privileging "maleness" as a favorable trait. In *Performing Jesus: A Queer Counternarrative of Embodied Transgression* (2008), Tricia Sheffield discusses the way in which gender performativity has been integral to the understanding of Jesus' role as a savior.[26] Paired with Ruether's notion that the possession of male genitalia was at one time the prerequisite for representing Christ, who is the disclosure of the male God[27], we might then begin to understand gender presentation as a pivotal factor that plays into both the savior and crucifixion narratives within Christianity. Wilgefortis' androgyny presents a direct challenge to the primacy of strictly "male" bodies.

Ambiguity always affords for a diversity of interpretation, and so it is no wonder that contemporary readers project many different competing theories of identity onto Saint Wilgefortis. She has been interpreted as the patron saint of intersex people, an asexual person, a transgender person, a person with Polycystic Ovary Syndrome and a lesbian virgin.[28] She is at once male, female, both, and neither. As a queer undergraduate of student of religion, Saint Wilgefortis presented to me the option of *possibility*. While binaries are a quick and easy way to make sense of the chaotic world, they have never really quite worked for me – nor for Saint Wilgefortis. Her case study demonstrates that just as religious studies and queer theory are not at odds with one another, neither are conceptions of male and female. A wealth of interpretation and meaningful identification exists somewhere in between.

End Notes

1 More 130
2 Friesen 15
3 The Bloomsbury Reader of Religion, Sexuality, and Gender (2017) edited by Drs. Donald Boisvert and Carly Daniel-Hughes
4 Friesen 47
5 More 130
6 Friesen 112
7 Sheffield 16
8 Bynum 65-67
9 Friesen 133
10 Bynum 67
11 Friesen 24
12 Friesen 27
13 Friesen 27
14 See figure I
15 See figure I
16 Friesen 128

17 Friesen 132
18 Wallace 60
19 Friesen 20
20 Friesen 27
21 Bynum 65
22 Friesen 47
23 Ruether 116
24 Sheffield 245
25 More 132
26 Sheffield 246
27 Ruether 122
28 Kittredge 1
29 Buzwell, Greg. *Saints in Medieval Manuscripts*. University of Toronto Press, 2005.

Figure I : Miniature of Saint Wilgefortis [artist unknown] 15th-16th century, taken from a Flemish Book of Hours[29]

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Terror from Above, Terrorists from Below
Towards a Joint Terror Campaign

Tristan Clairoux

> Anybody can see that bombers in those days could make bigger holes in the ground than agents could; but nobody believes that big holes in the ground are necessarily of military value […]
> — M.D.R. Foot, 384.

Big wars have often been equated with big feats. Wars in industrial modernity are wars of attrition. Today wars are long, arduous, gruelling day-in-day out bloodlettings where, more often than not, hundreds of 'decisive' battles are fought without the other's defeat. While it is true that wars always necessitate large amounts of raw force, a series of smaller, more tactical applications of force are often necessary, yet often forgotten. Interspersed amongst the ceaseless grinding of bones, the searing of flesh and the tearing of limbs are the forgotten struggles that paved the way for decisiveness to emerge. These small acts are often those of a few men, women and, unfortunately, children, whose effects seem inconsequential. However, these small acts add up, foment chaos and disorganization throughout the body politic. The more the vital organs of war are affected, the more the body politic slows down. Its mental energy is displaced towards internal policing, obscuring the sight of the oncoming army and sapping it of vital energy.

This essay will pit the downfalls of the British Royal Air Force's (RAF) Strategic Bombing campaign conducted in France against the effectiveness of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) that was shown during the end of World War II (WWII). While air bombing in France was a necessary instrument, it came at the price of hundreds of thousands of civilian deaths in France that could have been averted if something similar to what today would called a Strategic Joint Command had existed. Not only could civilian lives have been saved, but economic strain could also have been lessened and/or utilized in other military sectors, had there been a system that facilitated and fostered cross-departmental operations planning between the RAF and SOE. This is not to say that either organization was inherently better, but that better results could have occurred had they been wielded correctly. It is obvious bombing campaigns created large amounts of damage. Yet if these same targets had been viewed from a joint operations standpoint, then a much more nuanced strategy would have emerged and allowed for a maximization of strength (both psychologically and physically) and a minimization of deaths (both civilian and military). As we shall see, the one-glove-fits-all strategy that predominated the British military overvalued Strategic Bombing and undervalued sabotage operations. This was not only counterproductive due to it alienating the French population, but also came at the cost of thousands of unnecessary lives.

The idea of Strategic Bombing truly emerged out of the inter-war period. The term 'strategic' when referring to bombing was a by-product of a theory that took into consideration the economic and psychological aspects of the home front. It first developed out of the need to differentiate between two types of bombing strategies. The first and more 'traditional' aspect was a "strategy of directly assaulting [the] enemy's armed forces."[1] This strategy revolved around the classical conception of a defined territorial space, separate from civilian centres, where two or more armed groups engaged in war. Traditional air bombing was either thought of as an instrument used in supporting ground troops or as a stand-alone tool meant to weaken the enemy on the battlefield. However, in the era of total war, new sites of battle opened up, reconfiguring the battlefield and expanded the notion of what defined a legitimate military target. The battlefield now extended beyond the traditional space of war and settled well into civilian centres. A new field of knowledge about war emerged and with it new sites of power, such as economies and the psychological state of the enemy. If one weakened both the enemy's morale and productive capacity, in short a state's war economy, victory could be secured. By WWII, this new space of war had been inscribed in military rhetoric as 'the Home Front.' It is inside this space that the term Strategic Bombing came into focus.

As a term, strategic bombing "sought to describe the nature of long-range air operations carried out against distant targets behind the enemy front line."[2] While the French and Germans considered long-range, high-altitude air assaults divorced from "the fighting on the ground, as a poor use of strategic resources, the British and American air forces, on the other hand, thought long-range bombing was a real revolution in air warfare."[3] Strategic bombings, as opposed to "indiscriminate or terror," carried with them an ethical justification. Indiscriminate bombing, or what is now call 'carpet-bombing', was seen as immoral.[4] While it only nominally manifested itself on the most superficial level of language, it seems that remnants of the older military rules of conduct and engagement remained in this period. Those who considered themselves part of the 'civilized world' still saw civilians as noncombatants, and therefore non-legitimate targets. Only if they could be shown to be of "peculiar importance to the German war effort"[5] could one justify bombing them. This inevitably meant having to reorganize the category of legitimate target, which broke traditional concepts of civilian immunity.

During the 1930s both the US Air Corps Tactical School and their British counterparts readily accepted that "modern 'total war' reflected a changed democratic reality, the war was between peoples as well as armed forces."[6] In industrial modernity, towns became military objectives and sites of war. Air Vice-Marshal Arthur Barratt urged his audience at a Naval Staff College lecture in 1936, "to recognize that it was no longer possible 'to draw a definite line between combatant and non-combatant.'"[7] As Richard Overy writes, "[t]his was, he claimed, a result of the 'power of democracy'; the more governments depended on the support of the governed, the more the morale and resources of the civil population became legitimate object of attack."[8] The civilian mass had become the receptacle of a "will to resist, the will to fight."[9] Since the democratic turn, sovereign power no longer resided in a central node but was now 'equally' diffused, as per the ideology of democracy, throughout the social body. That the idea of attacking vital *centres*, and the emphasis is on the plurality of centres, came to replace the more traditional views concerned with achieving victory.

Of course cutting the sovereign's head was still a high priority, defeating his army in battle another, but a third one was attacking the very organs of the body-politic. Visually speaking, the engraving of Hobbes's Leviathan exemplifies whom and what needed assaulting in total war: the civilians that made up the sovereign's chain mail, his body—his very cells—is what needed to be vanquished. This literal body in need of conquering was the site of "[t]he will of the enemy population, it […] could be broken only by assaulting the 'social body,' a metaphor for the elaborate web of services, supplies, and amenities that held modern urban life together. In a list of factors that represented the capacity of a nation to sustain a war effort, the military system was placed fourth, behind the 'social, economic and political systems' that nourished the military effort in the first place."[10] With such an emphasis placed on civilian sites, British political and military leaders were more than willing to place their resources in strategic bombing.

Yet, a long history of grossly underestimating the enemy had taken hold of British political/military leaders. In theoretical war games pitting French and British troops against one another during the inter-war period, the British "argued that even if the French bombed London 'we can count on our superior morale and striking power to ensure that the Frenchman squeals first."[11] Of course, war always necessitates a certain devaluation of the other's life in order to legitimize extinguishing it. However, this devaluation led to a critical error, namely that "RAF leaders continued relying on unverifiable assumptions about the social fragility of the enemy."[12] Moreover, they had done very little in terms of defining these vital centres, and what made them 'vital'.

The psychological aspect of strategic bombing was concerned with breaking morale, a term as ill-defined as it was problematic to measure. Bombing would, as popular theory had it, shatter the morale and destroy the base that sustained the military. There was an exaggerated sense concerning what bombing could actually do, which was often advanced less by strategic and more by political concerns. Political issues inside both the military (that saw all four branches vying for more resources) as well as the political apparatus distorted the actual utility of bombing. British politicians throughout 1940 and 41 were pressured into proving that they could fight back. These conditions produced some of the most exaggerated accounts of what British airpower could accomplish. For the most part, the logic behind strategic bombing seems to have stemmed more from a 'common sense' type of thinking than from any actual quantitative analysis. In reality bombing did demoralize its targets; however, it "could also provoke sudden moments of exhilaration, or induce a profound apathy,"[13] both of which do not imply the definite collapse of the social body's productive capacities. Let us remember the London bombings and how little effect they had on British economic output; in fact these bombings had the reverse effect and produced an even tighter social cohesion that is still famously summed up by the British catchphrase 'Keep Calm and Carry On' that embodies an idealized ethos of a rational and resilient society. Yet 600,000 men and women were still killed due to allied 'strategic' bombing in Germany alone (1 million people throughout Europe and Asia), "a million seriously injured, millions more hurt less severely; millions dispossessed through bomb destruction; 50-60 percent of the urban area of Germany obliterated."[14]

The British not only underestimated the strength of their enemy's morale, they were equally unsuccessful at evaluating their economic resilience. It was neither "taut [nor] overburdened" yet this "remained the prevailing view for

much of the war."[15] Being unable to either define or quantify the strategic value of a 'vital centre' did not pose problems for those in charge. Strategic bombing campaigns continued to be mounted by the RAF until it became clear that the bombs were not hitting their targets. Even before the war, the RAF knew very well that they were incapable of conducting precise strikes. In 1938, a committee was formed in order to try to overcome such problems. What they discovered was that "with high-level bombing by day, the form most favoured, only 3 percent of bombs were likely to hit their target, and in a shallow dive, 9 percent."[16] Technologically, airpower was neither advanced enough in terms of accuracy (getting the actual aircraft in position or successfully striking its designated target), nor did it have the penetrative power to guarantee a successful hit once it did touch its target. The effective field of bombing i.e., the area a bomb was estimated to land in, was 4 by 8 kilometres. Both night and day raids inevitably failed to produce effective results; either whole squadrons got lost and were unable to find where they needed to be, resulting in aimless bombing raids, or "between half and four-fifths of the bombs" missed their target.[17] However, military and political leaders would not deter from holding onto their single-minded desire for retaliation, or to seem like they were doing so.

The mounting pressure of empirical evidence against precision bombing did produce change. However, instead of strategic bombing being set aside it received a revamped definition that was more in line with what it actually could achieve. 'Area bombing' came to replace strategic bombing. If one could not hit the enemy's working facilities then one should expand the target site. In other words, if they couldn't hit the working facilities they should hit its workers. The 'vital centres' expanded even further, engulfing whole cities. The British Bomber Command demanded that "one third of the German population" be de-housed.[18] Since everything but the vital sites—the strategic facilities that enabled the war—could be hit, then everything else became the target. 'If we cannot destroy the precise targets let us kill its workers. Even better, let us kill anybody who could be a worker—let us 'pre-emptively' carpet-bomb them simply because we are unable to do anything else but that.' Now the Hobbesian Leviathan, with his chainmail made of individuals, is truly an analogy worth remembering. To strike the sovereign one must first strike his people. The factory, like the chainmail, now became synonymous with its workers. In other words, civilians themselves became legitimate military targets.

Europe in general received "30 percent of the bomb tonnage dropped by the American and British,"[19] and France is where most of the resulting casualties took place. As Overy puts it, the French "faced an inescapable dilemma […] they wanted the Allies who were bombing them to win, and they wanted the Germans who protected them to lose."[20] The first few bombing raids seemed to have brought encouragement to the French population. It gave them the sense that something was being done, that they had not been forgotten. Evidence shows that workers asked the British to bomb their factories in order not to have to support the German war efforts.[21] In London, this was spoken of as 'morale-making' as exemplified in an internal Foreign Office memorandum titled "RAF and Morale-Making."[22] However, the population came to realize very quickly that the RAF was not simply bombing strategic sites. The 1942 Renault factory raid exemplified the failure of airpower and soon after French support dissipated. "The raid on the Renault works," as Overy writes, "became a test case of the dual strategy of economic attrition and morale making. […] Flying in to bomb

from between 2,000 and 4,000 feet with no anti-aircraft fire to distract them, 222 aircraft dropped 419 tons on the factory and the surrounding workers' housing. Much of the factory area was destroyed, though not the machinery in the buildings, at the cost of only one aircraft lost"[23] What ensued was "391 dead and 558 seriously injured, more than twice the number inflicted so far by the RAF on any one night over Germany. An estimated 300 buildings were destroyed and another 160 severely damaged."[24] While rumours spread of Parisians "call[ing] out 'Long Live Great Britain' as they lay dying,"[25] reality on the ground showed that indiscriminate bombings had very little to do with strategy. Lacking accuracy and conducted sporadically on seemingly pointless targets, the carpet-bombings soon showed the French population that the Allied forces were willing to inflict disproportionate numbers of civilian casualties in order to produce meagre results. A month later news came in that only 10 percent of the factory's machinery was destroyed and "was operating […] between 75 and 100 percent of its pre-raid capacity."[26] Following the 1942 German occupation in the south, these kinds of operations were expanded across the whole of the French territory at which point the veneer of 'strategy' truly faded.

Our transition from air to sabotage warfare must be done in the optic of military technology and a failure to fully utilize it. As Overy writes, "the idea that modern technology and science weaponry enhanced military efficiency was central to the American [and as we have seen the British] view of the potential of a bombing war."[27] It is by now clear how "airmen emphasized that airpower was 'a new means of waging war'; members of the Air Corps Tactical School argued that air power was "'the most efficient action to bring us victory with the least expenditure of lives, time, money and matériel.'"[28] We have already answered the question of whose lives were considered expendable and shown the cracks in the efficiency argument surrounding air bombing. As seen, this technology was both highly overvalued in terms of its strategic capabilities, while nevertheless continuing to be advanced by a series of political factors that were divorced from its actual military utility. Reticence to change their technological approach in the face of growing failures says a lot about the Allied command: the 'common sense' narrative that big wars required big feats continued to be tossed around without much critical thinking. Political and military figures enjoyed that the population saw these bombings as a reflection of active political leadership and effectiveness. The public and its leaders failed to grasp that a constant barrage of smaller, more precise operations, can incapacitate an enemy both psychologically and eventually physically and with fewer indiscriminate casualties to civilian life. The newest and shiniest technological ideas are often prioritized instead of implementing the time-tested ones. As we will see, SOE-run sabotage and resistance networks were a perfect example of a misused technology.

M.D.R. Foot opens his seminal work *SOE in France* by commenting on how irregular warfare had always been a dominant aspect of British military history. First authorized by Chamberlain and subsequently promoted by Churchill, the fact that a Special Operations Executive had to be created goes to show how divorced military and political leaders had been from their recent past. J.C.F. Holland, one of the founding figures at the head of SOE, was asked by the War Office to conduct research with the goal of setting up a secret organization separate from both the military and civil service, whose task would be subversion, sabotage and intelligence gathering. Holland's subject should, as Foot argues, "have been obvious to the British, for in 1899-1902 it had taken a quarter of

a million men to put down an informal Boer army less than a tenth as large; and twenty years later an Irish irregular force with arms for fewer than three thousand men had baffled the efforts of some eighty thousand troops and armed police to counter it."[29] While the British themselves (let us remember the famous T.E Lawrence in Arabia) had used it in countless countries as a "normal tactic of imperial expansion and defense,"[30] insurgent-led sabotage and subversion had all but vanished from its arsenal. If "[c]landestine operations are probably quite as old as war, if not quite as respectable" as Foot argues, by 1939 no organization was capable of mounting one.[31] The respectability part was undoubtedly why no such organization was in place at the time. The research led to an understanding "'that if guerilla warfare is co-ordinated and also related to main operations, it should, in favourable circumstances, cause such a diversion of enemy strength as eventually to present decisive opportunities to the main forces.'"[32] Why such a conclusion needed to be reached goes to show how narrow-minded, unaware or unable to learn from history the military and political command had become. Nevertheless, SOE ended up seeing the light of day. However, one must emphasize that research concluded that such operations should be '*related to main operations,'* meaning that a two-way communication line between itself and the other branches of military operations was necessary if it was to truly perform.

In a more practical sense, British agents would be sent into enemy-held territory, foment resistance movements, connect, supply and direct already existing paramilitary groups. In brief, they would conduct a campaign of irregular warfare. In the case of France, SOE either worked on their own when needed or with the Gaullists, the communists, and a series of other resistance groups that they had either created or supplied with communications networks, food, ammunition and weapons, as well as escape routes. Both soft (allowing defective products to leave the factory) and aggressive (destroying essential factory machinery) forms of sabotage were conducted by a variety of men, women and children in occupied France. Churchill in his renowned brief and dramatic manner told SOE, "And now set Europe ablaze."[33]

Yet SOE, not unlike the RAF, was far from shielded from the petty political intrigues and the "bureaucrat[ic] squabbles."[34] "Petty obstructionists" outside the organization distrusted what lay behind the "cloak of secrecy" and prevented them from realizing their actual worth.[35] This lead to the War Office in 1943-44 to "hinder travel abroad—even on operations into France—by army officers employed by SOE, on the ground that the security of the impending invasion would be compromised."[36] This mostly meant that they were denied the air crafts needed to parachute their operatives and supplies behind enemy lines. Dedicated aircraft were denied to both SOE and OSS "during the height of the strategic bombing campaign" due to its air force command "trying to validate the idea of strategic bombing and throwing as many bombers as possible at Germany in an attempt to defeat Germany by bombing alone."[37] The RAF was not the only one to prevent SOE from operating at its full potential. Its own thick cloak of secrecy seemed to have worked against itself. Instead of fostering the cross-departmental cooperation that had been argued for by Holland, secrecy estranged its fellow organizations and with them the possibility to fully be 'related to main operations.'

If political leaders had willingly wagged their tails in approval at the sight of the awe-inspiring destructive power of bombing raids, SOE mostly due to its sheer secrecy and lack of visible explosive results had a slow start. As we

have seen, British leaders had no qualms about uselessly smothering the lives of hundreds of thousands of civilians by carpet-bombing them, but when it came time to conduct sabotage in France both Churchill and SOE were now all too aware of the danger of reprisals they might engender. Andrew Roberts, in his book the *Storm of War*, argues along similar lines when he writes,

> [t]arget (and often untargeted) assassinations and the blowing up of communication lines behind enemy lines were sometimes strategically helpful before D-Day, but they tended to alienate the local populations upon whom the German wrath fell once the SOE operatives had got away. The Germans did not jib at mass shootings of hostages in reprisal against attacks […] with entire villages occasionally paying the price for SOE operations that were strategically not worth the butcher's bill.[38]

Now the wrath of the Germans after having successfully blown up a targeted factory is undoubtedly terrible. However, it is fair to say that the destruction of everything, villages, crops, civilians and cattle alike (except the targeted factory) due to delusional beliefs in bombing accuracy is, if not worse, on an equal footing. And regarding the alienation of the population, the RAF had taken care of that in their more than visible strategic bombing failures. French Resistance[39] made it clear that these types of raids were "undermin[ing] irretrievably 'the friendly feelings of the entire French population towards the Allies.'"[40] Intelligence reports show that the French spoke of these bombings in terms of their "'terror character.'"[41] OSS (the American version of SOE, which played a smaller role in the war) got word that the French viewed their "situation to be no better than that of the 'Nazis in Germany',"[42] which is the last thing one wants when trying to stimulate morale and resistance in order to reconquer a territory. The French Resistance argued that sabotage operations could produce much of the same strategic damage done by bombing in a less lethal manner.[43]

The main problem seems that stubbornness at the top of the chain of command fractured departments, each vying for more resources at the detriment of listening to the men on the ground. As Overy writes, the French Resistance had made it clear, they "regarded bombing as complementary to forms of active opposition to the occupier, though it was seldom integrated as closely as it could."[44] Once again, both the founding figures of SOE and their men on the ground were arguing something resembling a Strategic Joint Command.

Foot draws a very appealing picture of what could have taken place on the ground if dogged leaders had been less interested in demonstrating how big of an explosion they could unleash and focused more on how best to achieve the destruction of particular targets. On June 8, 1944, the RAF leaders risked sending out 135 "of the finest bomber aircrew" to demonstrate the power of the *Tallboy* (a recently created 12,000 lb bomb).[45] Nineteen bombs were dropped aiming to destroy the mouth of an important railway tunnel; only one hit its target while "the others made eighteen impressive holes in the surrounding fields."[46] Not only did they risk 135 lives, their 1 in 19 hit rate nearly missed the target, almost invalidating the mission itself. Had a Strategic Joint Command been in place, SOE WRESTLER unit, a nearby small group whose speciality was rail cutting, could have been deployed.[47] An even more stark realization is "that the total quantity of explosives used to produce" all of SOE's sabotages was less than a quarter of a single Tallboy.[48] This means that vast amounts of labour were wasted producing both a large quantity of useless bombs as well as a fleet of bombers, that in the

case of France could have been replaced by more effective methods or deployed towards more useful missions in the Atlantic, such as ocean mining.

While it was difficult to achieve, SOE did prove that it was viable to create effective sabotage networks across the large French territory. As Foot writes, "it turned out feasible to inflict through the clandestine channels of SOE an amount of critical damage comparable to that inflicted on French industry and French transport by the much larger and enormously more expensive formations of the RAF."[49] As Webster and Frankland write in their seminal four volume work on allied bombing during WWII, the overall effect the bombers had "in France was not very important" in comparison to what occurred in Germany.[50] The question is not whether they should have bombed more, as they did in Germany, but instead they could have freed up large bomber squads by funding much smaller and cheaper operations like SOE when possible.

SOE proved that they were able, with just "a few pounds of plastic," set back "weeks or even months of endeavour by the Germans or their underlings."[51] As exemplified in both the Peugeot and the Dunlop factory as well as the Pas de Calais refinery, incidences SOE either managed to destroy key machinery that bombing had failed to or to keep following up the original damage that the RAF had done. Like Richard Overy, Foot argues that "[a]ir bombardment sometimes could stiffen the will to fight it [was] intended to weaken"; moreover, "anti-aircraft defences are at least noisy, and give the groundlings the impression that someone is hitting back."[52] Yet repeated "pinprick" attacks at perfectly timed moments are enough to drive the German authorities mad.[53] As the Peugeot sabotage shows, nothing is more frustrating for the war-machine and demoralizing for its workers to wait for months on a small replacement piece and having it destroyed in front of them while it is still "waiting to be unloaded […] in the factory yard."[54] What is even more maddening and terrifying is this all took place beyond the line of sight. "[T]here are no noisy defences against sabotage; on the contrary, the incessant controls that are needed in any attempt to keep it in check are bound to be tiresome and may become exasperating."[55] While small dispersed resistance units are not enough to win a war they could have, it seems fair to say, that up to a certain point SOE, similar to how air bombing in Germany diverted economic production towards Homefront protection, could have forced the Germans to divert troops from the frontline in order to police the countryside. As we shall see, a disproportional application of force was required to quash small resistance movements.

We can see how effective SOE had been if it had been wielded with more accuracy by looking at some of the actual damage they managed to inflict in the wake of operations OVERLORD (June 6th 1944) and DRAGOON (August 15th 1944). French Resistance with the help of SOE managed to produce "nearly two thousand" railway cuts in three weeks and "maintained railway stoppages at an even greater rate than the air forces were able to do."[56] The German Seventh Army noted that during July and August "more of the rail cuts […] were attributed to 'terrorists' than to air action.'" More precisely, The Special Operations Research Office of The American University concluded that between "June 1943 and May 1944, the resistance destroyed 200 locomotives and 2,000 freight cars, and damaged 1,822 locomotives, 1,500 passenger cars, and 8,000 freight cars."[57] Moreover, as USAF Captain Howard Douthit writes, "[t]hese figures indicate the effectiveness of sabotage when it is realized that from January through March 1944, sabotage accounted for nearly three times the number of locomotives damaged by Allied

airpower."[58] In February of 1944, 500 weaponized Italian partisans held back 12,000 German troops who were supported by "air power, armored cars and mountain artillery" for roughly two weeks.[59] The French resistance are cited in a 1965 Special Operations Research Office report as claiming to "have delayed up to 12 divisions for from 8 to 15 days."[60] Douthit continues by writing, "as a direct result of the sabotage efforts against the rail system used by the Germans, French slowed the 2nd Panzer Division's movement from Toulouse to Normandy. It took the Panzers 12 days to cross the 400 miles, nullifying their potential contribution at Normandy."[61] Moreover, "having witnessed yet another failed bomb run" by the RAF, SOE agents managed to destroy the only bridge over the Eure River. If they had crossed and been able to join the fight in Normandy, Eisenhower believed it "might have spelled defeat for the allies."[62]

During D-Day, SOE managed with the invaluable help of Postes, Télégraphes et Téléphones (PTT) employees, to "put nearly all the main telephone cables in France out of action."[63] Once the 'actual' combat broke out, the large contingency of fighting forces SOE had raised during the war sprung up behind the Germans making them unable to control their rear line and their communications network. This was all done with what Foot estimates as less than three full brigades (one brigade being 2,000-5,000 troops).[64] Even this under-funded, undervalued and untrusted fighting force managed to hold back eight, "admittedly about the worst eight", yet eight German divisions (10,000-15,000 troops) nonetheless out of sixty from the frontline during OVERLORD.[65]

Eisenhower's post-war estimation of SOE can serve as a final note. On May 31, 1945, he wrote that during DRAGOON, SOE "reduced the fighting efficiency of the Wehrmacht in southern France to forty per cent."[66] Once in full swing, SOE not only managed to ferment and support the French desire for resistance, but to keep "the enemy's attention taut, sapping 'his confidence, disrupting [military action] […] 'at a crucial time,' so that his troops reached the formal battlefield 'in a state of extreme disorganization and exhaustion.'"[67] In their own way, SOE, like the RAF, were capable of inflicting terror. This terror as Foot has outlined is something much closer to what has sowed discord in our current lives. While those being bombed did fear the air raid sirens and the incoming devastation that would ensue, the enemy was nevertheless visible. They could see, hear and feel the enemy and its effects. As much as the British population was relieved to see its leaders masquerading behind the mask of strategic bombing, the deafening sound of anti-aircraft fire made it seem like they were striking back and enemies were being hit. A clear spatial division demarcated them from the enemy, the ground from the air. The us/them binary that war needs to operate was literalized in the sky, the enemy was above them, beyond them. If the last few decades have taught us anything, it is that terror functions on uncertainty—on the invisible. Our fear of 'sleeper cells' stems from our fear of being unable to distinguish the 'us' from the 'them.' This inability is what truly gnaws at our sleep and our social cohesion. The enemy from 'within' has shown that a disproportionate amount of force is needed to quash resistance groups. True strategic bombing, in its most technical sense, that is, bombing beyond the frontline, would have been best achieved by a strategic combination of both SOE, resistance groups, and RAF. If one wanted to truly inflict 'terror in the homeland', they should have stressed the *in* and as well at the above. As a multipronged strategy, aerial warfare combined with *in*filtrating the body politic—using the body's very own cells to destroy itself—would have undoubtedly taxed the war machine.

While historians might still be arguing over the effectiveness of bombing over Germany in the case of France, other means were available that could have alleviated large amounts of useless deaths. Had careerist military and political leaders, namely people like Arthur 'Bomber' Harris, been less dogged on pushing a one-glove fits all strategy and more inclined to draw out actual multifaceted strategic operation plans that utilized the strengths and weaknesses of other departments, the term strategic bombing might not have been synonymous with scandal and useless death. Had more emphasis been placed in SOE in France, it is clear that a few bombers at the least could have been diverted back to the coastlines and the sea where it has already been shown they were effective. A more dynamic use of both fighting forces organized around the principle of a joint operations command would have produced similar if not better strategic results and saved the lives of hundreds if not thousands of civilians.

End Notes

1 Richard 10
2 Ibid
3 Ibid 10f
4 Gordon 176
5 Wright 197
6 Overy 29
7 Ibid 30
8 Ibid
9 Ibid
10 Ibid 17
11 Ibid 19
12 Ibid
13 Ibid 26
14 Ibid 27
15 Ibid 44
16 Ibid 23
17 Ibid 394
18 Wright 178
19 Overy 361
20 Ibid 384, Overy's statement seems to be slightly black and white. While it is undeniable that a large portion of the French population wanted the Germans to lose it seems to gloss over the sympathy many others had for the invading force. In other words, one must not forget that many French actively collaborated and participated in the Jewish genocide, the massacre of a variety of ethnicities and numerous gratuitous political killings. However, here we shall focus on those unnamed men and women who were either active resisters or supporters of the liberation.
21 Ibid 364
22 Ibid 367
23 Ibid 371
24 Ibid
25 Ibid 372
26 Ibid
27 Ibid 29
28 Ibid
29 Foot 4
30 Ibid 3
31 Ibid
32 Ibid 5

33 Ibid 13
34 Ibid 11
35 Ibid 13
36 Ibid
37 Hartman ch 4
38 Roberts 116
39 A broad label meant to designate divergent paramilitary/political groups that operated with or without SOE support in France.
40 Overy 375
41 Ibid 387
42 Ibid 393
43 Ibid 394
44 Ibid 388
45 Foot 393
46 Ibid 383
47 Ibid
48 Ibid
49 Ibid
50 see Webster, Charles K. and Frankland, Noble. *Strategic Air Offensive Against Germany 1939-1945*.
51 Foot 385
52 Ibid
53 Ibid
54 Ibid
55 Ibid
56 Ibid 386
57 Douthit 20
58 Ibid
59 Ibid 22
60 Ibid 23
61 Ibid 23f
62 Ibid 24
63 Foot 386
64 Ibid 387
65 Ibid
66 Ibid 388
67 Ibid

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Moby-Dick
A Cryptography

Nelson Duchastel de Montrouge

> The old mummy lies buried in cloth on cloth; it takes time to unwrap this Egyptian king. Yet now, forsooth, because Pierre began to see through the first superficiality of the world, he fondly weens he has come to the unlayered substance. But, far as any geologist has yet gone down into the world, it is found to consist of nothing but surface stratified on surface. To its axis, the world being nothing but superinduced superficies. By vast pains we mine into the pyramid; by horrible gropings we come to the central room; with joy we espy the sarcophagus; but we lift the lid--and no body is there!--appallingly vacant as vast is the soul of a man!
>
> — Herman Melville, *Pierre; or, The Ambiguities*

I take Ishmael at his word when he tells us the eponymous whale is not a "hideous and intolerable allegory".[1] Allegories, structurally speaking, aim for the simplest possible relation of meaning wherein exactly one fixed (usually fictional) image stands for exactly one fixed (usually actual) object. Such clarity is at least sometimes contrary to the aim of *Moby-Dick*: some of its most celebrated episodes are those wherein the conventional channels of meaning and information are muddled through polysemy, perspectivism, or a switching of literary form. I will, resting on previous currents of Melville scholarship,[2] assume that neither Herman Melville nor Ishmael believe that the world can be known through writing, allegorical or otherwise. That is, the world cannot be *read*.

Ancient Egyptian imagery is but one tool with which Ishmael expresses the impasses of reading the world. As I will demonstrate, the conventional meanings which this imagery evokes are deliberately frustrated in *Moby-Dick*, demonstrating their shortcomings and thereby disclosing an *absence* of human meaning embedded in the novel. This process is *not* allegorical. I will be using the term *cryptography*[3] to denote the particular way in which this absence is made manifest in *Moby-Dick*, as well as to denote my tracking of this absence. This absence is a fitting parallel for death, or for cetacean intelligence, and for the unreadable world at large. My thesis, then, is that Ishmael (and his puppeteer Melville) uses Egyptian symbols, chiefly pyramids and hieroglyphics, in a way which demonstrates that no meaning can be extracted from the world wholesale into language, admonishing those who naïvely attempt to read meanings into the world. I will further argue that this Melvillean non-meaning buried within the imagery of ancient Egypt is at once deeply informed by historical beliefs, outlined below, and particular in its usage and nuance to *Moby-Dick*.[4]

A cultural fascination with ancient Egypt took hold of the West in the

first half of the nineteenth century.[5] Following advancements in European Egyptology, Egypt found ample representation within American cultural life through architecture, academic papers, popular fiction, exhibitions of mummies, etc. The Egyptian Revival style of monumental architecture flourished by mid-century, especially in the context of cemeteries. This easy adoption of Egyptian imagery into funerary contexts was aided by the still-prevalent vision of ancient Egypt as a civilization predominantly concerned with the sepulchral.[6]

Edward Said offers the insight that nineteenth-century academic Orientalism[7] (which includes modern Egyptology) finds its source in older mysticisms from the early modern West, and that these mysticisms were not dispelled by, but rather coexisted with, serious scientific and political forays into Egypt. In Said's own words:

> the essential aspects of modern Orientalist theory and praxis (from which present-day Orientalism derives) can be understood, not as a sudden access of objective knowledge about the Orient, but as a set of structures inherited from the past, secularized, redisposed, and re-formed by such disciplines as philology, which in turn were naturalized, modernized, and laicized substitutes for (or versions of) Christian supernaturalism.

Said refers in large part to Napoleon Bonaparte's 1798–1801 Egyptian campaign, "a sort of first enabling experience for modern Orientalism".[8] The team of scholars who accompanied Napoleon would publish the mammoth twenty-three-volumed *Description de l'Égypte* between 1809 and 1828.[9] The bilingual Rosetta Stone was uncovered during this campaign, and it is this stone with which Jean-François Champollion, in 1822, conclusively deciphered Egyptian hieroglyphics. As this writing system had been unreadable worldwide for most of the common era, Champollion's decipherment was one of the most celebrated achievements of modern Egyptology.

Prior to Champollion, Egyptological scholars such as Athanasius Kircher insisted that these hieroglyphs were *deliberately* undeciphered—that they contained divine truths about God and the world that could be read only by scholarly initiates like himself and that their seeming non-meaning was an intended component of their meaning.[10] These translations, naturally, had little to nothing to do with actual ancient Egyptian customs or language. Occultist scholarship such as this was summarily dismissed following Champollion's discovery.[11]

Yet Kircher was, for Napoleonic scholars, a major forerunner to modern Egyptology. Why? We ought to resist the assumption that modern Orientalism sought or caused the complete dissolution of these older esoteric traditions. Centuries of respected Western scholars—notably, Hermeticists like Marsilio Ficino, the Florentine Neoplatonists, and Thomas Browne—had been committed to the misunderstanding of the Egyptian hieroglyph as "a symbol with hidden moral and religious meanings", "a deep way of stating hidden truths in the sacred Egyptian writing," as the historian Dame Frances Yates puts it.[12] In a concrete way, that there was in the modern West such a political, scientific, and cultural interest in ancient Egypt itself evinces a continuation and reassertion of the pre-Napoleonic magico-religious fascination with ancient Egypt. Champollion's decipherment and the *Description de l'Égypte* were lauded in part because millennia of Westerners had regarded Egypt as something to decipher. Egyptomania was not and is not a celebration of purely scientific discoveries. Rather, it should be inferred by the excitement around these discoveries that they were taken to be

answers to long-held questions about a locus of particular esoteric interest to the West.

Beyond Egypt as mere allegory (for wisdom, death, commemoration, and so forth), I am more interested in the hieroglyph as mystic emblem: it would seem that it is *enigmatic*, which is to say that its (partial or total) indecipherability is itself part of its message. Yet more interesting is what occurs to this enigmatic semiology when the hieroglyph is conclusively deciphered, as it was in Melville's time.

Although the old Hermeticist supernaturalism could not in its original form survive the new science of Egyptology, this supernaturalism, being the cause of modern Egyptology, survives in some form within the Egyptological discourse as what Said calls "naturalized supernaturalism".[13] This paper entertains the notion that this "undislodged current"[14] of early modern supernaturalism discredits modern science in some way. To be more precise, modern science's objective of *reading the world* is sourced from now-deprecated schools of knowledge, outside of which this objective is no longer appropriate.

Following Said, I take the hieroglyph in the nineteenth century to contain simultaneously its supernatural and Champollionic meanings. In Ishmael's particular worldview, these two meanings seem to deny each other representational plenitude. The supernaturalist presumption of the hieroglyph as a mystical aperture into the truth of the world is made impossible by the static and definite philological meaning it gains. Insofar as we understand 'mysticism' to denote knowledge that cannot be contained nor disclosed through conventional language, perhaps precluding conventional forms of knowledge as such, mysticism is necessarily and bilaterally excluded from static and definite meaning. I have sourced the above understanding of 'mysticism' from Ishmael:

> [Queequeg's] tattooing had been the work of a departed prophet and seer of his island, who, by those hieroglyphic marks, had written out on his body a complete theory of the heavens and the earth, and a mystical treatise on the art of attaining truth; so that Queequeg in his own proper person was a riddle to unfold; a wondrous work in one volume; but whose mysteries not even himself could read, though his own live heart beat against them; and these mysteries were therefore destined in the end to moulder away with the living parchment whereon they were inscribed, and so be unsolved to the last.[15]

In light of this, the hieroglyphics in their non-mystic Champollion aspect seem to no longer contain a truth to be unfolded. The hieroglyphs now have a meaning which can be translated freely from Ancient Greek or into French: they can no longer be read to contain an innately metaphysical value, intrinsic and unique to the writing itself: the meaning is no longer inextricably tied to a mystical referent.[16] Champollion's research reveals the hieroglyph as a wholly human artefact which contains nothing of the non-human, whether death, the world, or whales. This is why, in taking up the supernaturalist challenge of deciphering the hieroglyph, modern science dissolves the supernatural doctrine that a non- or super- human order exists in a humanly meaningful way. And yet the undislodged current, the memory of mysticism continues to haunt the hieroglyph as an undispersable connotative value. The hieroglyph reminds its reader that science has evolved from and taken the stead of the uncompleted supernaturalist project to connect, through a mystical discipline of reading and writing, the human and the divine non-human, but has only failed in this endeavour.

Let us begin our analysis proper of *Moby-Dick* itself at Chapter 76, when Ishmael comments on his own narration and thus offers a way to read the rest of the novel. Ishmael, telling us about the staving capabilities of the Sperm Whale, bids us to treat his word as accurate and to sustain an epistemological humility:

> For unless you own the whole whale, you are nothing but a provincialist and sentimentalist in Truth. But clear Truth is a thing for salamander giants only to encounter; how small the chances for provincials then? What befel the weakling youth lifting the dread goddess's veil at Sais?[17]

The explanatory notes[18] to *Moby-Dick* point us to Friedrich Schiller's 1795 poem "The Veiled Statue at Sais",[19] which itself is part of a long and fascinating history of Egyptian imagery, a history to which I cannot here do justice. In the poem, "A YOUTH, athirst for knowledge, (hot desire!)"[20] travels to Egypt. In a temple in Sais, he spies the veil of Isis under which, he is told, lies Truth. He lifts the veil and looks beneath. We are never told what it is he sees. The remainder of his life is joyless and he dies young. Ishmael no doubt alludes to the poem as a shorthand for unknowable, unarticulateable, or unpalatable Truth.

But what does it mean that Ishmael alludes to the poem at all? The veil, not explicitly a metaphor of anything in *Moby-Dick*, is a fitting parallel for the Sperm Whale's forehead in question, the staving "dead, blind wall"[21] which relinquishes no intrinsic truth about the whale for the beholder. What about the veil as parallel for Ishmael's account? Throughout the entirety of the chapter, save those last sentences which I have quoted, we are reassured that the narrator has some reasonable grasp of cetological information, yet the Egyptian mysticism at the end is a reminder that this information can be at best "abide[d] by"[22] and never known. This self-declared opacity of the text is especial to Melville: we do not see it in Schiller.

The distinction between Melville's and Schiller's use of the same imagery is crucial. For one, access to Truth for Melville—in this case, the truth of his *very story*—is as improbable as owning a whale; for Schiller, such access is actually possible and relatively *easy*, if fatal. What's more, Schiller's veiled image is preceded by the youth's search for a generalized wisdom, but Melville's veiled image is directly preceded by no less than three short chapters of particular and exact claims about whale anatomy, claims which are now deprived of truth-status. For all the pessimism which Schiller seems to share with Melville, Schiller is fundamentally writing from a classically mystical standpoint; a radically different attitude to knowledge than Melville's. Melville's Egyptian legend betrays his *cryptographic* attitude, by which I mean that the would-be mystic element of the text serves instead to cast doubt over the whole text's truth-value.

Chapter 31, "Queen Mab", decidedly resists exhaustive interpretation. The titular Queen, a dream-inducing entity mentioned in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, does not appear in the chapter, however the chapter includes a dream of Stubb, second mate, as recounted to the third mate. This dream is itself a recounting, from Stubb's perspective, of the events of the previous night.[23] In that same Chapter 29, Stubb recounts those events to himself as he falls asleep.[24] "Enter Ahab; to him, Stubb" and its double, "Queen Mab", thus constitute a translation of a single event into three voices: the omniscient third-person voice of the disembodied Ishmael followed by the internal monologue from Stubb followed

by Stubb's conversational account of the dream imagery of the event. These chapters provide a glimpse into the novel's internal logic—a sort of Rosetta Stone by which the different voices of the novel can be isolated from the purported events of the novel.

The events are as follows. Restless Captain Ahab paces the deck at night and declares to himself that sleep is like to death, and the ship's hold like "one's tomb".[25] The sleepy, hold-dwelling Stubb rises to the deck to silence the sound of Ahab's pegleg. Captain Ahab viciously insults Stubb, who then surprises himself in not retaliating. Stubb, baffled, falls asleep wondering if Ahab kicked him without Stubb's noticing. In Stubb's dream, Ahab's attack is physical rather than merely verbal, and dream-Stubb retaliates in kicking dream-Ahab—who then becomes, inexplicably, a pyramid and silent. Dream-Stubb then reasons that since dream-Ahab merely kicked with his fake leg the attack was not a "living insult" but rather a "dead thump".[26]

Ahab becomes an allegory of deadness and silence in Stubb's dream, while Stubb had previously been an allegory of death for Ahab. That these disparate meanings contradict each other, with characters signifying to each other rather than uniformly throughout the novel, emphasizes the text's evasion of being read as a single coherent allegory. A perspectivist approach to these chapters would address this issue by locating allegories within the unique and limited context of the characters' perspective rather than in the overarching omniscient narrative weft. For instance: although Ahab never actually kicks Stubb, nor does Stubb kick Ahab. Stubb, as he falls asleep, wonders whether if Ahab did indeed kick him, and whether he ought to physically retaliate. The allegory of the kick in the ensuing dream has its origin in the subjective perspective of Stubb.

But then why on earth would Stubb's dream translate Ahab into a pyramid? The perspectivist approach here falls a bit short. The pyramid does not seem to allegorize anything, even to Stubb. Its significance may as well be impossible to conclusively locate in any single datum or anecdote about Egypt. Perhaps the pyramid is the representation in the subjective dream order of Stubb's bewilderment towards Ahab, whom he calls "full of riddles."[27] But if this representation is an allegory, it is an incomplete or failed one, as 'riddle' in this context only denotes a lack of ready meaning.

Or maybe the pyramid is an allegory of greatness? Melville deploys the image of pyramid in such a way in his earlier novel *Redburn*.[28] Stubb's dream indeed characterizes Ahab as a great man via the merman character.[29] That 'pyramids' suggests greatness reappears and unfolds later in the *Moby-Dick*, too. When Ishmael insists that the Sperm Whale possesses a "great genius", he argues (enigmatically enough) that this "great genius" is denoted in its "*pyramidical silence*".[30] He continues:

> And this reminds me that had the great Sperm Whale been known to the young Orient World, he would have been deified by their child-magian thoughts. They deified the crocodile of the Nile, because the crocodile is tongueless; and the Sperm Whale has no tongue, or at least it is so exceedingly small, as to be incapable of protrusion.[31]

See with what ease this narrative voice zips along the allegorical order! For glimpses at a time, it seems to the reader that Stubb's dream and indeed the novel as a whole could unravel itself to unveil great Truths; this feeling is—I declare, I feel—the underlying impulse of all enigmata, whether substantiated or not. My argument is that the text is demonstrably more concerned with evoking the tantalizing

possibility of its decipherment than actually being decipherable. When 'footedness' suggests 'pyramid' and thereby 'greatness', "great genius" is again denoted by 'pyramids' or their 'silence', both of which remind Ishmael of the Egyptian worship of tongueless and thereby speechless beings, which leads the narrator on to notions of deification. While it is tempting for the reader to assume that there is some underlying logic or aim to these chains of symbols, the fact of the matter is that little to none of these links seem to concern actualities about whales or Egypt. The novel, as in a dream, spins autonomous webs of unsignifying suggestion with 'pyramids' as a recurring nexus. What I have tried to demonstrate is that it is fruitless to try and salvage an allegory from this hermeneutical wreckage.

To Stubb himself, the pyramid is a hermeneutical stumbling-block and the condensation of his inability to make sense of the previous night or of his dream: it is silent throughout the dream and thereby reveals no meaning to him. It is in that sense that I propose we understand Stubb when he says: "I was stubbing my silly toes against that cursed pyramid"—Ahab is symbolized as a pyramid insofar as his presence is "so confoundedly contradictory", insofar as he eludes meaning itself for Stubb.[32] The pyramid is properly understood as a cryptographic monument to the confounding non-meaning of his world. This non-meaning of the pyramid, as well as other Egyptian imagery, recurs throughout *Moby-Dick*.

Consider that when Ahab first encounters Moby Dick and attacks him in a fury, "blindly seeking with a six inch blade to reach the fathom-deep life of the whale," "blindly seeking" for that supposed cetacean intelligence which is nevertheless mute and unlocateable within the bulk of that leviathan forehead; consider that it is at this moment that Ishmael names the "high, pyramidical white hump" of the whale as a token of his identity.[33] I further quote:

> Ahab had cherished a wild vindictiveness against the whale, all the more fell for that in his frantic morbidness he at last came to identify with him, not only all his bodily woes, but all his intellectual and spiritual exasperations.[34]

While Ahab identifies and imposes very human meanings onto that pyramidical white hump, the obvious takeaway is that this imposition is his tragic error. Ahab does not "own the whole whale".[35] The pyramid remains silent and unresponsive: any human meaning goes no further than its surface. Recall dream-Stubb "battering away"[36] at his own pyramid of admittedly very different scale. Something of a correspondence emerges. Both men have displaced their subjective hate onto a solid object which is impervious to their efforts to extract something intelligible from it. It is the inhuman silence of the universe made object, something that can be faced but not read.

One more brief word about pyramids. Some years after the publication of *Moby-Dick*, Herman Melville would visit Egypt. His journal reveals that he felt "oppressed by the massiveness & mystery of the pyramids [...] A feeling of awe & terror came over me."[37] From that same journal entry:

> It is all or nothing. It is not the sense of heigth but the sense of immensity, that is stirred. After seeing the pyramid, all other architecture seems but pastry. Though I had but so short a time to view the pyramid, yet I doubt whether any time spend upon it, would tend to a more precise impression of it. As with the ocean, you learn as much of its vastness by the first five minutes glance as you would in a month, so with the pyramid. Its simplicity *confounds* you. [...] It

> has been said in panegyric of some extraordinary works of man, that they affect the imagination like the works of Nature. But the pyramid affects one in neither way exactly. *Man seems to have had as little to do with it as Nature*.[38]

When he says that it seems an inhuman work, I assume he means that it seems to contain no gleanable human meaning *viz.* no meaning at all. Melville here confirms empirically in early 1857 what he had suspected while writing *Moby-Dick* in 1850, for Ishmael agrees with Melville that the grandeur of the pyramid resists "precise impression". Read:

> For the most part, the English and American whale draughtsmen seem entirely content with presenting the mechanical outline of things, such as the vacant profile of the whale; which, so far as picturesqueness of effect is concerned, is about tantamount to sketching the profile of a pyramid.[39]

It is absurd to try to summarize the existence of a pyramid, either through natural language or a simple pictographic triangle. "[P]icturesqueness" is here used in a merely cheeky way; the obvious message here is that the actual pyramids have a similar effect of awe and terror as do whales.

Consider the string of short chapters in which Ishmael and crewmates behold a dead Whale.[40] In Chapter 68, the whale, who in its bulk had previously been compared to a pyramid, is compared to a hieroglyphic text at its surface.

> In life, the visible surface of the Sperm Whale is not the least among the many marvels he presents. Almost invariably it is all over obliquely crossed and re-crossed with numberless straight marks in thick array, something like those in the finest Italian line engravings. But these marks do not seem to be impressed upon the isinglass substance above mentioned, but seem to be seen through it, as if they were engraved upon the body itself. Nor is this all. In some instances, to the quick, observant eye, those linear marks, as in a veritable engraving, but afford the ground for far other delineations. These are hieroglyphical; that is, if you call those mysterious cyphers on the walls of pyramids hieroglyphics, then that is the proper word to use in the present connexion. By my retentive memory of the hieroglyphics upon one Sperm Whale in particular, I was much struck with a plate representing the old Indian characters chiselled on the famous hieroglyphic palisades on the banks of the Upper Mississippi. Like those mystic rocks, too, the mystic-marked whale remains undecipherable.[41]

Ishmael calls the surface "hieroglyphical" insofar as he means "mysterious cyphers" by which he further means "undecipherable". But, as we have discussed earlier, he would have been well aware that hieroglyphics, at least Egyptian ones, are decipherable. In what sense, then, does he mean hieroglyph? In a basic way, he is referring to the earlier but still current anecdote of hieroglyphics as being inherently undecipherable. But I propose that he is also demonstrating how representation of an object ultimately fails to really concern the object. Note that Ishmael has remembered the shapes of the hieroglyphs of "one Sperm Whale in particular". Naturally, these hieroglyphical shapes do not disclose anything about the whale, they only *mean* or *represent* their own shape, tautologically. Ishmael's effort to read these hieroglyphs brings him not closer to the whale, but further, to particular rocks along the Mississippi which likewise cannot be read. Hieroglyphical hermeneutics for Ishmael seems to connote a slippage of

meaning from the purported subject, opening up instead "the ground for far other delineations."

Poignantly, Ishmael points out in Chapter 69, "The Funeral", that the jettisoned and harmless corpse of a whale is often mistaken at a distance by other sailors as "shoals, rocks, and breakers"[42] and thus unjustifiably avoided for years to come ("leaping over it as silly sheep leap over a vacuum"[43]). "There's your law of precedents; there's your utility of traditions;" mocks Ishmael; "There's orthodoxy!"[44] Human knowledge is characterized as accumulations around the vacua where carcasses once lay or floated, itself disclosing no certain meaning. In a pithy rephrasing of his 'spheres of fright' epistemology, Ishmael declares orthodoxy merely a haunting of once-real terrors whose ghosts have become "a powerless panic to a world."[45] As the chapter's title suggests, the world as human apprehension is a funerary thing, a "monumental white shroud"[46] that contains no thing in particular.

When Ishmael describes the vacancy or deathliness of human knowledge, Egyptian imagery is often close at hand. In the following Chapter "The Sphynx" Captain Ahab confronts the head of that same decapitated whale and, imagining it to contain profound truths, bids it to speak "the secret thing that is in thee."[47] Like the Egyptian sphinx, a comparison made by Ishmael, the dead whale's head remains silent. The passage simultaneously indicates both Ahab's and Ishmael's epistemological attitudes. Ahab, as is his flaw, assumes "some unknown but still reasoning thing" to be found beneath the outward mask of the world, or beyond the outer layer of a whale. Ishmael agrees that the world wears a mask which conceals information from us ("the mystical cosmetic"[48]) but asserts (in an incidental equation of 'cosmic' with 'cosmetic') that this information does not exist in a meaningful way beneath the mask.

In Chapter 79, Ishmael shows that these hermeneutical failures affect some fields of modern science. He begins in the fields of physiognomy and phrenology, which are, after all, as hermeneutical as the sciences of philology and metaphysical hieroglyph interpretation. Although Ishmael explicitly refers to the relatively modern Johann Kaspar Lavater (1741-1801), Franz Joseph Gall (1758-1828), and Johann Spurzheim (1776-1832),[49] those sciences have their origin in older mystical traditions,[50] and are thus incarnations of an already outdated and failed science.

Ishmael has a go at reading the Sperm Whale physiognomically. The task is futile, as phrenologists read the nose as a central features, but the whale is "physiognomically a Sphinx"[51] which is to say (I presume), as nose-less as the Great Sphinx of Giza. Ishmael also reads the decidedly more dignified physiognomical region of the brow:

> But in the great Sperm Whale, this high and mighty god-like dignity inherent in the brow is so immensely amplified, that gazing on it, in that full front view, you feel the Deity and the dread powers more forcibly than in beholding any other object in living nature. For you see no one point precisely; not one distinct feature is revealed; no nose, eyes, ears, or mouth; no face; he has none, proper; nothing but that one broad firmament of a forehead, pleated with riddles; dumbly lowering with the doom of boats, and ships, and men.[52]

What begins, in that first sentence, as seeming like a standard mystical reading of divine presence in the whale soon becomes, in the second, a cryptographic

apprehension of featureless unreadability. We should remember that it is this forehead which was characterized three chapters ago (and within this essay, some pages above) as the unrelinquishing veil of Isis. Any feeling of "the Deity" when beholding the whale's forehead is misplaced, since the whale's forehead is itself illusory. Unlike in a phrenologically regarded human, the whale's purported brow discloses nothing about the actual shape or size of its brain, which is a "mere handful" large and lies "at least twenty feet from his apparent forehead".[53] Within a phrenological attempt, the head of a whale is "an entire delusion."[54] Although Ishmael continues to entertain phrenology (proposing again that the pyramidical hump is the defining feature of the Sperm Whale[55]), the indication is clear that phrenology and physiognomy are failed hermeneutical sciences.

What do phrenology and physiognomy have to do with hieroglyphics? Amidst this extended gibe, Ishmael explicitly alludes to modern Egyptology as the exemplar of modern science:

> [Jean-François] Champollion deciphered the wrinkled granite hieroglyphics [the Rosetta Stone]. But there is no Champollion to decipher the Egypt of every man's and every being's face. Physiognomy, like every other human science, is but a passing fable. If then, Sir William Jones, who read in thirty languages, could not read the simplest peasant's face in its profounder and more subtle meanings, how may unlettered Ishmael hope to read the awful Chaldee of the Sperm Whale's brow? I but put that brow before you. Read it if you can.[56]

Granted, Champollion's achievement constitutes a great advancement in human knowledge. But what of it? Modern science does not even attempt to read the objective truth of the world as did earlier mysticism. Hieroglyphics then stand for this double failure (once modern, once mystic) to know anything.

With all this said, I can rephrase my thesis in different terms. Ishmael denounces a mystic Idealism (like that of Ahab, Kircher, Emerson) but does not propose a scientific Realism in its place. Rather, he allows these two epistemologies to cancel each other out. As ancient Egypt was, by the nineteenth century, a very significant object of knowledge for both systems, Egyptian imagery is the most potent tool with which to demonstrate the failure to find objective meaning by any means, and a fitting crypt in which to bury their pretentions.

End Notes

1 *Moby-Dick* 223

2 For background on the deliberately uneasy status of the written word in Moby-Dick as it relates to the Emersionian correspondential theory of language, see Gayle L. Smith's "The Word and the Thing: *Moby-Dick* and the Limits of Language". For further reading on the profound perspectivism in Melville's later work, see John T. Irwin's *American Hieroglyphics* (pp 239ff). For an analysis of epistemology in Melville's later work, see Raymond Daoust's *Is It Safe?: The Corrosion of Epistemology in Melville's Later Fiction.*

3 In this term I attempted to capture the attitude suggested by the epigraph of this essay. The first attested usage of this word was by the late Hermeticist Thomas Browne near the beginning of the third chapter of his *Garden of Cyrus*. This is a happy coincidence, as Melville's mid-century mid-career work took stylistic cues from Browne (see Foley 265ff), who is cited in the "Extracts" section of *Moby-Dick*. Etymologically, the word itself denotes a sketching-out of that which is hidden (κρυπτός: secret; γράφω: write, sketch). That its first morpheme has an acquired connotation of vaults and tombs reminds one of the absurd task of "sketching the profile of a pyramid" of which Ishmael quips. (*Moby-Dick*

292) The epigraph suggests that the Egyptian tomb is silent and vacant at its nucleus, a vast and tacit monument that can only be read at its surface. Ishmael's cryptographic tracing is thereby the delineation of the lack of human meaning (that is to say, non-meaning). The end and intractable dilemma of cryptography, which in its present-day meaning denotes the decryption and encryption of writing to and from intelligibility, is therefore that pictographic limit of intelligibility. The crypt-writing— hieroglyphics—can therefore not be conclusively deciphered for living humans as they must always contain at their centre the vacancy, death, or tomb—of meaning.
4 For further reading on the particular ways Melville explored the Egyptian lexicon see John T. Irwin's *American Hieroglyphics*.
5 Irwin 3
6 Giguere 47, 89, and throughout
7 It might be argued that I am transposing a concept proper to European colonial studies (Orientalism) too freely into a context which is foreign to it (American literature). Orientalism is primarily a phenomenon of English and French imperial powers, and since the United States had no imperial designs upon Egypt, American Egyptomania could therefore be argued to lie outside Orientalism. I counter: American Egyptomania was sourced from European discoveries, included participation from no living Egyptians, and was centred on themes and objects that are in and of themselves alien and other from day-to-day life: corpses, antiquity, death, and mysticism. In its character and origin, American Egyptomania essentially falls into a larger history of Orientalism. As I demonstrate, *Moby-Dick* is in part heir to this American Egyptomania, and in part comments directly upon French Orientalism.
8 Said 122
9 Ibid 84
10 Yates 416f
11 Irwin 5, although occult Egyptology had already been dubious in Kircher's life due to the philological efforts of Isaac Casaubon in 1668 (Yates 398ff)
12 Yates 163
13 Said 121
14 Ibid
15 *Moby-Dick* 524
16 We can also continue with our Queequeg example. Queequeg's hieroglyphic signature, the "queer round figure" (*Moby-Dick* 98) represented in some editions as 'his X mark', does not conclusively mean anything, and can thus be said to mean some unknown 'Y' about the world. This presumption that undeciphered emblems are deliberately undeciphered and enigmatic is, after all, the very real impulse which had previously granted hieroglyphics a mystical meaning. But if Champollion were to conclusively decipher 'X', it would tautologically mean simply 'X', or at least 'whale' or 'foot' or another word which could reliably be translated from Erromangan to English and thereby have no more intrinsic meaning about the world as the words of this essay.
17 *Moby-Dick* 370
18 Ibid 646
19 "Image" is a translation of *Bild*, which has also been rendered as 'statue', as in Melville's text.
20 Schiller
21 Ibid 368
22 Ibid 370
23 Ibid ch 29 "Enter Ahab; to him, Stubb" 137-140
24 Ibid 139f
25 Ibid 137f
26 Ibid 142
27 Ibid 139
28 "Dandies! amputate yourselves [the narrator refers to the smallness of hand and foot amongst fops and aristocrats], if you will; but know, and be assured, oh, democrats, that, like a pyramid, a great man stands on a broad base [a large foot / large feet]." (*Redburn* § LVI)
29 *Moby-Dick* 143
30 Ibid 380, my emphasis
31 Ibid

32 Ibid 142
33 Ibid 198f
34 Ibid 200
35 Ibid 370
36 Ibid 142
37 Parker vol.2 312, quoting a journal entry of Melville dating from 3 January 1857 about his one-day visit to Cairo 31 December 1856
38 Parker vol.2 313, see note 52, emphases mine, typographical errors Melville's or Parker's.
39 *Moby-Dick* 292
40 Ibid ch 67 "Cutting In" 330f, ch 68 "The Blanket" 332-335, ch 69 "The Funeral" 336f, ch 70 "The Sphynx" 338-340
41 Ibid 333
42 Ibid 337
43 Ibid
44 Ibid
45 Ibid
46 Ibid 212
47 Ibid 336
48 Ibid 212
49 Ibid 378
50 As seen, for example, in Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*: "For there are mystically in our faces certain characters which carry in them the motto of our souls, wherein he that can read A, B, C, may read our natures." "The finger of God hath left an inscription upon all his works, not graphical, or composed of letters, but of their several forms, constitutions, parts, and operations, which, aptly joined together, do make one word that doth express their natures. By these letters God calls the stars by their names; and by this alphabet Adam assigned to every creature a name peculiar to its nature." "Aristotle, I confess, in his acute and singular book of physiognomy, hath made no mention of chiromancy [palmistry]: yet I believe the Egyptians, who were nearer addicted to those abstruse and mystical sciences, had a knowledge therein: to which those vagabond and counterfeit Egyptians did after pretend, and perhaps retained a few corrupted principles, which sometimes might verify their prognosticks." and so forth. ("Part the Second" Sect. 2) What is relevant to our purpose is that the world has been inscribed upon, though not with conventional language, and may therefore be read by one who knows its mystic alphabet. This is the assumption upon which facial or cranial readings operate. And since physiognomy, like palmistry, is a mystical hermeneutic, ancient Egypt is the fount of this knowledge.
51 *Moby-Dick* 381
52 Ibid 379
53 Ibid 381
54 Ibid 380
55 Ibid 383
56 Ibid 380

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Godot's Goats

Julien S. Farout

In his study on Rabelais, Bakhtin states that "le grotesque ignore la surface sans faille qui ferme et délimite le corps pour en faire un phénomène isolé et achevé."[1] According to Bakhtin, the grotesque body's broken surfaces deconstruct our understanding of the body as a closed whole which functions separately from the world in which it exists, a *phenomenon* which Bakhtin attributes to a post-Medieval, modern[2] understanding. In *Waiting for Godot*, a trace of this idea finds voice in Estragon, who says that "everything oozes…it's never the same pus from one second to the next."[3] The latter part of Estragon's comment can be understood in general philosophical terms as meaning that everything is subject to a process of constant becoming. This process functions in grotesque terms of *liquor puris* pouring out of the pus, i.e. of something flowing into something else. Vladimir's breath stinks of garlic, Estragon has stinking feet, and Pozzo farts. Lucky's effervescent "thinking", is, according to Yoshiki Tajiri, the equivalent of "verbal diarrhea."[4] Their bodies expand beyond their "limited phenomenon": they make themselves present not as enclosed but rather oozing wholes, challenging the ways in which we understand and experience the "phenomenon" of our bodies.

Beckett's characters, in this sense, function in a similar manner as the happy giants of Rabelais' stories which come under close scrutiny in Bakhtin's work.[5] The latter notes that, in the grotesque, "le corps prend une échelle cosmique tandis que le cosmos se corporalise. *Les éléments cosmiques se transforment en joyeux éléments corporels du corps grandissant, procréateur et vainqueur*."[6] After Pozzo loses his watch, he "applies his ear to his stomach" but "hears nothing"; Vladimir, bending over Pozzo, "hears something": "It's the heart."[7] Beckett brings the stomach up to the high status of time, and time all the way down to the very physical stomach. Bakhtin notes that "après le ventre et le membre viril, c'est la bouche qui joue le rôle le plus important dans le corps grotesque, puisqu'elle engloutit le monde" : we can see in this passage the important role of both the *ventre* and the *bouche* in terms of "englouti[ssement] [du] monde."[8] Vladimir's remark, on the other hand, links time to the heart. In this manner, the life-organ becomes the watch over the time. The limits between abstraction and embodiment are broken: Pozzo possesses, within him, his watch over time. Whereas Estragon will "never forget this carrot,"[9] he forgot his question (We're not tied?[10]). Sensory memory is brought higher as the "memory of the mind" is brought down; in fact, it is almost negated. The body is, as Bakhtin says, "vainqueur", most notably the mouth and the stomach.

To analyze the body in *Waiting for Godot* through Bakhtin's theories on the grotesque, however, has its limits. In the course of his study he goes to great length to emphasize the "optimistic", "positive" aspect of the grotesque body

which, as I have just noted, he calls "vainqueur", considering embodiment as "victorious" over the "cosmic" abstraction. The grotesque body deconstructs in a manner which does not play a purely satirical role, negating "certains phénomènes particuliers". Rather, it plays a role of constant ambivalence which negates "toute la structure de la vie (y compris de la vérité dominante), négation indissolublement associée à une affirmation du nouveau naissant."[11] Thus the grotesque body is a "nouveau naissant" engaged with the "rénovation" and "perfectionnement" of humanity's "vie triomphante", which negates "toute la structure de la vie", including the "vérité dominante."[12] In other words, Bakhtin's conception of the grotesque body is intertwined with an extremely optimistic vision of human existence.

The optimism that Bakhtin attaches to the grotesque is irreconcilable with Beckett's universe. Most important to grotesque optimism is the recognition of death not as an end, but as a continuity. Bakhtin writes: "la mort, dans le corps grotesque, ne met fin à rien d'essentiel, car elle ne concerne pas le corps procréateur, au contraire, elle le rénove dans les générations futures."[13] Again, the emphasis is put on *production* and *renovation*, perceiving death as the joyful continuity of humankind. When Vladimir tells Estragon that hanging themselves would give them an erection, "with all that follows", death is directly linked to the erection and then to orgasm, but not as a means of reproduction or *rénovation*.[14] Rather, the orgasm is wasted: it's a dead-end, a conclusion which is worded in Pozzo's famous line, "they give birth astride a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more."[15] The movement here is from light to night, and the only thing which seems to stand out, to remain, is the *grave*, not the short moment of gleaming light. The emphasis here is with an end, not a continuity.

The same can be said of Vladimir's leaving the stage because he cannot control his bladder, which forces the suspension of the dialogue, of the never-ending and ever-looping discussion between him and Estragon. In the first instance, his exit stops Estragon from recounting the "story of the Englishman in the brothel", which is then never finished.[16] In the second one, Vladimir's exit stops Pozzo's search for his Kapp and Peterson, which is never resumed.[17] Vladimir's bladder which he cannot control, thus the necessities of his body, functions as both negation and interruption. Similarly to Bakhtin's grotesque is that both scenes are written as joyous spectacles: Estragon "gestures" like "a spectator encouraging a pugilist,"[18] and later invites Pozzo to watch ("I say!"[19]). However, Pozzo's comment on death, as well as the interruptions caused by Vladimir's bladder problems, unlike Bakhtin's conception of the grotesque, do not perpetuate an optimistic and meaningful human existence; rather, they interrupt the process of renovation.

If there is such a thing as a "vainqueur" body in *Waiting for Godot*, it is the victory of a body akin to a broken machine, victorious in its impotence. In his essay 'The Cartesian Centaur', Hugh Kenner explains that "Cartesian man deprived of his bicycle is a mere intelligence fastened to a dying animal", an animal out of which life is *oozing*.[20] Pozzo's appearance in the second act of the play can be understood precisely as a "dying animal" to which is "fastened intelligence": he retains most of his eloquence, but remains for the most part on the ground, unable to get up. Lucky, who *used* to be something, having taught Pozzo his "beautiful things", represents a later stage of decay in both the first and second act.[21] Estragon, incapable of taking off his boots, opens up the play by stating "Nothing to be done."[22] The very same words are repeated by Vladimir when he discusses

his bladder problems: he cannot repress them and, once the deed is done, they make him feel both "relieved" and "AP-PALLED."[23] Nothing to be done. Same conclusion after Vladimir, like an automaton, tries to force himself into smile, realizing that it is not the same thing as actually smiling.[24] Another repetition after Estragon concludes from his short exchange with Vladimir about individuality: "one is what one is, no use wriggling, the essential doesn't change."[25] Nothing to be done: I can't take off my boot, I can't control my bladder, I can't force myself to laugh, I can't change what I am. The bodies of *Waiting for Godot* either don't function or function on their own: they are broken machines which perpetuate impotence and, in more metaphysical terms, nothing.

Another way of thinking of the body as "a broken machine" in Beckett's play is explored by Yoshiki Tajiri in terms of what he calls the "prosthetic body."[26] He describes it as a body which "harbours the inorganic within it…[a body] that is felt to be alien and disintegrating, with its parts resembling detachable prostheses."[27] Tajiri's "prosthetic body" allows us to think of the characters from *Waiting for Godot* in a manner which makes us consider "body parts" as "prostheses" and "prostheses" as "body parts". Thus the body experienced as "oozing" (this time in terms of parts being attached and detached) remains, but not the optimistic vision attached to it by Bakhtin. The "prosthetic body" would imply that Pozzo's glasses are no different from his eyes; they are both detachable parts of his body. Thus the body is not a whole, but an assemblage that acts on its own, detachable at will, relating to a body which is pessimistically separated, alienated from its "owner".

In the first act, stage directions make it clear that Pozzo puts on his glasses whenever he looks at something. In the second, he is blind: his eyes have been "detached". The same can be said of time, the "inorganic" concept (or idea) of "time passing", something which is simply observed and experienced in the world. Time as represented by the pocket watch— which in the first act seemed to have been absorbed by Pozzo— is missing in the second act: "The blind have no notion of time. The things of time are hidden from them too."[28] A more obvious example would be Lucky's hat which allows him to "think": in this manner, it is no more Lucky, an individual with a mind, but a "thinking hat" which does the thinking. Tajiri also points out that Lucky's speech "might strike the audience primarily by its resemblance to a broken phonograph"; thus even the speech-act which traditionally (and necessarily) is the "essence" of a character seems removed from Lucky himself, coming from somewhere inorganic, un-human.[29]

I have gone over the "oozing" body in terms of Bakhtin's analysis of grotesque realism, Tajiri's concept of the "prosthetic body", Kenner's "Cartesian Centaur" as well as through my own textual analysis of some key passages of *Waiting for Godot*. Although irreconcilable, a grotesque or mechanistic analysis of the body in Beckett's play points towards one direction: that the bodies of our protagonists break down a traditional understanding of the body as a unified whole. In other words, those bodies "ooze", change from one moment to the other, whether in terms of their relationship with the "outer world" or with detachable prosthetic limbs or speeches. This is true at both the level of Beckett's representation and of our understanding. Both analyses demand a fair amount of intellectual gymnastics, which obviously (with a bit of common sense, so to say), bring us far away from the body that, in *Waiting for Godot,* is present on stage and (possibly) in the mind of the reader. Both analyses, although interesting, even charming in reassuringly bringing us to a place of understanding, fail to account

for the play's continuous production of *nothing*. This is well worded by Gary Banham who states that the "problem of an engagement with Beckett's work is thus the problem which Heidegger described in *What is Metaphysics?* as the difficulty of engaging with nothing, not turning nothing into a something."[30] The impotent bodies of Beckett's characters (who garner so much productive production of thought) mirror the *essence* of the play, namely that it is about waiting for something that, as Kenner notes already in 1973, we all know is not going to happen, not going to come about.[31]

Yet we seem to be unable to stop from doing so. In her *Beckett, Technology and the Body*, Ulrika Maude turns her back on the traditional scholarship of mind/body dualism of Kenner, as well as Derridean analysis, and concludes that the body in *Waiting for Godot* is "prereflective" and purely "sensuous."[32] She arrives at a paradox:

> What…appears to be constitutive of identity in *Waiting for Godot* are the characters' physical experiences, such as their stature, ailments, mobility, poise and Estragon getting beaten in the ditch. The fact that none of these conditions is stable only further serves to accentuate the dynamics of non-identity: because the characters are embodied beings, they are in constant flux; yet for the very same reason, they remain stubbornly individuated".[33]

Estragon sometimes remembers and Vladimir sometimes forgets. Psychological attributes, or rather the lacks thereof, in *Waiting for Godot*, fail to properly individuate. Estragon is defined by his stinking and problematic feet, Vladimir by his garlic breath and his bladder problems. We recognize Pozzo because of his glasses, and later because he is blind; Lucky, because he has white hair, doesn't talk, etc. Yet those attributes are far removed from how we tend to "individuate" (in terms of giving to someone an *identity*). In fact, as Maude notes, those very embodied attributes have nothing to do with "identity". Still, their bodies are what we retreat to in order to, inevitably, differentiate Vladimir from Estragon from Pozzo from Lucky (or perhaps a "famous" sentence, such as Pozzo's talk about death in act II). In other words, the characters from *Waiting for Godot* show that individuation is created by non-individuation, by its opposite.

Interestingly, Maude's conclusion leads us once again to an ambivalent understanding of the body which seems to be unresolvable not at the level of the text, but rather at the level of the way we, as readers or as members of the audience, come to distinguish individuals. Our own understanding, it would seem, is oozing. The analyses of the grotesque, mechanistic, prosthetic, or paradoxical "individuating-non-individuating" body all serve to augment the discourse of the body, the understanding of the body, which, evidently, is profoundly challenged (possibly shattered) in *Waiting for Godot*. Yet, the discourses emitted by those authors all have the tendency to conceal the flesh, alive, and affective body. Andrew Bennett notes in *Language and the Body* that

> there is an intimate and ineluctable paradox at the heart […] of the discourse of the body, because any representation of the body 'endeavours to make the body present. But this making-present is always, necessarily, marked by its absence, since it is a law of language, of representation, that the 'use of the linguistic sign implies the absence of the thing for which it stands.'[34]

This statement has certain consequences considering that *Waiting for Godot* is a play; but I will forego those consequences since I am now analyzing the play

by approaching it as a text and not as a performance. All analyses of the body are problematic by virtue of dissipating the body into systems of thought. Thus we have a problem both at the level of *Waiting for Godot* and our many attempts to analyze and understand the body. Because the body is just there. Pozzo farts, Lucky thinks, Estragon can't take off his boot, Vladimir must leave the stage in order to piss. Yet it is not here: I am sitting at my table reading words. The same is true of Bakhtin's analysis: the grotesque body is in constant oozing with the world, and its presence is not as important as its relationship to a "victorious future", in relationship to a "victorious past", created in the image of God. Tajiri's body separates at will (and is this not the opposite of the body as we understand it, the "modern" understanding as explained by Bakhtin?) and Maude's paradoxical conclusion also points towards "an oozing" of presence and non-presence in terms of individuality.

Perhaps more interesting than my previous point about Maude's analysis is that although she attempts a non Derridean analysis, she ends up at a conclusion which sounds oddly close to Derrida's conceptions of *presence* and *absence*. Indeed, *Waiting for Godot* seems to reveal the tensions, the clash between presence and non-presence, being and nothing, our habits of understanding and a representation of the body which clashes with this habit. As Vladimir says, "habit is a great deadener."[35] On the topic of presence, non-presence, but more particularly habits and, as I have said earlier, the charming reassurance of analysis, Derrida writes:

> Le concept de structure centrée est en effet le concept d'un jeu *fondé*, constitué depuis une immobilité fondatrice et une certitude rassurante, elle-même soustraite au jeu. Depuis cette certitude, l'angoisse peut être maitrisée, qui naît toujours d'une certaine manière d'être impliqué dans le jeu, d'être pris au jeu, d'être comme être d'entrée de jeu dans le jeu.[36]

The foundations of *jeu*, or *play,* Derrida posits, is constituted from an "immobilité fondatrice" and a "certitude rassurante": the reassurance of making sense of something by beginning from something which is "soustraite du jeu", in turn neutralizing the "angoisse", which is a consequence of the feeling of being "impliqué dans le jeu, d'être pris au jeu, etc". In other words: the feeling of a centre which is forever outside of the structure is reassuring. Habits play a role in this; indeed, we are used to, or habituated into, thinking of "truth" itself as being outside of the structure. And this centre, of course, is one of *non-presence*. In the same manner that Heidegger argues in *What is Metaphysics* that *Da-sein* means "to be held into nothingness,"[37] i.e., that Being comes to be revealed when it comes into contact with nothingness,[38] the origin of *jeu* in Derridean terms comes about by virtue of the presence of a centre which, by definition, and because it is outside of the structure, unquestioned within the structure, is non-present. Thus, as Maude has argued, the body in *Waiting for Godot* could be understood in Derridean terms as the representation of something which is both present and non-present. This could apply to Tajiri's and Bakhtin's analysis as well. The grotesque body as extending towards both past and future play on two non-presences; i.e. the non-presence in the present moment (it is discarded since the present of the body is nothing in front of its renovating qualities), but also the non-present of a future and a past. The prosthetic body is both a body but also a non-body since it can be detached as will. The body as "individuating" but also negating "individuation" functions in a similar manner. Attempts at analysis are, just like pus, always oozing. Finally, Derrida's "jeu", or his *différance*, is also a

form of oozing: the oozing of presence into non-presence, and non-presence into presence, in the absence of the "transcendental signifier."[39]

The absence of a transcendental signifier is, to say the least, not reassuring. One does not feel at home while reading or watching *Waiting for Godot* (Is it a tree? Will Lucky kick again? Are *we* tied? What are we waiting for, and will it ever come?). The bodies of our characters are, to use Heidegger's term, un-homely.[40] I have noted a few of those uncanny moments, such as Pozzo's degradation (and his fart), Vladimir's bladder problem, Estragon's feet, Lucky's thinking (to an extent, everything that has to do with Lucky). That they are part of a play, of the "cannon" of literature, make them even more uncanny as they come to confront a "canonical" or "homely" or "habitual" understanding of the body, the "modern" understanding which Bakhtin so often criticizes in his study on Rabelais, the body as a "whole". Whether one calls it *absurdist* or *grotesque*, the uncanny moments of the play function in a similar manner to how Derrida describes *jeu*, "la disruption de la présence [...] toujours jeu d'absence et de présence [...] il faut penser l'être comme présence ou absence à partir de la possibilité du jeu et non l'inverse."[41] Thus absence and presence, "toujours [...] référence signifiante et substitutive inscrite dans un système de différences,"[42] is contingent on the possibility of *jeu*. "Uncanny-ness", which could be called another form of oozing,[43] occurs when something which presents itself to us does not correspond to a present, habituated understanding of it.

A lot of *Waiting for Godot*, including how the bodies of its characters function, present to us uncanny-ness. As I have noted, Derrida puts emphasis on how the "centred-non-centred" structure masters a certain *angoisse*. In fact, the whole essence of the play, waiting for Godot, revolves around a "centre-non-centre". Godot, who is absent during the entirety of play, remains oddly present as we are so often reminded that we are listening to the characters because they are waiting for Godot and they can't go anywhere. Thus the meta-structure of *Waiting for Godot* is itself based on the *jeu* between absence and presence. Hugh Kenner also points out that there are many things in the play's world which exist only by virtue of their not being present: memories of the Bible, the Eiffel tower, a ditch, and strangers (to the audience) who have beaten Estragon.[44] One of the kids tends Godot's goats and the other, his sheep. How absent those goats are! As Andrew Bennett metaphorically notes, "there is nothing more intimately embodied than breath (that by which speech is produced, that which speech just is), while at the same time there is nothing–nothing, that is, of the body–that is less material."[45] Godot himself, as well as all the other things I have just listed, are all *breath*; the production of language, of dialogue, speech which presents to us something which is entirely non-present, yet brought to an uncanny presence through the word, as seen in Estragon and Vladimir's dialogue: "You're right, we're inexhaustible […] All the dead voices […] they make noises like wings […] like leaves […] like sand […] they all speak at once […] rather they whisper […] to be dead is not enough for them."[46] Here, I have collapsed both voices into one. The voices whisper to one another, all at once, Estragon and Vladimir's voices have produced corpses and skeletons, resulting in a charnel-house.[47]

Absence and presence as understood through Derrida's *jeu* is of course, productive (although one might argue that the only thing that is produced, in the play, is *nothing*). Productive, first, in all the academic discourse that it produces (including this one), but also productive within the play. The absurd or

the grotesque seen in the light of "oozing" in terms of *différance* or *jeu* becomes productive by virtue of negating the present and past of Beckett' play (the plot, the *déroulement*), by immediately breaking it. For instance, Vladimir's leaving the stage because of his bladder problems changes from negation to *play* in the Derridean sense. In this manner it does "rénove" something by virtue of bringing the reader or the audience away from what was happening in order to bring him or her somewhere else. Pozzo's fart (which is a double non-present, since it is recalled[48] by Estragon, and it is, in a similar manner as breath, immaterial) breaks a moment of endearment between Estragon and Vladimir to return the attention to Pozzo. Estragon's failing memory often forces Vladimir to elaborate, which tends to produce more than what was originally intended. Estragon referring Pozzo as Abel and Lucky as Cain *differs* in an extraordinary fashion.[49] Firstly, it's hilarious, which lessens the seriousness of the situation. Additionally, it gives renewed meaning to both the biblical characters by linking them to Pozzo and Lucky as well as Pozzo and Lucky by linking them to Cain and Abel. More importantly, this linking is completely absurd: it doesn't make sense, it is not meant to make sense: no one believes Pozzo and Lucky to have any link with Abel and Cain. In this manner language criticizes itself by creating presence but also by removing it quasi-simultaneously.

The Derridean analysis, in this manner, shows us yet another form of oozing, the most ambiguous one, the more positively productive one, the least offensive one to the centrality of impotence and nothingness in *Waiting for Godot*. The bodies of the characters from *Waiting for Godot*, including their language, are constantly oozing, challenging our own understanding of bodies, and even challenging our ability to understand as such. And it must remain so. That *Waiting for Godot* is a play about "nothing" or "waiting" (as Kenner would have had it[50]) is not a wrong diagnosis, so to say, but it simply does not account for the fact that we do not do *nothing* with *Waiting for Godot*. In fact, as we have seen, we do *a lot* with *Waiting for Godot*. The Derridean analysis accounts for that; but I want to stress a point which has been made by Richard Begam, who states that "we might not only use poststructuralism to interpret Beckett, but Beckett to interpret poststructuralism."[51] This, I think, is the only conclusion that I can in all honesty arrive at. And it was, perhaps, also Derrida's. In an interview during which he was asked why he had never written on Beckett, Derrida answered (dubiously, of course) that he felt "in extreme proximity" to and even identified with Beckett.[52] And, indeed, there seem to be overarching correlation between *Waiting for Godot* and Derrida's ideas. *Playing,* so to say, with one another. And so to end by stating that "the post-structuralist analysis is the most fitting" would reduce *Waiting for Godot* to a cold, much too solid *appropriation* through analysis. This would threaten, I believe, the fact that throughout my study I have endeavoured to show that the oozing takes place as well during the analytical process (this includes my own). The process of *jeu* can only continue (it will, in fact, continue, whether we like it or not, whether it takes a new name, adopts a new language). Could we, perhaps, and just for a moment, assume that Godot could stand for the Derridean transcendental signifier, which comes from "un passé qui n'a jamais été présent,"[53] pointing towards a future which never comes? It is a tempting, almost charming assumption. But I would want to refrain from it. *Ce n'est absolument pas lui.*

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End Notes

1 Bakhtin 316
2 My usage of "phenomenon" and "modern understanding" are part of Bakhtin's vocabulary. He calls an understanding of the body a phenomenon because of his belief that epistemology is entangled with a historical point in time, what Foucauld and post-Foucaldian studies would later call the study of "knowledges". His usage of the term "modern" is vague, but does essentially mean, as I state in this sentence, everything that came after the Middle Ages and, to an extent, Rabelais.
3 Beckett 51

4 Tajiri 49
5 As Ulrika Maude writes in *Beckett, Body and Mind*, Beckett was a student of Romance languages. He had an acute proximity to Rabelais' work, owning a copiously annotated of *Pantagruel,* making reference to the author in his letters, and even visiting Rabelais' birthplace and grave (Maude, 177-178).
6 Bakhtin 337
7 Beckett 37
8 Bakhtin 315
9 Beckett 12
10 Ibid 11
11 Bakhtin 315
12 Ibid 338
13 Ibid 320
14 Beckett 9
15 Ibid 80
16 Ibid 8
17 Ibid 26
18 Ibid 8
19 Ibid 28
20 Kenner 125
21 Beckett 24
22 Ibid 1
23 Ibid 3
24 Ibid 4
25 Ibid 13
26 Tajiri 5
27 Ibid
28 Beckett 77
29 Tajiri 49
30 Banham 55
31 Kenner 29
32 Maude 135
33 Maude 111
34 Bennett 73
35 Beckett 81
36 Derrida 410
37 Heidegger 103
38 Heidegger writes: "The essence of the originally nihiliting nothing lies in this, that it brings Da-sein for the first time before beings as such." Ibid
39 Derrida 411
40 I use "un-homely" as the literal translation of Freud's *unheimlich*; or, as it is conventionally translated, the "uncanny".
41 Derrida 427
42 Ibid 426
43 Of the "un-homely" into the habitual, and the habitual into the "un-homely". In less abstract terms: attempting to 'set' something which is uncanny (i.e. does not fit within our habitual structure of thought, experience, understanding) within a system to which we are "used", habituated, which has been proved to work: the centre-less centred structure which Derrida writes of.
44 Kenner 28
45 Bennet 75
46 Beckett 53
47 Ibid 54f
48 Ibid 72
49 Ibid 74
50 Kenner 32
51 Begam 887
52 Szafraniec 3
53 Derrida, *La Differance* 60

"She said Unprintable Things" Finding Lo in *Lolita*

Kevin Galarneau

In 1998, the first English translation of *Lo's Diary* by Pia Pera was published. It recounted the events of Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* from the titular character's perspective. The novel was criticized for its portrayal of Dolores as a manipulator and torturer of small animals. According to one review of Pera's novel, by limiting Dolores, Nabokov's source material suffered. The author of the review, Michiko Kakutani argued that "there is no […] narrative tension in 'Lo's Diary,' which gives us a flat, irony-free portrait of Lolita as a calculating vixen, a pubescent girl who acts and talks like a woman twice her age".[1] Nabokov created a novel in which the anti-hero's eloquence generates tingles in the spine, a feeling of aesthetic bliss. He claimed that his novel did not have a didactic moral within. From the review, it is clear that the feeling of aesthetic bliss (in which a person is connected to another state where art is the norm) is lacking in *Lo's Diary*.

Despite the criticism it received, Pera's novel presents an opportunity to renew interest in the character of Dolores Haze. Nabokov's *Lolita* relies upon Humbert Humbert's eloquence, wit, and artistic sensitivity as much as his distortions, lies, and the overall dubiousness of his manuscript. It also relies, however, on the object of Humbert Humbert's solipsization. Dolores Haze's character emerges from H.H.'s attempts to silence her. This is facilitated by Nabokov's presence in the novel, when he knowingly inserts puns and parodies of which the characters are unaware. Ultimately, Nabokov ensures that his novel is not amoral, as he would seem to claim. In the afterword, "On a Book Entitled *Lolita*," he claimed that his novel "had no moral in tow" and asserted that fiction exists only to afford someone "aesthetic bliss, that is a sense of being, somehow, somewhere, connected with other states of being where art (curiosity, tenderness, kindness, ecstasy) is the norm".[2] Nabokov did not intend for *Lolita* to be moralizing, but his definition of art implies humane interaction between people. Curiosity, tenderness, kindness, and ecstasy require the artist to be aware of things occurring around him/her, as well as the subject of observation. For much of the novel, Humbert Humbert is unable to connect with anyone but the masked figures he projects. However, Nabokov demonstrates that characters exist beyond Humbert's understanding. Contrary to Pera's Lolita, Nabokov's Dolores is complicated by Humbert's hazy vision. In instances where Lolita cannot be solipsized, where it is obvious that her speech is not truly hers, and through the Americanisms attributed to her, Dolores emerges as a character with agency in Nabokov's novel. Dolores is able to communicate moral attributes and emotions to the reader despite her solipsization, ultimately demonstrating that Humbert Humbert lacked the attention to detail necessary to achieve true artistry.

The morality Nabokov presents in *Lolita* is concerned with empathy rather than will. Throughout the novel, Humbert Humbert displays his passionate

love for Lolita but undermines himself by solipsizing her. He deliberately uses language in an attempt to convince the reader that he experiences aesthetic bliss. Constant appeals to a jury of Humbert's own creation are an attempt to give credence to his voice. Describing the hotel room where Lolita is anaesthetized, Humber appeals to the jurors, saying, "If my happiness could have talked, it would have filled that genteel hotel with a deafening roar".[3] His description includes an affirmation that he "knew very little about children",[4] and culminates in the sentence: "Finally, the sensualist in me (a great insane monster) had no objection to some depravity in his prey".[5] Humbert asserts that he is a sensualist in order to insert himself into the template of the 'artist,' but undermines himself by showing that his monstrous side is a part of him. While this may fool the reader, Nabokov is more concerned with Humbert's lack of concern for childhood. However artful and removed from himself Humbert's appeal is, his actions display a lack of attention to 'his' Lolita. When Humbert experiences bliss, the reader is barred from sharing this experience due to the depravity associated with "fondling nymphets," as Humbert phrases it.[6] Additionally, the art Humbert associates with it is further ruptured by the presence of Dolores as a person outside of Humbert's viewpoint.

In the afterword of the book, Nabokov points to "co-ordinates" that serve as the subliminal plot points of the novel. One of these moments is when Humbert gets a haircut in Kasbeam. Richard Rorty examines the event in-depth in the "Cruelty and Solidarity" section of his *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Referencing Nabokov's requirements for achieving a state where art is the norm, Rorty reconciles the author's views on morality and art as such:

> If curiosity and tenderness are the marks of the artist, if both are inseparable from ecstasy—so that where they are absent no bliss is possible—then there is after all, no distinction between the aesthetic and the moral. […] The curious sensitive artist will be the paradigm of morality because he is the only one who always notices everything.[7]

He also asserts, however, that Nabokov is aware that it is difficult to reconcile the four elements of aesthetic bliss despite his desire to see it take shape in the world. Thus, Nabokov populates his novels with non-poets who cannot acknowledge the existence of people outside themselves and attempts to show the reader their shortcomings. While the barber is giving Humbert his "mediocre" haircut, he speaks about his dead son. Due to his lack of empathy, Humbert's main concern is about the saliva being spat onto his neck "at every explodent".[8] He lacks the moral capacity to connect the information Nabokov lays out through the barber. His lack of curiosity limits him from enjoying true aesthetic bliss.

Although the barber of Kasbeam is an example that points to Nabokov's view of morality, it is a moment in the novel when Lolita is not present. In his chapter, Rorty does not address other characters that invalidate Humbert's view of himself as an artist. This is because Nabokov named the interaction between Humbert and the barber a "subliminal co-ordinate" in his afterword.[9] However, Rorty chose to examine it because it has implications for the rest of the novel. Instances in which Dolores displays awareness of Humbert's crimes are not to be overlooked with Nabokov's advocacy for paying attention in mind. One such example occurs when Humbert experiences ecstasy through his illicit acts. Nabokov would build up tension and would implicate the reader, hoping that it would not go unnoticed. In an ambiguous passage, Humbert explains the passionate love he feels:

> My Lolita! You would give me one look—a gray furry question mark of a look: 'Oh no, not again' (incredulity, exasperation); for you never deigned to believe that I could, without any specific designs, ever crave to bury my face in your plaid skirt, my darling!".[10]

While Humbert frames himself as a victim, literally brought to his knees by Lolita, her signal reactions an unwillingness to submit. Humbert ends the chapter by asserting that he is "only a brute"[11] relating to the form of 'monster' he assumes in order to justify his actions. A basic reading of the scene would reinforce the view that Lolita is a seductress while Humbert Humbert is a hopeless romantic. However, when read within the context of aesthetic bliss, Humbert is only seen as expressing his ecstasy in the moment without regard for anyone else. Writing in prison, he can recall the feelings of passion that overcame him, but attributes a specific—and limiting—reading to Lolita's reaction. While he characterizes her words with his own in parentheses, he neglects the possibility that his nymphet is unwilling to participate in the action following his entreaties, or the entreaties themselves.

Rorty's argument maintains that the morality of *Lolita* is concerned with attention to the details Nabokov left for the readers, such as Dolores' protests against Humbert's obsession. The moral that John Ray Jr. PhD proposes in the foreword of the novel relates to the problems he sees in society, specifically, the disturbed like Humbert. However, Rorty elucidates that the moral in tow of the novel is not as simple as avoiding despicable urges, "but to notice what one is doing".[12] He expands upon the idea, saying:

> Just insofar as one is preoccupied with building up to one's private kind of sexual bliss, like Humbert, or one's private aesthetic bliss, like the reader of *Lolita* who missed that sentence about the barber the first time around, people are likely to suffer more.[13]

The problem with Humbert's ecstasy is that it is irreconcilable with the truly moral artist. By injecting his novel with someone so morally compromised, it is his hope that his readers will pay attention to the human suffering within his work, despite Humbert's manipulative command of the English language. As a result, Nabokov—rather than Humbert—grants Dolores agency, who subsequently makes herself known to the readers attempting to experience aesthetic bliss.

Towards the end of the novel, when Humbert Humbert confronts his stepdaughter before murdering Quilty, she provides for the reader what H.H. could not. Humbert makes a last attempt to convince Lolita to live with him someday, stating that "[he] will create a brand new God and thank him with piercing cries, if [she] give[s] him that microscopic hope".[14] Humbert transcribes her response: "'No,' she said, smiling, 'no'".[15] Upon the first reading, it is possible to interpret her sentence as the simplicity of someone robbed of their childhood, a non-adult. Alternatively, it can be read as Humbert attempting to inspire sympathy in his make-believe jury, or the reader in general. However, relating to Nabokov's description of the state where art is the norm, Dolores—in that moment—demonstrates the balance between the moral and the artistic by being aware of Humbert's crippling sadness. Her smile suggests tenderness, tenderness that Humbert cannot express unless it is in relation to "the hopelessness of sensual reconciliation",[16] which discounts Dolores's reactions. Although Humbert has violated the relationship, she can still offer sympathy. Humbert does not describe her smile as sad, but the tone set by the conversation implies her sense of pity. In a previous attempt to 'win her back,' Dolores replies with "No, honey, no"[17] and

Humbert is quick to realize that she had never previously called him "honey." Humbert Humbert's eloquence stands opposed to Dolly's glimpse of sincerity in the novel. Dolores not only displays a facet of herself outside of Humbert, but in that moment she adheres to the desired effect of the novel. Humbert's literary pomp is easily forgotten when compared to the emotion derived from Dolly's definitive and simple "no." Without demonstrating the cruelty of ignorance as Humbert had done in Kasbeam, Dolores is capable of sympathy if not empathy. Dolores communicates her concern for her stepfather, pitiful tenderness, and sad kindness through the tone of a single sentence culminating in ecstasy for the reader who is capable of recognizing real communication between two humans.

Humbert does gain some knowledge but not enough to experience bliss. Nabokov presents a humbled Humbert following his last meeting with Dolores. However, the nature of the novel leads the careful reader—those Nabokov called "a lot of little Nabokovs"[18]—to question the authenticity of his repentance. One passage oft cited by scholars is another subliminal co-ordinate. Towards the end of his manuscript, Humbert describes the musicality of children at play, noticing that "the hopelessly poignant thing was not Lolita's absence from [his] side, but the absence of her voice from that concord".[19] Humbert acknowledges that Dolly Schiller was robbed of her childhood, but mostly to instill an inkling of sympathy in the jury/audience. Humbert showcases his attention to detail, but too late to communicate it to those he implicates, as he wants his "memoir to be published only when Lolita is no longer alive".[20] Humbert continues to solipsize her despite his revelation.

In his article "'My Ultraviolet Darling': The Loss of Lolita's Childhood," Robert T. Levine examines the language of the passage and points to another pun placed by Nabokov. The use of the word 'concord' reminds Levine of the French term "*hors concours*"[21] which Humbert uses to describe fondling a nymphet earlier in the novel. He also claims that the bliss of that experience "belongs to another class, another plane of sensitivity".[22] His choice of language implies a concord of his own in the thralldom of his love for a nymphet. However, as Levine explains, "by fondling Lolita by seeking experience that is '*hors concours*,' he forces her *hors concours* and *hors concorde*, out of the concourse and concord of children into the dolorous world of adults".[23] Nabokov's use of the concord is designed to undermine Humbert, but removes Dolores' perspective in Humbert's confession. Levine describes it as Sophoclean irony; Humbert acts against his own happiness.[24] Fondling nymphets leads him to the experience of another plane of sensitivity, but also thrusts them into adulthood. Ultimately, Dolores' ability to affirm that she does not love her abuser is a result of his actions. Though Humbert may realize that her childhood was denied by his hand, his attention is directed to his suffering rather than an epiphany that loving nymphets is self-defeating.

Through double-voicing, Nabokov is able to create oscillations between silence and expressions of personhood for Dolores. As it is his memoir, Humbert's presence is felt strongly and the story is filtered through his lens. However, Nabokov appears in subtle ways to inject the novel with puns and parody that are unknown to solipsizing characters. Alfred Appel Jr. states in "*Lolita*: The Springboard of Parody" that "many readers overlook the deep moral resonance of [Nabokov's] work, for characters hopelessly imprisoned within themselves must submit to Nabokov's irony, parody, or, significantly, self-parody".[25] Nabokov was quick to refute that he was a satirist, as that would entail the assumption that society maintained a general morality. Nabokov's parody adopts mimicry, then alternates

to literary forms, narrative clichés, and the figure of the novel itself. Ultimately, the use of parody forces Nabokov's goal, that is, to pay attention to every level of reading. Like Rorty, Appel adopts a moral view of the novel. However, Appel examines the role of the writer within the work more deeply. Describing how Humbert has failed where Nabokov succeeded, Appel states "Nabokov's search for the language adequate to *Lolita* is Humbert's search for the language that will reach Lolita, and it is a representative search, a heightened emblem of all our attempts to communicate".[26] Nabokov's main concern is to make the reader feel through attention. Appel affirms that the parody of the novel is the shape the hero assumes. *Lolita* enlists the readers to sympathize with H.H. against their will.[27] The parody of a traditional novel leads to the discomfort in audiences, forcing them to pay attention and question what they consume. However, just as Humbert Humbert oscillates between sympathetic and monstrous, Nabokov shifts between aesthetic bliss and moral quandary. Puns give way to serious moments in which Lolita breaks from her imposed prison.

The oscillation Nabokov incorporates into the novel further parodies the authority of H.H.'s voice. For instance, when Humbert is being questioned by a shadowy figure on the porch of a hotel, his worldview falters. The dialogue between Humbert and the drunk figure is as follows:

"Who's the lassie?"
"My daughter."
"You lie—She's not."
"I beg your pardon?"
"I said: July was hot. Where's her mother?"[28]

The interaction calls into question Humbert's ability to discern what is real and what is not. Humbert's grip on reality becomes more doubtful as his story progresses. One chapter breaks the flow of the story and Humbert addresses the printer, writing the name "Lolita" eight times followed by: "Repeat till the page is full printer".[29] The printer does not fulfill his wish, further resisting Humbert's desire for utter control. Ultimately, these moments are Nabokov's way of reminding readers that Humbert cannot be trusted. In these instances, Dolores' character may emerge, either as the child she is or through her general malaise.

Scholars discount the voice of Humbert's victim because it is difficult to discern when she is Lolita and when she is Dolores, a name which is not hers, but a cover created by John Ray Jr. However, Appel's arguments make it plausible that Dolores exists outside of Humbert. By paying attention to Dolores, the reader is able to better-understand the experience of aesthetic bliss. The lack of Lolita's voice is imperative to understanding Humbert's lack of control and his misguided attempts at sensual experience. From her silence, Dolores is able to demonstrate the desire for empathy and communication in the novel. Nabokov breaks the action of the novel by creating an artificial language for Lolita. Humbert reflects upon his love, heavily solipsizing her, and she asks: "Was the corroboration satisfactory?".[30] Either Humbert is romanticizing her unusually high IQ, or she adopts the language of her stepfather. In both interpretations, Dolores is denied agency that would be offered to another character of a traditional novel. However, soon after, Dolores emerges as her own character during an argument over how much information she divulges. They argue, and Humbert claims "she said unprintable things. She said she loathed [him]. She made monstrous faces at [him], inflating her cheeks and producing a diabolical plopping sound".[31] Humbert Humbert denies Lolita a platform for speech, writing her words out of

the story, and yet, when he cannot understand her dialogue, her childish nature emerges. A childish act such as sticking out one's tongue requires multiple lines of explanation from Humbert. Additionally, he overreacts to it because he cannot reconcile the simplicity of the act with the image of Lolita he has created. The use of the word 'loathe,' as much as 'corroborate,' implies knowledge of the English language beyond her age. To use the word 'loathe' as opposed to hate comes into conflict with the linear trajectory of the story. Belief is suspended and it is possible to discern that there is an authentic Dolores beneath Humbert's Lolita.

The letter Mrs. Richard F. Schiller (Dolly, Dolores' newest identity) writes to Humbert is further indication of her use of language to establish her personhood, albeit, a simple one. In an article concerned with approaches to teaching *Lolita*, Peter Clandfield and Tim Conley cite Dolly's letter as a "debateable instance of degrees of agency".[32] They do not forget that the manuscript is a product of Humbert's memory, and are wary to trust any affirmation that Dolly possesses agency. However, unlike Charlotte's letter—which H.H. summarizes—Dolly's letter is transcribed in full. Clandfield and Conley explain that the "the understatement of [Dolly's] words contrasts tellingly with the literary hyper-eloquence of Humbert's usual style".[33] For Dolly to claim that she has "gone through much sadness and hardship,"[34] demonstrates authenticity. Her language leaves no room for distortions or lies that Humbert has been producing throughout the novel.

The language she uses in her final meeting with Humbert exemplifies Dolly's active character. Humbert asks Dolly questions, but does not transcribe her words. Humbert hijacks her answer to his question: "Where is the hog now?" (the hog being Quilty) Humbert includes two references to himself, saying "I just could not imagine (I, Humbert, could not imagine!) what they did at Duk Duk Ranch".[35] Agency continues to oscillate until Dolly ends the conversation with a definitive "no" (as elaborated upon above). Because Humbert has "only words to play with,"[36] he is the lesser artist. She is able to imitate his craft in producing a memoir, but is also able to reveal Humbert's "biases and blindspots as a reader of the world around him".[37] Her letter displays simplicity while reaching out for human communication, while Humbert continuously shuts the reader out of narrative by attempting to elaborate on the suggestive aesthetic bliss achieved by fondling nymphets.

Humbert's impotence in relation to Dolly's active life is further reinforced by his reaction to their final goodbye. Following the encounter, he states: "Then I pulled out my automatic—I mean, this is the kind of fool thing a reader might suppose I did. It never occurred to me to do it".[38] The reader believes this because Humbert has made references to murder before meeting with Dolly. In his frantic search for Richard's home address, Humbert states that he found a lead living on "10 Killer Street".[39] He conflates the name Richard with "Dick Skiller" rather than Schiller. Whether Humbert claims Richard is a killer who kidnapped Lolita, or that he himself might be a killer is ambiguous. However this passage is indicative of the role Nabokov plays in the novel. Humbert parodies the expectations of the reader while Nabokov parodies the artistry Humbert sees in himself. H.H. undermines the beauty of the passage by reminding the reader that it is not unbelievable that he could murder Lolita, as he was speaking about pulling "the pistol's foreskin back," and toying with the idea of murdering Dick.[40] The juxtaposition of sexuality and the weapon reminds the reader that Humbert has no qualms about sexual deviance, suggesting that murder might not be far-

fetched. Concurrently, he is a parody because he does not kill her, effectively juxtaposing Dolly's action and his impotence.

Some scholars would argue that because Humbert Humbert does not shoot Dolly because he has achieved redemption. In his article, "The Art of Morality, or on Lolita" Leland de la Durantaye elaborates upon a quote by Nabokov. Of Humbert, Nabokov said "in his last stage is a moral man because he realizes that he loves Lolita like any woman should be loved. But it is too late, he destroyed her childhood".[41] Nabokov acknowledges the redemption but also reinforces the idea that he was too late, suggesting an irredeemable quality to Humbert's affronts against art. According to de la Durantaye, the moral ramifications of the novel are not in the lesson Humbert learns, but "the one that he *imparts*".[42] Humbert's sensitivity is undermined by his desire to see the world as purely artistic. In writing his memoir from this position, he is able to impart wisdom despite destroying a life.

However, because Nabokov asserted that Lolita's childhood was destroyed, de la Durantaye discounts her as an agent within the framework of the novel. Humbert's redemption is simple in the sense that he maintains his love for Lolita. Humbert quotes an 'old poet,' who is truly Nabokov.

The moral sense in mortals is the duty
We have to pay on mortal sense of beauty [43]

According to de la Durantaye, Humbert understands the moral duty of the artist is the "vigilance as regards the danger of art—the threat that in its single-minded pursuit of its goal, in its heat and hurry, it might trample the tenderness of the artist".[44] However, soon after Humbert's acknowledgment of this moral duty, he reaffirms his love for Lolita rather than Dolly. Thus, he demonstrates that he does not fully understand the destruction of her childhood. In the reflections on his love, Humbert describes the moments after his "insane exertions" as a transcendental experience. He uses the word tenderness four times.[45] However, in the center of the passage, H.H. remarks that Lolita's eyes were "more vacant than ever,"[46] signifying his lack of understanding, even upon reflection, of his shortcomings as an artist. Throughout the novel, references to Lolita's vacant, or gray/colorless eyes indicate moments when Humbert is reading what he wants to see into her character. He describes how Lolita says "'oh, *no*,' […] with a sigh to heaven".[47] In this moment, Dolores pierces H.H.'s haze in a single expression. Though he is regretful that he ignored her, he maintained his solipsization of Lolita by fondly remembering her vacant eyes. Dolores' "Oh, *no*" however, is emblematic of something more, specifically that she is a human capable of agency. Nabokov makes this poignant by showing an artist who wished to experience the tenderness of aesthetic bliss, but could not without damaging another human life.

Throughout the novel, Lolita actualizes herself through her American vernacular, which limits Humbert's understanding of his victim. In his afterword, Nabokov references the exhilaration of "philistine vulgarities".[48] These Americanisms allow Dolores to branch away from Humbert introduce another vehicle of miscommunication between the two. Nabokov further explains that philistinism is not limited to America. However, Humbert is compelled to adapt to the unique setting he chooses.

Humbert seeks to cultivate Dolores' sensibilities, but she maintains her vulgarities. Her voice appears in her interests and language. Following the death of her mother, Lolita is taken from her home where her room decorated by posters of 'crooners' and things that symbolize her childhood. Humbert attempts

to fill that void by purchasing a bike for her birthday, but also tries to cultivate her by also gifting a *History of Modern American Painting*. He admires how Lolita rides her bike, calling it graceful, but is disappointed by his failed attempt "to refine her pictoral taste".[49] Lolita "wanted to know if the guy noon-napping on Doris Lee's hay was the father of the pseudo-voluptuous hoyden in the foreground".[50] Dolores' concern with the couple in Doris Lee's painting is emblematic of the corrupted relationships perpetuated by her father figure. In the Lee painting, a couple lie on a haystack while an older man sleeps further away. For Lo, the roles are reversed, and the father sleeping on the haystack replaces the boy Dolores Haze experiments with. Despite the absence of her voice, Dolores is still felt through Nabokov's efforts. Her concern with the painting is human, she is trying to make sense of her situation while Humbert's attention is turned towards further solipsizing his nymphet.

In his article, "Artist in Exile: The Americanization of Humbert Humbert," John Haegert describes the character's solipsization of the American landscape. He posits that H.H. is an émigré who dominates, then adopts the American landscape. Assuming the view that Humbert redeems himself, Haegert states:

> Humbert's ambivalent search for 'his' lost Lolita in the last third of the book enacts an émigré's quest for a truer vision of his host environment—an America no longer seen as a nubile nymphet in need of European refinement, but as an estimable independent spirit requiring (and deserving) a national identity of her own. [51]

The duality existing within Humbert between the monster and the artist in search of aesthetic bliss is elucidated in his interactions with the American landscape. He continuously searches for a Riveria where he can gratify his "lifelong urge".[52] Whenever he comes close to finding such a place, "a thick damp sky, muddy waves, a sense of boundless but somehow matter-of-fact mist" prevents his subconscious urge from coming to fruition.[53] The haze Humbert projects onto Lolita is mirrored in the environment. When Humbert does find a location, the so-called "operation" is dissatisfactory. Lolita offers a "salutary storm of sobs after the fits of moodiness that had become so frequent with her in the course of that otherwise admirable year!".[54] His experience is ruined by almost being discovered coupled with Lo's sadness. Though he was laughing in the moment, the Humbert writing the memoir claimed he later understood the nature of Lo's cries. In the moment, her reaching out is lost on him, but the little Nabokovs notice the resistance to Humbert in both personage and environment itself. Haegert claims that Humbert cannot let go of the idealized state until he imagines Lolita in the concord near the end of the novel.[55] However, placing trust in Humbert proves to be problematic.

The argument that Humbert is forgivable raises questions as to the authenticity of his change. Throughout the novel, Humbert portrays himself as annoyed or disappointed by Lolita's Americanisms. As Haegert explains, "Lolita can be neither solipsized nor transfigured completely, any more than the North Atlantic coast can be transformed into a 'Sublimated Riviera'".[56] Humbert instead chooses to incorporate Dolores' mannerisms into his love for Lolita. Avoiding Dolores' question about how Charlotte fell in love with Humbert, he states "Some day, Lo, you will understand many emotions and situations, such as for example the harmony, the beauty of spiritual relationship".[57] This passage refers to Lo rather than Lotte. However, Humbert transcribes her response as "'Bah!' said the

cynical nymphet"[58] Humbert's endearing term of nymphet is associated with her American language. At the end of the novel, Dolores' "Good by-aye" prompts Humbert to call her his "American sweet immortal dead love".[59] Humbert reveals that a part of his project for the entirety of the novel was to immortalize Lolita as an element of himself in the "refuge of art".[60] Thus, he incorporates her American identity into his love for an image projected onto her.

Although his redemption is the realization that Dolores is deserving of love, he cannot do so without casting his veil over her. Despite his assertion that she is missing from the concord, Humbert Humbert is fallible, as is his memoir. His insertion of Lolita's Americanisms into the story also creates dissonance. They are often paired with the artifice of Humbert's influence on Dolores. Following her exclamation of "Bah!", when told she was missed, Lo responds "Fact I've been revoltingly unfaithful to you, but it does not matter one bit, because you've stopped caring for me, anyway".[61] The combination of slang in the "Fact I've" and proper grammar and advanced wording for a pre-adolescent makes Humbert's narration doubtful. Thus, the reader becomes more aware of the moments Dolores is herself rather the combination of Humbert's fetishizations. Ultimately, it unhinges Humbert's appreciation, denying her place in his refuge of art. Rather, her exclamations are products of her unique identity because they do no coincide with the language he forces upon her. In doing so, he demonstrates that he lacked the curiosity to investigate her American identity.

To unweave Lolita out of *Lolita* would be difficult to accomplish. The ambiguity surrounding her character is as important as Humbert's quest for love. Limiting her character also provides a superficial reading of *Lolita* that often leads to arguments against picking up the novel. Claiming that Humbert is merely a hopeless romantic takes away from the severity of his actions just as claiming Dolores is a seductress robs her of her innocence and the agency which accompanies that. Pia Pera's rendition of Lolita removes the irony and the ambiguity present in Nabokov's novel that allows for Dolores to emerge as a human character, marred by flaws but also attempting to make the best of her situation.

Nabokov may have claimed that he countered the morality of the novel, but it was his desire to weave it a certain way. A spider's web connects at critical points, but leaves holes for interpretation. Lolita falls into these holes but she makes herself heard as she falls. There is a moment in the story, unbeknownst to Humbert, where Dolores succeeds in inspiring a state of being in the reader where art is the norm. She is able to pity Humbert despite his inability to elaborate further upon it in his manuscript. Rather, Humbert is too concerned with pitying himself. Although Humbert's cries of lament are loud, Dolores emerges, expressing her sadness with the situation. In other instances, Humbert is unable to explain her reactions, demonstrating that she is her own person with her own Americanisms. In the end, Mrs. Richard Schiller finds brief respite from H.H.'s solipsization in her simplicity. She dies shortly afterwards, but not without leaving an imprint on little Nabokovs reading the novel. Nabokov ensures that the reader maintains attention in order to show the moral aspects of art. He hopes to inspire curiosity for the barber of Kasbeam's son, or Lo's brother who died young, a desire for Dolores to experience tenderness unabated by Humbert, kindness from Dolly who pays attention, and ecstasy in realizing that art demands communication. Humbert is not free from Nabokov's parody. However, he calls Lo his "ultraviolet darling".[62] She is invisible to the eyes, but can be heard nonetheless. Furthermore, her

existence is not idle. Her appeals to the attentive reader radiate through Humbert Humbert's heavy haze.

End Notes

1 Kakutani
2 Nabokov 314f
3 Ibid 123
4 Ibid 124
5 Ibid
6 Ibid 166
7 Rorty 158f
8 Nabokov 213
9 Ibid 316
10 Ibid 192
11 Ibid 193
12 Rorty 159
13 Ibid 164
14 Nabokov 280
15 Ibid
16 Ibid 227
17 Ibid 279
18 qtd in Rorty 163
19 Nabokov 308
20 Ibid 309
21 Ibid 166
22 Ibid
23 Levine 474
24 Ibid 476
25 Appel 205
26 Ibid 240
27 Ibid 224
28 Nabokov 127
29 Ibid 109
30 Ibid 204
31 Ibid 205
32 Clandfield and Conley 36
33 Ibid 37
34 Nabokov 266
35 Ibid 276
36 Nabokov 32
37 Clandfield and Conley 37
38 Nabokov 280
39 Ibid 268
40 Nabokov 274
41 qtd in de la Durantaye 190
42 de la Durantaye 190
43 Nabokov 283
44 de la Durantaye 190
45 Nabokov 285
46 Ibid
47 Ibid 285
48 Ibid 315
49 Ibid 199
50 Ibid

51 Haegert 779f
52 Nabokov 167
53 Ibid
54 Ibid 169
55 Haegert 792f
56 Ibid 784
57 Nabokov 112
58 Ibid
59 Ibid 280
60 Ibid 309
61 Ibid 112
62 Ibid 221

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Le cœur à l'air – ou ce qu'est un poème érotique –

Étienne Gélinas

J'ai la tête à vide et le corps en crue.
À force d'ouvrir tes ports d'écluses
Pour m'y tremper, m'inonder, souiller
La terre de tes amalgames buccaux sans voix.

Tout ça, tout toi, pour nourrir
Ma corne de brosse autour des lèvres
Et mes souvenirs d'irrigations criardes crispées.
Pardonne ce devenir de jouir à perte…

À perte de jour, mais surtout de nuit,
À crever sourire, les pores révulsés

Nerveux du cœur, ça bat, ça vient
Nerveux, en crise, j'ai le cœur à l'air.

the summer empty

Taliesin Herb

> This is the letter. The letter
> that falls in its carrying. In the killing of
> its crushing, its clinging
> in its excesses and its masks.
> — Adeena Karasick, "And this is the letter"

In its sickly monotony, my summer spent in Berlin seemed unwilling to let me go. Each day was structured through trips to Lidl, never failing to soothe with its white pasta and *Vollmilch*—maxed at a euro. I portioned my hours in snack bags and hoped to minimize the gaps within and without. Food was satisfying, though the pleasure it gave was fleeting, unable to diffuse long enough to sweeten the air. I breathed solitude.

> I dreamed of green fields
> and dank streets in London—
> both of which I would choose to
> both inseperable from grey skies

Berlin, was rarely beset by clouds. And each afternoon, the urge to escape my studio led me to Teufelsee, peach trees, and naked men swimming to a sun-baked raft. Those hikes into the woods concluded my time in Europe and prepared me for an inevitable return to Canada. I would reach towards that image of bathers fleshed out by Whitman, pull myself from the water, and close myself to the world. Lulled by tree leaves, I could forget him.

Could I have done differently—folding dreams into themselves instead of loosening them into tepid uncertainty, where rot quickly supplants bloom? The heat would not relent; nor could my raging naivety—a swelling that stirs you into a March grin when the air is frigid and their breath smells, but something has snagged—be held back.

Poetry was always in my life, but it found me again nonetheless—bleeding the aches in my chest over digital flicks. Other moments felt more profound, even as fingertip content. One photo taken in May shows me seated at the Akademie der Künste, situated amidst three panes of glass, embedded in a tree trunk—

> just partially there—a
> pathetic response to a
> cheery group photo taken just a
> few weeks ago

Irony was endearing to my German peers. To me, its stain represented something more pernicious: the intent to remove someone from memory.

Even now, I still cannot decide whether I saw symbol or substance in that image. The semiotics of group photography would be a fascinating subject to study, but to me it would bring no comfort.

Liminal, translucent, I encountered sound poetry and one in its vanguard: Henri Chopin. His piece, La Plaine Des Respirs unfurled itself around

me as an embodied soundscape. It felt like theatre, but its narrative was elusive. It held scenes, yet the audience was abandoned, left to constitute the narrative through interpretation. Chopin charmed me with his harsh, at times painful voice. His breath was the sound wave, his cheek its reverberation, his lips its granulation and EQ. He bit, spit, clicked, gagged, and hissed out a trail through space that continuously transformed itself. Chopin sung infinitudes that required no permission or contact to be accessed.

I remained on that seat between the panes for half an hour, maybe more. When I felt too self-conscious to remain, I left the academy and returned that week for a workshop on electroacoustic poetry. Somehow, I imagine the voices of Chopin and others like him—Toine Horvers, François Dufrêne, John Cage—as fixed to the academy walls, that aesthetic residue from the Interbau project of the late 50s. David Lynch also comes to mind when I remember them, though it is melancholy I remember more than unease. And still, immersed in the timbral nuances of the sound poets, I experienced some respite.

Many canal walks followed my visits to the academy and several afternoons were wasted in Grünewald reading Rilke and bissett to lend the transient months some meaning. The modern poets textured my emptiness through their melodic work.

I think that somewhere in those fragments of sound and lyric poetry, I was able to create a new world for myself. With each dive from the raft and poetic break with syntax, the soil and pavement of Berlin that was so hard to walk upon became fluid.

I never let go of Berlin and that summer, but

> and his verdant brilliance
> his lime precision, have all begun
> to fade like some prosaic dream

The words I gave and received that summer are still coloured—it is impossible to blanch some without robbing from the others, yet Chopin gave his share.

Seated and heartbroken, I listened to the basis for my honours thesis. There, I began to free myself from the indifferent green.

Le regard d'Olympia

Lori Isbister

En 1865, le peintre français Édouard Manet (1832-1883) présente son tableau *Olympia* au Salon des Beaux Arts de Paris. Aspirant à une reconnaissance officielle dans le domaine, l'artiste est déjà controversé pour son *Déjeuner sur l'herbe,* présenté deux ans plus tôt au Salon des Refusés. Le public décriait alors que la femme nue représentée dans la peinture parodiait l'iconographie traditionnelle de la Vénus.[1] L'*Olympia* de 1865, un second portrait de femme nue, indigna encore plus le public. Le tableau représente une jeune fille nue, assise sur un lit. Elle regarde devant elle, vers le spectateur, cachant son intimité de sa main. Elle porte une fleur dans ses cheveux attachés ainsi qu'un bracelet, un collier et des souliers. Près d'elle, une servante à peau noire est debout et lui tend un bouquet de fleurs. À ses pieds, un chat noir a le dos hérissé. La réception de ce tableau par le public bourgeois est alors si violente que le jury du Salon se doit d'agir. On place un garde au-devant pour éviter que les visiteurs n'endommagent l'oeuvre. On conseille également aux femmes enceintes de s'abstenir de la regarder, afin d'éviter le risque d'une fausse-couche.[2] Éventuellement, l'*Olympia* fut déplacée en hauteur sur le mur d'exposition. Dans cet essai, j'expliquerai les raisons derrière la réaction violente de la foule envers l'*Olympia* de Manet.

Plusieurs experts se sont penchés sur la question, et tous défendent que ce sont les innovations formelles de Manet dans sa représentation de la femme nue qui causèrent autant d'émoi. Ils sont toutefois en désaccord sur la façon dont ces innovations affectent le public. Plusieurs défendent que le public réagit au propos politique de l'oeuvre. T.J. Clark, une référence en la matière (un chapitre entier de son livre *The Painting of Modern Life* est dédié à *Olympia*) défend que le public réagit au corps nu d'Olympia comme à une performance de classe sociale. Cette conclusion est critiquée dans plusieurs analyses féministes du tableau, qui y voient plutôt une réaction à son propos sexuel explicite. D'autres, dans une approche anthropologique des effets de l'art sur le public, critiquent l'approche contemplative des historiens de l'art et expliquent la réaction par le bris formel des limites de la représentation.

Dans cet essai, je tenterai de réconcilier ces différentes thèses en adoptant la thèse de Foucault dans son analyse d'Olympia. Selon le philosophe, l'art est un discours visuel qui «véhicule et produit du pouvoir; il le renforce mais aussi le mine, l'expose, le rend fragile et permet de le barrer».[3] Ainsi, je défendrai que par ses innovations formelles dans la représentation du nu, Manet transforme le regard du public de façon à ce que le tableau ne soit plus une commodité que le public puisse s'approprier, mais un objet politique qui entraîne un discours allant à l'encontre du système de pouvoir en place. Je démontrerai d'abord que le sujet d'Olympia est une prostituée, puis expliquerai que le tableau s'organise autour d'un regard signifiant féminin. Je démontrerai ensuite que le propos d'*Olympia* est

défini par son sujet et imposé au public. Finalement, j'expliquerai que la réaction du public est causée par le bris des limites conventionnelles de la représentation qui expose les structures de pouvoir.

Contexte: la tradition artistique du nu

Pour expliquer l'effet du bris des conventions dans Olympia, il est primordial de situer le contexte artistique dans lequel le tableau s'inscrit. Celui-ci constitue le point de référence pour expliquer l'innovation de Manet et démontre également l'interaction traditionnelle entre le spectateur et l'oeuvre. Ainsi, les conventions formelles de représentation sont influencées par la théorie selon laquelle le sens d'une oeuvre est activé par le regard du public. On facilite la projection de sens en utilisant des outils formels tels que la perspective, le chiaroscuro et le modelage qui imitent l'espace physique du public.[4] L'oeuvre devient donc une extension visuelle de la réalité du spectateur. Le nu est l'une des rares formes visuelles où la sexualité est non problématique. Cela s'explique par le mode d'attribution de sens: par ses conventions formelles, le nu n'est pas sexuel en lui-même. Plutôt, le corps féminin est représenté de façon à ce que le public masculin vive une émotion sexuelle. En effet, l'analyse du regard masculin dans la représentation graphique suggère que le «male gaze» contient le pouvoir d'action et de possession qui manque au regard féminin. Le corps féminin est inséré dans une structure de représentation patriarcale, dont les conventions sont établies de façon à ne pas déstabiliser le regard masculin.[5] La tradition du nu au XIXe siècle est donc dominée par des images de la Vénus. Le corps féminin est idéalisé et présenté comme un symbole de pureté, de beauté et de soumission. Il est un canevas sur lequel l'homme peut projeter son désir, mais ne possède en lui-même aucune individualité ou signification sexuelle. À ce sujet, T.J. Clark suggère que la marque du nu est la chasteté et l'abstraction.[6] Pour l'argument qui suivra, il est donc primordial de comprendre que la façon dont la sexualité est présentée dans l'art au XIXe siècle est strictement contrôlée. De plus, la façon dont le corps de la femme est représenté formellement affecte les relations de pouvoir entre le public et le tableau lui-même.

Représentation d'une prostituée: un propos sexuel tangible

Nous avons donc établi que, dans la tradition du nu, la sexualité n'est pas intrinsèque au tableau, mais est plutôt un effet de la projection de la sexualité masculine. Manet fait fi de ces conventions lorsqu'il représente Olympia: il peint un sujet qui incarne la sexualité féminine. D'abord, le sujet n'est pas idéalisé: le corps présente plusieurs caractéristiques particulières comme une position naturelle et du poil aux aisselles. Traditionnellement, la Vénus est représentée sans poil, car toute pilosité — excepté les cheveux —est une référence aux poils pubiens, et dirige l'attention vers le sexe féminin.[7] Manet souligne d'autant plus le sexe féminin par la « shameless contraction » de la main gauche d'Olympia sur sa cuisse, et en peignant un chat, dont le nom réfère au sexe féminin dans le langage vernaculaire anglais et français.[8] Les accessoires sur le corps nu contribuent également à souligner la nudité d'Olympia, et suggèrent que sa nudité est temporelle, en opposition à la Vénus dont la nudité est mythique. Ainsi, Olympia n'est pas un canevas sur lequel le public peut projeter une sexualité, mais bien un corps de femme qui incarne sa sexualité.

Olympia est également le portrait d'une prostituée, et était reconnu comme tel par le public et les critiques. Manet fait allusion à ce statut de plusieurs

façons. D'abord par le choix de son modèle, Victorine Meurent, une courtisane connue de la bourgeoisie française.[9] De plus, le titre du tableau —qui se veut être le nom du sujet — «Olympia», était un nom emprunté couramment par les courtisanes de l'époque.[10] L'environnement peint par Manet est également une indication. Les femmes nues étaient généralement peintes dans un espace intemporel et mythique, alors que Manet peint un boudoir contemporain qui rappelle ceux des maisons de jeunes filles.[11] Finalement, le bouquet de fleurs dans les bras de la bonne est couramment interprété comme le cadeau d'un client, et Laure, la bonne de race noire, était à l'époque un symbole pour une sexualité dépravée, basée sur des préjugés racistes au sujet de la sexualité des noirs.[12]

La prostitution au XIXe siècle

Pour comprendre l'effet qu'a la représentation d'une prostituée au Salon de Paris en 1865, il faut savoir comment s'inscrivent la prostitution et sa représentation en France à cette époque. Je discuterai donc brièvement de la place de la prostitution dans les structures de pouvoir. À l'époque, la France se développe comme une société de consommation, et l'on assiste à la marchandisation de plusieurs biens et services: l'argent devient un moteur de mouvement social.[13] La prostitution, dans ce contexte, est la marchandisation du corps de la femme. La bourgeoisie semble également croire au désir: c'est l'époque du Marquis de Sade, qui infuse la culture de contes de dépravation sexuelle.[14] Ainsi, la prostitution s'insère peu à peu dans les hautes strates de la hiérarchie sociale. Toutefois, cette intégration de la prostituée dans le tissu social menace les structures en place, et des mesures policières sont mises en place pour faire des prostituées une classe à part.[15] En effet, les autorités craignent que la France ne soit reconnue pour son vice et sa dépravation.

Toutefois, la représentation de la sexualité est bénéfique à l'Empire. Elle est donc permise dans une certaine mesure dans la figure de la courtisane: une version présentable de la prostituée. La courtisane était annuellement représentée au Salon de Paris. Ces femmes, généralement peintes dans un contexte antique ou allégorique, étaient reconnues comme étant des courtisanes par le public et les critiques.[16] Ainsi, la représentation d'une prostituée ne peut pas être la seule explication derrière la réaction violente à Olympia. En effet, le public du Salon s'est familiarisé avec la prostitution représentée sous couvert en 1865. Manet va peut-être plus loin en peignant la version dépravée de la courtisane (la prostituée), et cela dans un contexte contemporain, mais il peint toutefois dans une tradition établie.

Rejet du regard masculin comme regard signifiant dans le nu

Ainsi, si la représentation de la prostitution n'est pas le seul facteur expliquant la réaction violente du public, c'est que le bris des conventions de représentation influence des aspects différents du tableau. Dans les paragraphes qui suivront, j'expliquerai comment l'innovation de Manet affecte également la relation entre le public et le tableau. D'abord, je démontrerai comment le regard masculin ne peut être le regard signifiant dans *Olympia*.

Comme mentionné précédemment, l'art du XIXe siècle est composé de façon à ce que le public, qui est majoritairement masculin, appréhende le tableau. Pour que cela ait lieu, le regard se doit d'être intégré dans la composition. Pour la forme du nu, Laura Mulvey identifie deux modes d'intégration distincts. Le regard invitant et soumis de la Vénus vers le spectateur est le mode direct, mais le

regard masculin peut aussi être intégré indirectement en se substituant à une autre figure de spectateur dans la composition.[17]

Dans *Olympia*, le choix des sujets empêche l'intégration du regard masculin dans la composition, et rendent difficile l'attribution de sens par le public. En effet, Manet modifie les deux modes d'intégration de façon à ce qu'ils soient inopérables. Je discuterai ici du mode indirect, assumé par la figure de la femme de chambre. (Le mode d'intégration direct — le regard d'Olympia — est modifié de façon à renverser les modes d'attribution de sens et sera discuté plus en détail dans la prochaine section.) Dans *Olympia*, une femme de chambre de race noire est peinte tenant un bouquet de fleurs. Elle occupe sensiblement la même quantité d'espace que le corps nu, mais son visage est difficilement discernable du fond de la peinture. Son regard est dirigé vers le corps nu d'Olympia. L'intégration d'une femme de race noire est en soi une décision innovatrice, vu le statut marginalisé des femmes de couleur en France du XIXe siècle. C'est toutefois un des sujets de choix de Manet, qui peint Laure — modèle pour la femme de chambre — plusieurs fois au cours de sa carrière. L'intention dans le regard de Laure, dirigé vers le corps d'Olympia, suggère son rôle de conduit formel pour le regard masculin. Toutefois, ce conduit est inefficace, car il est impossible pour le public d'*Olympia* de s'identifier à Laure. Les différences de race, de genre et de classe sont trop importantes, le public du Salon de Paris étant majoritairement constitué de bourgeois blancs. Ainsi, le regard masculin est aspiré par la présence de la femme de chambre plutôt que projeté sur le corps nu d'Olympia.[18]

Olympia: dénonciation des structures de pouvoir

Le regard masculin s'efface également derrière le regard de Victorine Meurent. D'abord, l'individualité de l'expression de Victorine contribue au rejet de l'autorité du spectateur. Le pli du coin de la bouche, le subtil haussement de sourcil, le soulèvement du menton et le regard qui toise le spectateur différencient Olympia du regard simple et soumis du nu traditionnel. Plutôt, le regard résiste au spectateur. T.J. Clark suggère que c'est par ce regard que Victorine démontre son autorité, car elle décide de la façon dont elle se présente au public.[19] Ce regard représente son pouvoir d'action sur le spectateur. Puisque son intention est déjà représentée, le spectateur ne peut lui en imposer une. En fait, le regard d'Olympia suggère qu'elle est consciente de la présence du public, construisant ainsi un dialogue fictif entre le public et le sujet. Olympia, en fixant le spectateur, le force à imaginer un contexte dans lequel cet échange fait du sens.[20] C'est donc le regard d'Olympia qui confère un rôle au public dans la narration du tableau.

Cette intégration du public dans le tableau est renforcée par l'utilisation de la lumière. Manet n'inclut pas de source de lumière dans la composition d'Olympia. Plutôt, la lumière frappe Victorine de plein fouet, et semble donc provenir de l'extérieur du tableau, où le public est situé. Manet utilise la lumière pour représenter formellement le regard du public dans le tableau, suivant sa conviction que l'action de regarder n'est jamais impartiale.[21] Ainsi, le public est impliqué dans l'exploitation visuelle d'Olympia, et souligne le statut de commodité du corps de la prostituée. En présentant le spectateur comme un acteur dans la prostitution d'Olympia, Manet ajoute de la profondeur à son propos. La réalité de la prostitution n'est pas représentée sous couvert comme le veut la convention. Plutôt, Manet représente une transaction entre le public et la prostituée, et expose ainsi les mécanismes de pouvoirs tenus secrets dans la société à l'époque. C'est donc ici que l'analyse Foucaudienne s'inscrit dans l'explication de la réaction du

public. À cause du pouvoir attribué à *Olympia* par les jeux de regard, celui-ci est forcé de participer à un geste de dénonciation de structures de pouvoirs.

La réaction iconoclaste

J'expliquerai maintenant la réaction violente en me basant sur l'analyse anthropologique des effets de l'art proposée par Alfred Gell dans son livre *Art and Agency*, où il est avancé que les réactions iconoclastes (lorsque le public s'en prend physiquement à l'oeuvre) s'expliquent par le mode de visualisation. Ainsi, les innovations de Manet dans la représentation du nu brisent les limites formelles de la représentation. En effet, les rôles généralement tenus par le public et le sujet sont inversés. Plutôt que d'être à la disposition du regard du public, le tableau confère à celui-ci un rôle très particulier dans son narratif. Selon Caroline Van Eck, c'est ce bris du mode de visualisation traditionnel qui explique les réactions violentes du public. En effet, lorsqu'un tableau investit l'espace du public et brouille les limites de la réalité, le public est porté à franchir certaines limites. Ainsi, le public est dupé par l'espace d'échange fictif entre lui et le tableau.[22] Leur réaction violente est donc expliquée par ce bris des limites de la représentation. Le regard d'Olympia investit l'espace du spectateur et le public est intégré dans le tableau par les jeux de lumière.

Conclusion

En conclusion, le bris des conventions de représentation dans *Olympia* permet à Manet d'exposer les structures de pouvoir en France au XIXe siècle, et d'intégrer le public dans son propos artistique. Si la courtisane est couramment représentée dans la tradition picturale, le public est surpris par le propos sexuel et politique du tableau. Ainsi, lorsque *Olympia* met en scène une transaction entre une prostituée et un public bourgeois, les gens sont indignés de l'intrusion d'un sujet tabou, et ont des réactions iconoclastes face à l'image.

End Notes

1 Van Eck 424
2 Palmer 68
3 Foucault 62
4 Moore 225-226
5 Ibid
6 Clark 128
7 Ibid 72
8 Bernheimer 270
9 Lipton 158
10 Clark 86
11 Ibid 226
12 Ibid 225
13 Palmer 66
14 Clark 107
15 Ibid 106
16 Ibid 111
17 Moore 226
18 Ibid 227
19 Clark 133.
20 Van Eck 426
21 Palmer 70
22 Van Eck 429

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Figure I : Édouard Manet, *Olympia*,
1863, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

The Unwritten Play

Cedric Lowe

The resident playwright of the Grand Theatre sat at his desk and pulled out from his messenger bag several scripts and sheets of paper. He spread them out across the surface of the desk into different piles. Old scripts, current projects, future projects, and notes on all manner of issues were quickly organized. The last document to be pulled out from the bag was the latest version of a play he had been struggling to complete, or rather start writing, for several months. He flipped through it and sighed, this one was no good either. It lacked the spark of magic that would burst into the fantastic play he wanted it to be. He opened a drawer in the desk and dropped the script inside it to join the other incomplete and lacklustre attempts. He grabbed a blank sheet of paper and a pen and began to once again sketch a basic skeleton upon which he could later flesh the story out. To give himself some inspiration he looked at the first document in the pile of old plays. It was in an orange folio. Many of the documents scattered across his office were in orange folios, binders, paper clips, or had notes written with an orange ink. Everything that did not have an orange element to it was off on a bookshelf in the corner of the room. He couldn't be bothered to look at those, they were of no use to him with this project. They were flat, lifeless documents that could sate the endless thirst of the masses, but lacked the something that he wanted to imbue this new play with. These empty scripts, as he liked to call them, were easy to make. He smirked, the audience was easy to please since they told him what they wanted, all he had to do was listen without being noticed by them.

"Just like what I did that night," the playwright mumbled to himself as recalled how this had all started...

"Truly that was brilliant wordplay towards the end of the second scene by the prince!" exclaimed a man to his friends in the lobby of the Grand Theater during the intermission between the second and third acts. "What made it great was the quick quip his brother threw in just before," one of his friends added. "I quite enjoyed the way..."

Such conversations were common occurrences when one of the Grand Theatre's resident playwright's plays was being performed. Everyone in attendance had something to say about what they had just seen. Which is exactly why the playwright in question was currently walking slowly through the audience members as they

chatted without drawing attention to himself.

"How does he do it!" exclaimed a woman, "The playwright is just great at making these characters. It's amazing how he knows that we wanted to see the arrogant merchant reprimanded by the prince."

"It's no surprise madam, you told me during the first intermission after all," quietly mused the playwright to himself as he casually walked past the surprised woman chatting with her husband. "Truly, there is no better way of getting unfiltered feedback from the audience."

The playwright had learned from watching people how to use his unassuming appearance to be bland and unnoticed. Walk a bit this way, sit down in a corner, meander around the cannapé table. In this way he gleaned from the audience their thoughts on his work and, if needed, how it could be better. A few minutes before the third act started, he worked his way backstage and gave some instructions to the actors based on the things he heard from the conversations in the lobby. "Sam, I want you to be just a touch more gruff in your delivery. Yes that's good! And Elise..."

After having given his instructions, he took his seat in the corner of the second gallery. When the play resumed, he nodded as he saw the people in the audience whom he overheard earlier becoming quite pleased as they saw the suggestions in the comments they made earlier being realized on stage. As he was watching the crowd, he thought about how easy it was to make plays that would please the crowd and surprise the audience members with the tweaks they suggested. It didn't really matter whether the play had any substance so long as it felt like it did and had themes people could relate to. Not that this façade mattered to most people, they came to the theatre to have a good time, and he gave them things to enjoy.

"Hmm? I wonder who that could be. She really does seem to be enjoying the performance," the playwright thought to himself when he had glanced through the audience and saw a black-haired woman in an orange dress who seemed to be really enjoying the play. In fact, she seemed to be enjoying it more than anyone else around her.

His eyes gravitated to the woman in the orange dress each time he glanced at the crowd. Her reactions to the performance were very different to those of the people around her. She seemed to have an emotional resonance with the action on stage. When the main character was in a spot of trouble she gripped the armrest, leaned forward, and willed the scene to change in a manner that would help the main character. When the tense moment had passed she visibly sighed in relief and let go of the armrest. The traitorous friend had now come on stage and presented the main character with an alluring plan to defeat the enemy. The audience knew that this was a ploy that he had set in motion in the previous act. The woman in orange shook her head as if to warn the main character of the danger standing in front of him. Throughout all of this the woman's neighbours only gave the occasional nod or gasp as the events unfolded. They were watching the play while she was living it and trying to interact in some way

with the performance. Her appreciation of the performance was on a deeper and richer level. As the last scene came to a close, the audience gave the actors a standing ovation for the wonderful performance they gave, though only the woman in orange seemed to have really enjoyed the play. The playwright rose up as well and clapped, not towards the stage, but to the woman in orange for he thought that she was the one who truly brought the play to life.

The playwright had become distracted as he thought back to the woman in the orange dress. That night was over a year ago, and since then he had seen her appear in the audience of his performances every now and then. Each time she was just as enthralled and excited about his work as the last, if not more so. He had always wanted to hear from her what she thought about the plays, but he never had the chance to. It was a shame that she would either stay in her seat during the intermissions or he would loiter around the lobby as she was leaving. What he could glean from her was that she liked what he put on the stage and that she came wearing the same orange dress every time. It really stood out from what everyone else wore and was quite easy to spot from his seat. These days, even though it was his habit, he grew tired of watching the audiences. They were always the same two-dimensional people with the same predictable expressions and mannerisms: the affluent groups who pretended to know what was going on, the knowledgeable theatre junkies and critics who spouted technical jargon to whoever would listen, the students who were busy taking notes for their homework assignments, the couples who were on dates and spent far too much time at the bar... No, not everyone was dull, she radiated something else, something that was *alive*. This was something that brought back to life that spark of desire to do something truly creative, a play that went beyond merely satisfying the crowd and the critics, something that he could fully invest himself in. He also wanted to dedicate it to the person who brought his creativity back, the woman in orange.

"That's all well and good, but *how* do I do that when I don't know what she likes?"

This was the impasse the playwright found himself in for the past year, the same stumbling block that had filled the drawer in his desk. He sighed, how was he to write a play for someone when he didn't know them? He glanced down at the sketch he had made, after a moment he crumpled it into a ball and tossed it into the waste bin next to the desk. He rummaged through one of the piles on the desk and drew out a few pages held together with an orange paperclip. These were notes he had taken a month ago about the woman's latest appearance at the Grand Theatre. He smiled as he read through them since they had nothing to do with that evening's performance but were instead everything that he noticed about her.

...It has been a while since she had last visited. It's not my place to speculate on why that might be the case, but I'm glad she came back. As usual, she has on her orange dress. It really does stand

out from the drab people around her, though I think that might be because the cheerful colour is an extension of who she is (as good a guess about her character as any, I've yet to have the chance to hear her thoughts on the plays. I'd like to think she's a cheery person). How animated she is! It's always nice to see her and the way she interacts with the play. I really must convey my thanks to her with this next play...

This evening would be last showing of the playwright's most recent play. After this one he would be able to take a few months off to work on other projects, primarily the project he had given the tentative title of 'Orange.' It was currently the intermission between the first two acts and he was leaning against a railing on the second floor gazing down at the crowd in the lobby. Normally he would have gone down to pick up on what people were saying, but the crowd was just too thick and it would not be worth the effort to fight his way through it for tidbits he already knew. From his vantage point, the mass of people looked like the entire theatre-going community had come to give his play a collective send-off. He really did not know why they had thought so highly of this one, it was the least creative one he had produced what with it catering to every whim of the critics and the audiences. The faces below him blurred together and he was losing interest in his perch. As he started to turn away to head back to his seat earlier than usual, he stopped as one face, it's details and contours crystal clear, caught his gaze. He smiled, for his favourite person had come again and had saved him from an interminably dull evening.

He leaned once again on the railing, clearly more interested in what was going on below than before, and sighed, "Ah, how frustrating. Had I gone down I would have been able to listen to her, or perhaps chat with her for a bit." He still had a few moments before he had to go back, and he decided to spend them by observing her and seeing if he could spy any clues that would help him with his script-writing. She chatted with people she knew about the first act. Even though he was too far away to hear her, he could feel her enthusiasm and he regained some of the drive to write that he had lost over the past few days. Each time he saw her. even if it was only for a few moments, his worries melted away and he forgot his surroundings. Though she was an entire floor away from him, he felt like her happiness was right next to him and it rubbed off of him. He became distracted with her wavy black hair.

He put down the papers and sighed, even now, a month since the last time he saw her, he was distracted by that hair. The notes were not really that helpful for his writing, but they encouraged him to keep trying. He looked around his office. It was quite messy with all the paper everywhere. His desk was the most cluttered and there was barely any room for his mug of coffee. He lifted it up to take a sip and found it cold.

"Well that's as good a reason as any to take a walk outside of this drab room," the playwright muttered under his breath. He

stuffed a notebook and a pen into his pocket, picked up the mug, and left his office for a breath of fresh air. The mug of coffee was replaced with a fresh one in the staff kitchen and he walked to the Grand Theatre's side entrance, outside of which was a short flight of stairs leading down into an alley. The alley itself was not terribly interesting, but it was a quiet spot and he liked to look out at the people out on the main street as they passed by the alley's entrance. He sat down on a step, placed his mug next to him, pulled out his pen and notebook. He flipped through some pages and began to read various notes for his own script and those of other writers that had asked for his help. In the corner of his eye he noticed an orange blur walk past on the main street, though he was too engrossed in his notebook to pay it any attention. The blur came back to the entrance of the alley, stopped, and then slowly headed towards him.

"Hello!" cheerfully said the orange blur as it stopped in front of him.

The playwright looked up from his notebook fully expecting to see one of the interns at the Theatre and saw standing in front of him, in that distinctive orange dress that she liked to wear, the woman to whom he wanted to write the play for. He was quite surprised and was at a loss as to what was going on.

She continued by saying, "My name is Zoë and I'm a huge fan of yours. I happened to be in the area and saw you on the steps as I was passing the alley beside the Grand Theatre and I just had to stop and talk to you."

His thoughts regained their functionality and he asked, "What can I do for you Ms. Zoë?"

She was visibly excited at the prospect of chatting with someone she greatly admired. He could see how she struggled to choose a topic to start with out of the many she wanted to ask about, and after a few moments she found the right one, "I'm sure people ask this of you frequently, but I was wondering, when would your next play be released?"

He sighed and gave an apologetic response, "I honestly do not know since this play is most uncooperative."

She tilted her head at this and sat down next to him. Then she asked, "Oh? How come?"

"Well I've been wanting to write a play to thank someone and I just can't seem to find a good place to start." The playwright had become somewhat immersed in his thoughts, "I just want to convey what I feel, you know?"

Having felt that she might be able to help him, Zoë asked, "What were you feeling?"

"Well, you know how I keep making stuff that everyone wants to watch? Well I do that on purpose and after a while I kind of lost some of my motivation to be creative. But one night I saw someone who really enjoyed the performance, more than anyone else." He took a sip for his mug, then continued, "At first I just wanted to thank them for enjoying the show that much. No one else had ever come close to that level of enthusiasm, you know? I have this thing

where I like to listen to people as they talk about the shows during the intermissions to hear what can be improved and tweaked, but I wasn't able to hear from that person. Fortunately she came back on a regular basis, but we kept missing each other. I had a hard time knowing where to even start writing since I did not know what she thought. The only thing I could do was watch from a distance and appreciate her enthusiasm, though as time went, I guess that my appreciation changed into something else and my motivation had also changed from thanks to something else."

Zoë saw his wistful expression as he gazed off in the distance and gave him one more nudge, "What did it change into? What did you want to tell her?"

Now fully lost in his thoughts, he absentmindedly turned to Zoë and said, "That I love you, Miss who wears the orange dress."

After a few moments, the playwright realized that he had just revealed his true feelings to the person he had been admiring for so long, and he quickly looked away in embarrassment. When he looked back up at Zoë, the worries he had and the embarrassed apology that he was about to give her faded away when he saw her beaming smile.

Fin

The Nighthawk

Logan Pelletier

We learned to fear the Nighthawk at an early age;
An easy task, for it had a shape
unlike any bird we'd ever seen,
And as it screamed across the sky,
its angular pattern moving through the boundless atmosphere
the voices of freedom decried
"This is your liberator! You are being liberated!"
But those who saw it always died.

The ravenous screech announcing its arrival
was nothing compared to what it left behind.
Points of pressure, noise. Contact, fire;

A force which
De-renders bones;
Sunders homes;
Turns infrastructure to stones;
And sends the dust of the earth back to God.
We have no weapons capable of felling the Nighthawk.

They come daily now. The roads have all been demolished.
And due to the craters, It's been weeks since any of us have been fed.
If only the F-117 Nighthawk dropped bread and not bombs instead.

Baudelaire prisonnier d'un imaginaire Oriental façonné par la modernité

Ophélie Proulx-Giraldeau

Publié en 1857, *Les Fleurs du Mal* de Charles Baudelaire illustre l'imaginaire de l'âme tourmentée d'un poète œuvrant au cœur de l'effervescence de la vie moderne. Connu pour avoir défini la modernité comme étant : « le fugitif, le transitoire, le contingent, la moitié de l'art, dont l'autre moitié est l'éternel et l'immuable », Baudelaire devient l'emblème de son époque, l'auteur du mal du siècle, et le visage du *spleen*. Or, dans ses écrits, le poète incompris se marginalise et s'exclut de sa société qui le menace. En effet, dans des poèmes comme *Le Cygne,* ou *L'Albatros,* le narrateur est hostile face aux changements, à l'industrialisation et à la société qui l'entourent. Par le fait même, il devient ennemi de son époque. Cependant, s'il se marginalise volontairement, la société l'ostracise tout aussi bien. Associé à la figure du dandy et ouvertement consommateur de substances enivrantes, Baudelaire se taille rapidement une place au sein des « dégénérés » de son époque, concept scientifique fondamental émergeant au XIXe siècle. Comme l'explore Max Nordau dans son ouvrage *Dégénérescence* publié en 1892, le dégénéré est associé au criminel, au prostitué, ou à l'artiste. Il revêt alors une identité suspecte, menaçante et dangereuse pour la société. Celui-ci doit donc être identifié et éliminé. Toutefois, si Baudelaire semble être isolé de son époque, il ne peut se dissocier entièrement ni de sa mentalité dominante, ni de son imaginaire collectif. Ainsi, naïf peut-être dans son désir d'être marginal, c'est son fantasme de l'Orient qui trahit sa différence. En alimentant le concept d'Orientalisme dans des poèmes comme *La Chevelure*, *L'Invitation au voyage*, *Les Bijoux*, ou *Le serpent qui danse* Baudelaire s'inscrit parfaitement dans le mécanisme paternaliste et colonisateur de la sphère scientifique, littéraire, et artistique de son époque. Exploré par Edward Said en 1978 dans l'ouvrage *Orientalism*, l'Orientalisme devient un outil fondamental pour affirmer la domination de l'Ouest sur l'Est par le biais d'une conception erronée, fantastique et mystérieuse de l'Ailleurs. Ainsi, en utilisant tous les mécanismes propres à l'affirmation de ce pouvoir euro centriste, Baudelaire participe malgré lui au projet progressiste et industriel de la modernité. Il se retrouve prisonnier d'une époque qui, indirectement, façonne son œuvre et son imaginaire.

Si de nombreux écrits de Baudelaire témoignent de la solitude et de l'étrangeté du narrateur, c'est qu'ils reflètent parfaitement le constant combat que l'auteur entretient avec l'Autre dès son plus jeune âge. Comme le soutient Luc Decaunes dans la présentation de son anthologie sur Baudelaire : « dès l'adolescence, [il] s'est cru maudit, c'est-à-dire mis à part, incompris, exilé dans un univers où il se découvrait la proie de la sottise et de la méchanceté *des autres* ».[1] Ainsi, les « autres » devenant une menace très tôt, Baudelaire bâti son identité en marge. Toutefois, le poète ne cherche pas à se morfondre, mais bien à provoquer par son originalité étonnante. Il écrit à sa mère : « Je veux faire sentir sans cesse

(…) que je me sens étranger au monde et à ses cultes ».[2] C'est donc en créant ses propres cultes et son propre monde que Baudelaire se construit en opposition avec la société de son époque. Parmi tant d'autres, les poèmes *L'Albatros* et *Le Cygne*, publiés dans *Les Fleurs du Mal,* regorgent d'exemples illustrant le rapport hostile qu'entretient le narrateur étranger avec son univers. Dans *L'Albatros*, l'auteur compare « Le Poët » au « prince des nuées ». Il le décrit comme étant tout aussi « gauche et veule » et « comique et laid » que « ce voyageur ailé ». Toutefois, ce sont les deux derniers vers du poème qui décrivent le mieux la relation conflictuelle qu'il entretient avec son monde : « Exilé sur le sol au milieu des huées,/Ses ailes de géant l'empêchent de marcher. » Dans ces vers, Baudelaire fait resurgir l'essence de son poème qui donne au poète des habiletés de « géant » appartenant au monde élevé des idées. Il l'illustre comme étant inadapté au monde terrestre, et « exilé sur le sol » comme forcé dans un habitat qui lui est hostile. Or, dans *Le Cygne*, Baudelaire décrit plus précisément l'habitat, ou l'environnement malsain, dans lequel le poète doit œuvrer : le Paris moderne. Bien que le lieu devienne une de ses sources d'inspiration principales, ce n'est pas avec amour et admiration qu'il décrit la ville, mais bien avec nostalgie et amertume. C'est dans sa mémoire qu'il doit puiser le peu qui reste de cette ville changeante lui inspirant les vers : « Le vieux Paris n'est plus (la forme d'une ville/ Change plus vite, hélas! Que le cœur d'un mortel) ». Perdu et déboussolé tel un majestueux cygne déambulant au cœur d'une mer de béton, le poète déplore les « palais neufs, échafaudages, blocs » qui nourrissent sa mélancolie. Ici, c'est littéralement la modernisation et le progrès qui affligent Baudelaire. Pourtant, la transformation de Paris par Haussmann, permettant « l'ouverture de larges voies, l'amélioration de l'éclairage public, la restauration des monuments, [et] la destruction des quartiers les plus abjects de la ville »,[3] enchante la majorité des Parisiens. De plus, cette modernisation assure une protection militaire plus effective. Marquée par de nombreuses guerres, Paris doit absolument changer pour faciliter le déplacement d'éventuelle machinerie lourde, affirmer sa force militaire, et garder son statut de puissante métropole française. Or, nourri par la mémoire de « nœud de ruelles sinueuses, mal éclairées et insalubres »[4] du vieux Paris, reflétant l'esprit troublé du personnage, Baudelaire appartient aux rares âmes qui sont « nostalgiques d'un passé riche d'histoire »[5]. Ainsi, cherchant constamment à se décrire en opposition avec la majorité qui l'entoure, sa dissociation face à l'engouement général de la modernisation de Paris devient une opportunité en or pour alimenter et célébrer l'image de son identité solitaire et marginalisée.

Or, ce désir d'être maintenu en marge est également alimenté par la société qui rejette et exclut le poète tout autant. Son esprit tourmenté, ses désirs excessifs, sa consommation accrue de drogues enivrantes, et son aspect physique particulier inspirent les jugements et la critique de tous. En effet, les sciences psychiatriques (évoluant autour de la phrénologie et de la criminologie) extrêmement populaires de l'époque, donnent naissance au concept de « dégénérescence » auquel Baudelaire peut facilement être associé. Ces sciences populaires cherchent à rendre l'identification des types « dégénérés » plus efficace dans le but de les éliminer toujours dans l'optique d'assainir et purifier la société. Introduit par le psychiatre Bénédict Morel en 1857 dans son *Traité des dégénérescences physiques, intellectuelles et morales de l'espèce humaine et des causes qui produisent ces variétés maladives*, le concept est définit ainsi : « L'idée la plus claire que nous puissions nous former de la dégénérescence de l'espèce humaine, est de nous la représenter *comme une déviation maladive d'un type primitif* ».[6] Considéré comme un vice se transmettant

de génération en génération jusqu'à sa perte, le concept de dégénérescence humaine[7] est au cœur des préoccupations de l'époque. Originalement associée aux « criminels, [aux] prostituées, [aux] anarchistes ou [aux] fous déclarés »[8] le médecin Max Nordau élargit la famille des dégénérés aux écrivains et aux artistes. Dans son ouvrage *Dégénérescence* publié 1892, le médecin s'attaque entre autre à l'œuvre de Verlaine, Wagner, Huysmans, Nietzsche, Wilde, Schopenhauer, et Baudelaire. Acharné à analyser leurs travaux pour y relever toute preuve de profonds vices, Max Nordau diabolise ces esprits « dépravés ». (Par ailleurs, la condamnation qu'il fait du caractère de Baudelaire est assez drastique:

> Il a le « culte de soi-même », il abhorre la nature, le mouvement, la vie; il rêve d'un idéal d'immobilité, de silence éternel, de symétrie et d'artificiel; il aime la maladie, la laideur, le crime; tous ses penchants sont opposés en une profonde aberration à ceux des êtres sains (…) Il se plaint d'un effroyable ennui et de ses sentiments d'anxiété; son esprit n'est rempli que de représentations sombres, son association d'idées travaille exclusivement avec des images tristes ou répugnantes; la seule chose qui puisse le distraire et l'intéresser est le mal : meurtre, sang, luxure, mensonge. Il adresse ses prières à Satan et aspire à l'enfer.[9]

Dans son commentaire, Nordau identifie tous les éléments clefs de la poésie de Baudelaire pour en faire un diagnostique fidèle à celui du dégénéré. Il prend au pied de la lettre toutes les prouesses littéraires de l'auteur pour dresser une liste de symptômes soi-disant propre à la folie. En évacuant entièrement les subtilités artistiques, la beauté et les métaphores de l'œuvre de Baudelaire, Nordau le transforme en dangereux satanique. Par conséquent, selon la « science » de l'époque, Baudelaire fait assurément partie de ceux qu'il faut chasser de la société dans le but de l'assainir, puisqu'il est ennemi de la beauté, et de la raison. Enfin, s'ajoute à ce caractère qui s'oppose « à ceux des êtres sains » son aspect physique dépravé et ambigu. En effet, bien connu pour son dandysme qu'il définit lui-même comme « le besoin de se faire une originalité contenue dans les limites extérieures des convenances »,[10] Baudelaire porte une attention particulière à la manière de se vêtir et se crée une apparence qui s'oppose aux normes de son temps. Comme l'exprime Luc Decaunes, « Baudelaire varia merveilleusement sa tenue, au long de son existence; mais toujours avec une recherche et un goût presque féminins ».[11] Or, l'aspect féminin du dandy qui renforce la conception d'une sexualité ambiguë lui vaut une étiquette d'autant plus suspecte et dangereuse aux yeux de la société hétéronormative de l'époque. Ainsi, incarnant avec brio l'ensemble des caractéristiques qui forment le dégénéré, Baudelaire devient un produit de la société moderne qui, pourtant, doit s'en dissocier. S'il cherche autant à s'en défaire, elle tente tout autant de le chasser. Ancrée dans un idéal de progrès et d'industrialisation, la modernisation est tout aussi fatale pour les esprits tourmentés que les vieux quartiers insalubres de Paris.

Toutefois, peut-on affirmer avec autant de certitude qu'un produit de la société puisse s'en défaire aussi facilement? Car, bien que ce dernier puisse témoigner de tendances étrangères ou digressives, peut-il se défaire entièrement des idéologies et des mœurs véhiculées par la société de son époque? Si en surface Baudelaire devient l'ennemi de la modernité, son œuvre regorge d'images et de préjugés ancrés dans l'imaginaire collectif de son temps dont il semble profondément prisonnier. Par ailleurs, c'est sa riche contribution à la création de l'Orientalisme qui trahit sa tentative d'être opposé à la modernité. Peut-être naïf, ou aveugle, face aux prétentions colonialistes et dominatrices de l'idéal

orientaliste, Baudelaire contribue tout de même à alimenter une tendance qui est propre à la pensée moderne. Car, bien qu'il écrive à un moment crucial de l'Europe caractérisé par l'abolition de l'esclavage (1848) et qu'il entretienne une relation amoureuse compliquée avec Jeanne Duval, sa muse mulâtresse, le portrait qu'il crée de « l'Oriental » n'est certainement pas dénué d'un regard colonisateur. Il parvient donc à s'inscrire dans la tradition des penseurs affirmant l'autorité de l'Ouest sur l'Est; un Ailleurs où tout devient paresse, luxe, et enivrement. En effet, s'il se laisse charmer par un Ailleurs qui lui permet de s'évader sporadiquement de son Paris ennuyeux, il réaffirme un concept qui sera beaucoup plus tard introduit par Edward Said dans son ouvrage *Orientalism* publié en 1978 : L'Orientalisme. Ce que Said entend par « Orientalisme » c'est : « une idée qui a une histoire et une tradition de pensée, une imagerie et un vocabulaire qui lui ont donné une réalité et une présence en Occident et pour l'Occident ».[12] Autrement dit, il est question d'une représentation créée par l'Occident pour l'Occident qui reflète ses propres préoccupations et qui, par conséquent, ne devient en aucun cas une représentation factuelle d'une autre entité géographique.

Sans cesse réaffirmé dans les discours politiques, scientifiques, intellectuels et culturels, l'Orientalisme est caractérisé par son étrangeté et son primitivisme. Se tenant à l'opposé de l'idéal moderne , l'Orientalisme à, en réalité, « moins de rapports avec l'Orient qu'avec 'notre' monde »[13] puisqu'il est en réaction à tout ce que l'Occident n'est pas. Or, cette création par l'hégémonie occidentale est le résultat d'une attitude colonialiste et faussement supérieure que s'est donné l'Occident dès le début du projet des Lumières à la fin du XVIIIe siècle. Par ailleurs, l'engouement généré par la campagne d'Égypte menée par Napoléon Bonaparte de 1798 à 1801 renforce particulièrement le désir de posséder et déchiffrer les mystères de l'Orient. Ainsi, ancré dans un profond désir de tout connaître, de tout comprendre et de tout hiérarchiser dans l'exploration et la colonisation du territoire « oriental », l'Occident s'est octroyé un statut dominant. Car, comme le dit si bien Françis Bacon, penseur instigateur des Lumières : « *knowledge is power.* » Or, comme l'exprime Edward Said, cette « géographie imaginaire (…) légitime un vocabulaire, un univers du discours représentatif particulier à la discussion et à la compréhension de l'islam et de l'Orient ».[14] Ce discours, extrêmement présent dans l'histoire de l'art et dans la littérature, inspire d'ailleurs les Delacroix, les Ingres, les Gérôme ou les Hugo, les Flaubert, et les Chateaubriand de l'époque qui jouent avec le concept de l'Ailleurs pour véhiculer et légitimer des idées proscrites par l'Occident (relations sexuelles hors mariage, relations homosexuelles, sur-stimulations des sens, etc.) Ce sont : rondeur, odeur, vapeur, lumière, chaleur, bijoux, harem, bain turcs, palmiers et paresse qui appartiennent au vocabulaire qui fait rêver et alimente le fantasme oriental. Perpétuellement féminisé, l'Orient devient une Terre à conquérir, à dominer et à pénétrer. Par conséquent, cette féminisation de l'Autre devient un outil efficace pour l'argument auto-justificateur de l'affirmation de l'Ouest sur l'Est.

De plus, dans son essai *Inside Orientalism : Hybrid Spaces, Imaginary Landscapes and Modern Interior Design,* John Potvin introduit le lecteur au travail de Linda Nochlin qui identifie quatre majeures composantes ou « absences » de la peinture Orientaliste française du XIXe siècle qui s'ajoutent aux caractéristiques générales de l'Orientalisme mentionnées plus haut. Premièrement, Nochlin souligne que l'Orient semble s'être arrêté dans le temps. Systématiquement, il est dépeint dans une même « temporalité intemporelle ». Deuxièmement, elle constate que l'Occident est toujours absent, exclu ou désintéressé de l'Orient. Que ce

dernier n'y figure jamais et est manquant à l'Univers imaginaire. Troisièmement, elle soutient que les peintures orientalistes, faites avec un souci élevé de réalisme, perdent de leur statut artistique au profit du documentaire et du scientifique. Finalement, elle affirme que ces représentations nient la possibilité que le travail et l'industrialisation fassent parties intégrantes de l'Orient. Ainsi, Baudelaire, lui-même critique d'art et connaisseur du langage visuel de l'Orientalisme, devient expert en la matière et est certainement influencé (consciemment, ou non) par ces quatre absences (en plus des caractéristiques générales des représentations Orientalistes) pour recréer, avec perfection, l'idéale rêverie d'un Ailleurs et échapper à son « spleen de Paris ».

Les exemples de stéréotypes et de fausses représentations alimentant l'illusion orientale pullulent dans l'œuvre de Baudelaire. Il semblerait presqu'impossible de pouvoir rassembler et analyser l'ensemble des affirmations fantasmagoriques évoquées par l'auteur dans ses écrits tellement elles sont nombreuses. Après tout, Baudelaire écrit énormément avec ses sens qui sont particulièrement stimulés par la lumière, les sons, les parfums et les goûts exotiques. L'Orientalisme étant alimenté par une conception dans laquelle une constante stimulation des sens est possible grâce à l'encens, les parfums, la vapeur, la musique, la lumière ou la luxure joue un rôle important dans l'écriture des Baudelaire. Dans *Les Bijoux* ou dans *Le serpent qui danse*, les descriptions synesthésiques aux images évocatrices sont très nombreuses. D'abord, dans *Les Bijoux*, Baudelaire fait référence à « des bijoux sonores », un « bruit vif et moqueur », un « monde rayonnant de métal et de pierre » et à un « son [qui] se mêle à la lumière ». Ces mots, tous également évocateurs d'une stimulation profonde des sens, ne sont pas explicitement évocateurs de l'Orient. Cependant, ils font référence, grâce au titre, au luxe et au rêve d'une richesse insaisissable souvent associés à l'imagerie orientale. Dans *Le serpent qui danse*, l'association sens/orient devient plus explicite. En effet, lorsque Baudelaire écrit « Sur ta chevelure profonde/Aux âcres parfums,/ Mer odorante et vagabonde/Aux flots bleus et bruns, » il est particulièrement inspiré par la mer. Certainement éloignée de Paris, la mer est évoquée par un « parfum âcre » et devient porteuse d'un Ailleurs lointain, d'un espoir d'exile, et de transit vers le voyage. Encore une fois, le titre confirme le ton Oriental du poème en faisant directement référence à la tradition des charmeurs de serpents, scène typique qui inspire notamment le peintre Gérôme dans sa fameuse œuvre *Le charmeur de serpents* qui, d'ailleurs, fait office de page couverture pour la première édition de *Orientalism* d'Edward Said.

S'ajoute à ces premières observations un aspect important de l'Orientalisme auquel Baudelaire fait référence dans *La Chevelure*. Très bien expliqué par Françoise Lionnet dans son essai *« The Indies » : Baudelaire's Colonial World*, cet aspect est celui qui propose que l'Ailleurs implique un vaste territoire jamais nommé dans lequel aucune différence entre cultures ou traditions n'est notable. Elle écrit :

> The unnaming of these distant spaces and their interchangeability in popular consciousness are also due to a familiar pattern in colonial discourse: "others," whatever their origin(s), are defined by similar terms and become indistinguishable from one another when the critic is focusing on the more universalist and civilizational elements of the poetry.[15]

Autrement dit, Lionnet insiste sur l'aspect anonyme de l'entité Oriental qui devient un tout confus et impersonnel. Baudelaire participe explicitement à

cette conception confuse dans laquelle l'idéal paradisiaque de l'Orient s'applique à l'ensemble du territoire « Autre ». Dans *La chevelure*, le poète écrit: « La langoureuse Asie et la brûlante Afrique,/Tout un monde lointain, absent, presque défunt,/Vit dans tes profondeurs, forêt aromatique! ». Or, dans ces quelques vers, l'Asie et l'Afrique se confondent volontairement dans le même idéal et dans le même fantasme. Elles s'inscrivent de manière égale dans la construction d'un rêve exotique, du mystère, et de l'excitation des sens. Par conséquent, ces vers réaffirment l'association erronée de cultures, traditions, géographies, religions, cultes, et histoires différentes en une seule et grande généralisation qui participe au phénomène Orientaliste.

La femme étant pratiquement dans tous les cas le véhicule des désirs du poète, il est presque inutile de souligner l'importance que donne Baudelaire à la féminisation de l'Autre. Ce corps, représenté comme lubrique et sensuel, semble être la personnification parfaite du territoire à conquérir et du fantasme ultime. C'est pourquoi il y fait référence dans pratiquement tous ses poèmes aux tendances orientales. Dans *Les Bijoux*, le poème commence avec « La très-chère était nue ». Dans *La chevelure*, le poème se termine par « N'es-tu pas l'oasis où je rêve, et la gourde/Où je hume à longs traits le vin du souvenir? ». Dans *Le serpent qui danse*, le poème débute avec la strophe : « Que j'aime voir, chère indolente,/De ton corps si beau,/Comme une étoffe vacillante,/Miroiter la peau! ». Enfin, dans *À une Malabaraise*, les premiers vers du poèmes vont ainsi : « Tes pieds sont aussi fins que tes mains, et ta hanche/Est large à faire envie à la plus belle blanche ;/A l'artiste pensif ton corps est doux et cher ;/Tes grands yeux de velours sont plus noirs que ta chair. » Cette liste, échantillon d'une très mince portion des écrits de Baudelaire, témoigne de l'innombrable quantité d'exemples faisant référence aux désirs qu'évoque le corps féminin à la fois inconnu et étranger. Toujours réaffirmée comme étant au cœur de son fantasme, cette idée est rattachée au désir de conquête colonisatrice d'un territoire vierge à pénétrer. De plus, le fait que le corps masculin de Baudelaire devient observateur extérieur du corps féminin réaffirme le concept dans lequel Nochlin souligne que l'occidental s'exclut ou s'absente de la représentation orientaliste. Ainsi, en affirmant son regard masculin externe sur l'Autre, Baudelaire s'insère parfaitement dans l'idée que l'Orient devient un sujet dissocié de l'observateur qui consomme l'imagerie paradisiaque s'offrant à lui. Par conséquent, l'Autre féminisé, considéré comme inférieur dans un rapport à l'Occident masculin, devient un outil efficace de l'argument auto-justificateur au colonialisme.

En poursuivant, Baudelaire intitule deux de ses oeuvres *L'Invitation au voyage*. L'une, dans *Les Fleurs du Mal* est un poème en vers, tandis que l'autre s'inscrit dans la série de poèmes en proses du *Spleen de Paris*. Dans les deux écrits, ce sont les mêmes idées qu'il véhicule et réaffirme. D'abord, dans le poème en vers, la strophe : « Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté,/Luxe, calme et volupté. » est répétée à trois reprises. Cette répétition met automatiquement l'accent sur les premières caractéristiques fondamentales de l'Orientalisme. Par les mots « ordre » et « beauté », Baudelaire attribue à l'Ailleurs des caractéristiques opposées à celle de son Paris pluvieux en constante transformation. La géographie exotique à laquelle il fait référence devient forcément tout ce que « son Occident » n'est pas. Puis, avec les mots « luxe » et « calme », il renforce le côté primitif ou incorruptible de l'Orient : là où le temps reste immobile et intouché par le progrès historique ou industriel et où la population peut se permettre le luxe de la paresse. Enfin, le mot « volupté » qui complète le vers vient assurément ajouter à l'image de l'Ailleurs

sa touche sensuelle et jouissive. Définit comme un vif plaisir des sens et évoquant naturellement une connotation sexuelle, le mot « volupté » vient compléter l'imagerie féminisée de l'Autre enivrant. Ces vers, repris sous forme de prose dans l'écrit du même titre: « Un vrai pays de Cocagne, où tout est beau, riche, tranquille, honnête; où le luxe a plaisir à se mirer dans l'ordre; où la vie grasse et douce à respirer; d'où le désordre, la turbulence et l'imprévu sont exclus; où le bonheur est marié au silence (…) », réaffirme exactement les mêmes idées. Ce sont les mêmes outils, le même champ lexical, et les mêmes images qu'évoque le poète. Encore une fois, la tranquillité, la beauté, le luxe, la douceur (en opposition au désordre), et le bonheur dominent l'imaginaire exotique. Or, ce vocabulaire, entièrement créé par l'Occident, est le seul qui circule pour parler de l'Orient. Comme exploré par Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak dans son essai post-colonial intitulé *Can the Subaltern Speak?,* le « *subaltern* » où « l'Autre » n'est pas en possession de sa propre identité puisqu'il n'a pas le vocabulaire pour la définir. Autrement dit, le vocabulaire est le produit d'une élite privilégiée. Par conséquent, l'individu en marge ou exclu de la puissante sphère dominante ne peut se définir autrement que par un vocabulaire inadéquat ou inexistant. Ainsi, Baudelaire, reconnu pour avoir été influencé de nombreux écrits de voyages comme ceux de Melchior-Honoré Yvan[16] se nourrit de ce vocabulaire populaire inadéquat et des images véhiculées en masse par ces écrits pour composer son imaginaire.

Heureusement, ayant voyagé lui-même dans sa jeunesse aux îles Mauritius et Bourbon,[17] Baudelaire peut utiliser ses propres expériences pour parler du voyage et de l'Ailleurs (contrairement à d'autres artistes de son époque comme Ingres ou Delacroix qui ne pouvaient se fier qu'aux écrits rarement objectifs composés par d'autres). Par conséquent, il s'inscrit dans la tradition d'auteurs qui, comme Gauthier, Chateaubriand ou Loti, ont réellement vécu à l'étranger. Or, comme l'explique Christopher L. Miller dans *A New History of French Litterature*, le voyageur occidental, majoritairement en quête de beauté et d'images inspirantes, ferme son regard à la réalité socio-politique de l'Orient et ne se consacre qu'à l'aspect esthétique du voyage dans le but d'enrichir sa production artistique.[18] Ainsi, ce n'est plus la « réelle réalité » de l'Ailleurs qui le stimule, mais bien le rêve, ou l'impression esthétique du lieu. Le souvenir sensoriel guide la plume de l'auteur : les odeurs, la lumière, les images et les couleurs persistent, tandis que le reste est évacué.

De plus, comme le soutient Françoise Lionnet, la « légitimité » attribuée aux évocations de l'Orient basée sur de réelles observations et expériences peut devenir problématique. Car, comme elle le mentionne, si Baudelaire a réellement été influencé par son expérience, le réalisme que cette dernière peut donner à ses écrits élimine l'art de son œuvre et devient carrément « irrelevant to the aesthetic realm and to literary autonomy ».[19] En effet, en retournant à l'idée que l'aliénation de l'art au profit du réalisme anecdotique ou scientifique fait partie d'une des « absences » de l'Orientalisme selon Nochlin, il faut conclure que la représentation artistique de l'Orient se doit de rester dans le domaine artistique. Autrement dit, si elle semble devenir un relevé factuel, empirique et scientifique créé par l'artiste, la représentation peut se tailler dangereusement dans la sphère Orientaliste. De plus, Ainsi, mal interprétée, ou influencée par le fait que son auteur ait vécu à l'étranger, la poésie de Baudelaire peut facilement contribuer à alimenter la légitimité de l'imaginaire oriental.

Cependant, plutôt en désaccord avec la lecture colonialiste des poèmes exotiques de Baudelaire, Françoise Lionnet estime que dans le poème *Le Cygne* le

poète critique « the exploitation of nature and of human beings [in] reference to the disappearance of the island's […] ravages caused by colonial agriculture ».[20] Or, dépendamment de l'interprétation et de la générosité que l'on veut attribuer au travail de Baudelaire, la compassion envers l'Ailleurs ainsi que la dénonciation des ravages colonialistes par le poète n'est pas aussi évidente. C'est-à-dire que, bien qu'il fasse effectivement référence à une géographie désolée dans ce poème, Baudelaire n'est pas pour autant acquitté de sa contribution aux problèmes en lien avec la conception de l'Orientalisme. Dans *Le Cygne* le poète illustre les « ravages causés par l'agriculture coloniale » ainsi : « Je pense à la négresse, amaigrie et phtisique,/Piétinant dans la boue, et cherchant, l'œil hagard,/Les cocotiers absents de la superbe Afrique/Derrière la muraille immense du brouillard; ». Cette « négresse amaigrie» et « cherchant, l'œil hagard, les cocotiers absents » est décrite comme étant en détresse et déracinée de son environnement. D'une part, cette image fait clairement écho à la situation de Baudelaire devenu lui-même étranger dans son Paris natal maintenant transformé. D'autre part, bien qu'elle semble être empreinte de compassion, cette représentation d'une Terre désolée renforce l'image de ce que l'Orient « devrait être » selon l'imaginaire collectif orientaliste: un lieu primitif intouché par l'industrialisation. En d'autres mots, elle nourrit l'illusion d'une réalité meilleure où les palmiers et la beauté devraient dominer. Ainsi, bien qu'il semble troublé par ce que la colonisation et l'industrialisation font à l'Orient, Baudelaire contribue à alimenter et à réaffirmer le rêve perdu d'un Ailleurs à la fois sauvage, pur, mystérieux et enchanteur. Paradoxalement, le poète devient donc à la fois dénonciateur du colonialisme et contributeur de l'imagerie orientale colonialiste.

Somme toute, la contribution de Baudelaire à la fabrication de l'idée Orientaliste est non négligeable. Illustrant à merveille les nombreuses caractéristiques identifiées par plusieurs auteurs comme étant au cœur de la conception erronée de l'Orient, Baudelaire participe activement à la création de l'imaginaire oriental par ses écrits. Par le fait même, il s'inscrit parfaitement dans l'imaginaire collectif de sa société qui, bien qu'il ait tenté tant bien que mal de s'en dissocier, le fait prisonnier. Produit de la modernité, Baudelaire ne peut échapper aux idéologies véhiculées par l'époque dans laquelle il œuvre. Il est forcément un penseur qui reflète la pensée de son temps et les tendances qui courent. Car, bien qu'il soit profondément inspiré par un Ailleurs qu'il n'aura jamais réellement visité de fond en comble, touché par les effets dévastateurs du colonialisme, et investi dans une relation houleuse avec Jeanne Duval, sa muse à la peau noire, le poète ne peut échapper à une lecture colonialiste qui réaffirme un rapport de force de l'Occident sur l'Orient. Ainsi, faisant la promotion des idées véhiculées par son époque, Baudelaire est piégé. Éternellement condamné à faire partie intégrante de sa société, il ne peut échapper aux échafaudages, aux blocs de béton, au ciel gris de Paris, et à sa marginalisation perpétuelle. Il reste captif de son époque : prisonnier de son spleen.

End Notes

1 Decaunes 27
2 Ibid 10
3 Marville 12
4 Ibid 9
5 Ibid
6 Nordau 24

7 Notamment, Zola s'inspire de la dégénérescence humaine pour créer son œuvre monumentale : Les Rougon-Macquart qui s'inscrit dans l'essor des sciences psychiatriques.
8 Nordau 23
9 Ibid 339
10 Decaunes 29
11 Ibid 34
12 Said 17
13 Ibid 25
14 Ibid 89
15 Lionnet 731
16 Ibid 729
17 Ibid 731
18 Miller 701
19 Lionnet 732
20 Ibid 727

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