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P for Problematic: Welles and the Essay Film

Corey Gates

This paper analyzes Welles's film *F for Fake* through the lens of genre theory. What is problematic with this method of analysis is the genre in which it is being studied: the essay film. The essay film is still an under-theorized and much-debated term in film studies and this paper does not present a fixed conclusion as to the definition of the term. However, through a study of current theories on essay film, the paper will outline specific technical attributes that films most commonly accepted as "essay films" share. Identification of these same attributes in Welles's film allows the study to properly analyze *F for Fake*'s peculiar cinematic experience in terms of genre, and in turn, offer new insights into the debate over the definition of essay film.

In 1975, Orson Welles made his last complete, feature length film, which he described as "a new kind of film." This last film, *F for Fake*, as far as being a new kind of film, is almost unrecognizable as part of his oeuvre. The film is devoid of the traits that can be considered "Wellesian" – except his trademark complex editing, public persona and autobiographical details; which by no means is a bad thing, especially since most auteurs seem doomed to fall into creative ruts. However, the sheer break with popular cinematic convention was so startling to audiences at its release that it prompted some to say that it wasn't even a film (Rosenbaum). This is an unexpected criticism of a work by someone who is widely regarded as a master of the cinematic form, but as anyone who has seen the film can confirm, *F for Fake* eludes clean-cut definition. Welles's longtime collaborator and friend, Richard Wilson, when asked to characterize the films from the end of Welles's career, called them *essay films* (Domènech 79). Peter Bogdanovich, another of Welles's troupe (and, perhaps, his protégée) refers to *F for Fake* in an introduction to a DVD release for the film as: "[A] kind of essay, I suppose you could say; it's not really a documentary...it's as though you said to Orson Welles, 'what do you have to say about the subject of fakery, art forgery, charlatanism, magicianship, the idea of authorship and experts?'" (Criterion). This description seems to come closest to what Welles meant when he said, "a new kind of film." But what exactly is an *essay film*, and what does it mean in relation to Welles's film? To define or at least analyze *F for Fake* in terms that will give us answers to these questions, and to detect what Welles is trying to accomplish cinematically is the goal of this paper.

The *essay film* is a film of contradictions; it lies somewhere at the crossroads of documentary, narrative and experimental cinema but eludes the genre trappings of all three. The term itself has been thrown around for the past few decades to describe certain films that resist all other classification while the term itself was lightly pawed at by film theorists. Only recently have theorists taken on the task of analyzing in depth the mysterious form, debating if it should be its own genre or if it is too protean to be fixed in one. Analysis of *F for Fake* encounters this problematic sense of genre as well;

therefore, a review of the history and development of the *essay film* will help us understand just what all the cuts, doublings, interviews, monologues and images used by Welles mean in an essayistic sense (and how they make the film so entertaining). Before delving into the *essay film's* past, a basic understanding of the literary essay from which our subject evolved is necessary. We will find that what is characteristic of the literary essay form can almost completely transfer over to *essay film*. What we recognize as the literary essay of today stems from the works of 16th century social critic and philosopher, Michel de Montaigne. Film and media scholar Nora M. Alter perfectly summarizes the notion of the essay according to Montaigne in her paper, "Translating the Essay Into Film and Installation" (2007):

By 'essay', Montaigne meant the testing of ideas, himself...and society. It was a wide-ranging form of cognitive perambulation that reflected upon fundamental questions of life and human frailty, tensions and overlaps between 'fact' and 'fiction', and their consequences for social order and disorder. Since Montaigne, the essay has retained some of its distinguishing features. Its weapons are humor, irony, satire, paradox; its atmosphere is contradiction and the collision of opposites. (45)

This summarization of Montaigne's essay is the foundation on which 20th century critics built their own theories of classifying the essay into a literary genre – a task that proved almost as hard as that of classifying the essay film. Two of the most important of these critics are Georg Lukács and Theodor Adorno, who took upon themselves not only the task of classifying the essay, but also of defending it in a skeptical, intellectual climate where the form was so new that there was not yet a word in the German language for it. The two have somewhat conflicting thoughts on the literary essay, but the ideas of both are crucial to our understanding of *essay film*.

Lukács (who was critically active during the very beginning of the 20th-century) suggests that the essay is criticism as a form of art, and uses a metaphor of ultra-violet rays refracted through the literary prism to describe the essay's place in general literature. Furthermore, Alter points out that, "it was Lukács who [first] theorized the translation of the written essay into a new aesthetic medium, and it was he who also reformulated Schlegel's famous dictum that the 'theory of the novel should be a novel' into the idea that the theory of the essay should be an essay or the theory of film a film" (48). On the other hand, Adorno (who was critically active long after Lukács) disagrees with him on the condition of 'art' being in the definition of the essay; he argues that the only relationship the essay has with art is that they both are constantly pursuing new modes of presentation. In addition to this disagreement, Adorno takes on the task of defining this "cognitive perambulation" that Montaigne uses in his description of the essay. Adorno described thought as not progressing in a single direction; instead, the moments of thought are interwoven like the threads of a carpet (Alter 47). This definition of thought in a literary essay bridges the gap to *essay films*, in the sense that

“moments of thought” can be changed to “images” and we would have the definition of montage, that is, film editing. As we will see, montage is a major factor in what makes a film essayistic.

The humble beginning of theorizing the *essay film* brings us to the end of the 1920's, when none other than the great filmmaker and theorist Sergei Eisenstein was literally trying to make a film based on a written essay. The written essay was Karl Marx's *Capital*, and the film, *October 1917*. Eisenstein felt that the film was a first for the medium in the sense that it was comprised of essays on the themes of the film rather than presenting its theme through narrative (Rascaroli 27). Unfortunately, the film was funded by the socialist state (under Stalin) and Eisenstein had to re-edit his film in order to cut out all mention of Stalin's political rival and glorify the events of October 1917. His original plan to completely adapt a theoretical text to film was lost to these restrictions, and it is because of this that Eisenstein's comments about essay and film went by relatively unnoticed or ignored. After *October 1917*, the term *essay film* does not resurface in film theory or analysis for another decade or so. In 1940, the first article specifically dedicated to fleshing out the definition of *essay film* is written by German filmmaker and theorist Hans Richter. The article, “Der Filmessay, Eine neue Form des Dokumentarfilms,” describes *essay film* as a new type of cinema that is both intellectual and emotional, capable of visualizing the formerly un-filmable, i.e. internal thought or the portrayal of a concept. But how exactly does *essay film* accomplish what Richter claims it is capable of? Recall Theodor Adorno's description of thought in a literary essay and its similarity to montage, for it is through montage that the essay film accomplishes the portrayal of a concept and internal thought.

The editing technique of *essay film* is first touched upon in a review of Chris Marker's *Letters From Siberia* (1957) by the great French film critic and scholar André Bazin (who in this same article is the first to refer to a film as essayistic). He describes Marker's film as, “an essay documented by film” (Rascaroli). Instead of vaguely using the term to describe a film that no one else had any clue as to what it should be classified as, Bazin explains the relation of literary essay to *essay film* through the importance of voice-over and montage:

The important word is “essay,” understood in the same sense that it has in literature – an essay at once historical and political, written by a poet as well. Generally, even in politically engaged documentaries or those with a specific point to make, the image (which is to say, the uniquely cinematic element) effectively constitutes the primary material of the film. The orientation of the work is expressed through the choices made by the filmmaker in the montage, with the commentary completing the organization of the sense thus conferred on the document. With Marker it works quite differently. I would say that the primary material is intelligence, that its immediate means of expression is language, and that

the image only intervenes in the third position, in reference to this verbal intelligence....Marker brings to his films an absolutely new notion of montage that I will call "horizontal" as opposed to traditional montage that plays with the sense of duration through the relationship of shot to shot. Here, a given image doesn't refer to the one that preceded it or the one that will follow, but rather it refers laterally, in some way, to what is said. (44-45)

It is this concept of horizontal montage that is integral to the *essay film's* structure, and because the images that make up the montage rely on 'what is said,' voice-over is just as important.† Voice-over in an *essay film* is unlike the form used by narrative and documentary cinema (voice-over as narration in the former and as didacticism in the latter) in the sense that it is dialectic. The best way to describe voice-over in an *essay film* is as a discourse on what is being presented visually. It is through the discourse made possible by horizontal montage that *essay film* accomplishes the testing of ideas, self, and society that Montaigne felt were hallmarks of the literary essay. We will see in the following analysis of *F for Fake* that Welles touches upon these hallmarks in a unique way, ultimately confirming the comments made by his contemporaries at the beginning of this paper.

From the very moment the film begins Welles eases us into our new role as audience: interlocutors in the film's discourse. Before the first shot of the film fades in from black, Welles's voice-over begins, asking us to lend him a personal object for his next illusion. The voice-over continues as though a magician is addressing us over static shots of what seems to be a train station before finally cutting to reveal that Welles is in fact a magician performing a trick; and instead of talking to us, Welles is addressing a child. This appears to be an establishing shot intended to connect the voice-over of the static shots to the dialogue between Welles and the child, but what follows directly is strange: as Welles continues the trick, he asks, "You've met my associate Monsieur Reichenbach?" We cut to a film crew filming Welles and the child. The cameraman looks up from the eyepiece and gives Welles a thumbs-up. This totally disrupts any traditional sense of cinematic security that the previous establishing shot gave us. As for the trick he is performing, it is a simple sleight-of-hand involving a key and a coin. Via the voice-over, Welles asks the child (and us as well) to look for any signs of "hanky panky" during a montage of close-ups on his hand performing the trick. Here we have

† A little clarification: Bazin is describing the difference between horizontal montage and what we now call intelligent montage (formerly known as dialectical montage, kinetic montage, or montage by attraction per Bazin). Intelligent montage is an editing technique in which the film-maker places shots in an order that will produce a compound meaning; the cut from one image to the other creates a sentiment not found in either of the images alone, but is found in their combination. Intelligent montage, however, presupposes that images are the only components of the montage. With horizontal montage, Bazin is saying that the compound meaning produced between shots is instead produced between the shot and the voice-over playing during that shot.

an example of Bazin's horizontal montage working in a self-reflexive sense because the voice-over pertaining to the images is telling us to watch for the cuts – the “hanky panky” – in the cinematic illusion. After this sequence Welles remarks in voice-over that, “the key wasn't symbolic of anything – this isn't that kind of movie,” but we know, because it is rather obvious, that the “key” to the magic trick scene is editing. In this opening scene, Welles has drawn our attention to the fact that we are watching a film where there will be some trickery, but because of his method in introducing us to the film, we will all be aware (or at least try to be) of anything of that sort. Therefore, we will be participating with the film in a manner in which we will be constantly questioning the information presented to us; that is, we have entered a discourse with Welles on the subject of his film. I use the term “subject” very lightly because one could argue that the discourse itself is the subject of the film, but for the sake of analysis, I will briefly summarize the “frame subject” (however, even this term will become problematic) that acts as the agent, or arena, for discourse.

The majority of *F for Fake's* footage is interviews from an unfinished documentary by Francois Reichenbach (the cameraman from the first scene in Welles's film) concerning an event in the early 1970's that scandalized the art world: the exposure of Elmyr de Hory as the twentieth century's most notorious art forger. This serves as the first level of our frame subject. The second level was created through chance – sometime after production was discontinued on the documentary, Welles picked up the project and was filming new footage to be edited together with Reichenbach's original, and a writer named Clifford Irving who had published a biography of Elmyr (titled *Fake!*) was interviewed extensively and appeared to be Elmyr's closest friend. As it turns out, just a short while after Welles finished shooting, Irving became famous for publishing a biography of the reclusive millionaire, Howard Hughes – which ended up being completely fabricated. Having filmed a documentary about a faker with the help of someone who ended up being just as much of a faker was too much for Welles to resist; he shot more footage covering Irving's exposure to the public and edited it together with everything that came before it. Finally, if that wasn't complicated enough, Welles uses his own history as a faker, or charlatan as he calls himself in the film (citing his famous “War of the Worlds” radio hoax), for the third level of the frame subject. Amidst this tangled web of frame subjects the method of the *essay film* is at work: horizontal montage will direct the discourse to subjects such as the concept of authorship, the validity of experts and the meaning of art itself.

Following Montaigne's meaning of essay, the ideas being tested are the previously mentioned subjects of the discourse; each touched upon by Welles's voice-over or the various people in the film. The concept of authorship is debated more subtly compared to the other two in the sense that the opinions of the people in the film discredit or downplay the concept, but Welles counters their arguments indirectly referring to his past films. This explains why, for a film in which Welles said he was trying to avoid any “Wellesian” references, many can be found within the film. As critic

Jonathan Rosenbaum points out: “the echoes of the fire consuming the Rosebud sled [from *Citizen Kane*] in the burning of a couple of [Elmyr’s] forged canvases...the way various ‘conversations’ manufactured through editing reproduce aspects of the community chatter about the Ambersons in *The Magnificent Ambersons*, or the way a Gypsy-like fiddle, Welles’s Slavic intonations, and all the frenetic plane-hopping call to mind *Mr. Arkadin*,” (5) are all references to Welles’s long career in cinema within *F for Fake* (not to be overlooked as well are the numerous shots of Welles walking in front of a segmented, store front window; his many reflections in the glass recalling the finale of *The Lady From Shanghai*) and seem to reinforce the notion of authorship. The meaning of art is mused over in a beautiful segment on Chartres cathedral (which is shot like the first glimpses of Kane’s Xanadu and figures prominently in *The Trial*) and the subject (or maybe problem) of experts is handled with brutal honesty through dialogue with the film’s personalities.

The “self” being tested in the film is very complicated. While one would assume that the self means Welles in this case (and one would not necessarily be wrong) it actually means all of them; Welles, Elmyr and Irving – and anyone who identifies with them for that matter. This is apparent from the similarities in the three faker’s histories. The film technically accomplishes this infinite mirroring through carefully edited bits of footage that create a single voice-over which is delivered from all three voices; giving them an air of interchangeability in some instances. Conversely, Welles focuses on himself (or rather pokes fun at the legend of himself) from time to time for what seems like no other reason than self-parody itself. Remember the Paul Masson wine commercials, Welles the gourmet assuring us that “We will sell no wine before its time,” or the scores of Hollywood restaurants that boast an, “Orson Welles Special,” usually consisting of odd combinations of food in large quantities? Welles pokes fun at those aspects of his life several times, most obviously in the scene in La Méditerranée restaurant when he orders the steak au poivre right after finishing a massive plate of seafood.

The testing of society is present throughout the entire film, most recognizably in the subversive themes Welles presents us: that experts are irrelevant, that art can be anything that demands to be taken as art. What could be more trying for a society built on value and recognition of achievement than Welles’s entire segment on Chartres cathedral, merely saying of its unknown authorship, “the important thing is that it exists?” Welles softens the intellectual blow by offering a parable, so to speak, to help us digest all the information just consumed. The scene is a short piece of fiction (although we do not find that out until the very end) about Pablo Picasso and Welles’s mistress, Oja Kodar. In the scenario, Oja is on holiday in the same town that Picasso is, and her beauty is so powerful that he begs to paint her. She agrees on the condition that she gets to keep all of the paintings he produces, which she then sells to an art gallery to make a fortune. What follows is a heartfelt (and rather outrageous) dialogue between Welles and Kodar that drives home all the important questions that Welles wants us to think

about after seeing his film. This last bit of fiction at the end leaves us with an overall structure to the film that mirrors the best accepted definition of *essay film* to date. For if the *essay film* is “between narrative fiction and documentary” (Alter 45) *F for Fake* is a composite of the two. Notice that the opening sequence with Welles as the magician and “the great outdoor sport of girl watching,” and the ending with Picasso and Oja, really have no relation to the middle of the film but act as parentheses: total fiction encapsulating nonfiction encapsulating the discourse.

There’s something to be said about Welles’s subject(s) mirroring the means of his film-making – there has never been an art form as appropriate as cinema to discuss a subject as slippery as the art of fakery. The art of cinema, or more specifically, Welles’s background in Hollywood narrative cinema, requires the director to constantly fake reality. The director has to convince the “experts” (that is to say us – the people who live outside of what is on the screen) that what we are seeing is reality, and that we get, at the very least, emotionally involved in what we witness. *F for Fake* is not a narrative film because it reminds us constantly that we are watching a movie, yet, we still become emotionally involved with the film’s personalities. *F for Fake* is not a documentary because of its dependence on fiction to demonstrate some of its key ideas. What we are left with is truly a new kind of film; the *essay film* in one of its most entertaining and accessible forms. (Today, *essay films* are mostly the adaptation of theoretical texts to film vis-à-vis Eisenstein, but these films carry a sense of formalism that is not present in Welles’s film). What is problematic is the varying degrees by which a film can be essayistic suggesting that it is true that the term is too protean to be contained in a solid genre, but with the analysis presented in this paper, we are able to identify certain techniques in films that would otherwise elude definition and can understand them for the better. Even if one doesn’t quite understand why, how or what is going on in an *essay film*, one at least knows it has a certain power – and to echo Welles, “The important thing is that it exists.”

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Criminal Queers

Matt Keefe

This essay focuses on two different fictional interpretations of a true murder crime as represented in James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room* versus William Burroughs' part in *And the Hippos Were Boiled in Their Tanks*. It discusses the role of homosexuality in the two novels and in particular David Kammerer's affection for the much younger Lucien Carr, which eventually led the latter to murder the former. The two novels provide very different representations of the same story that speak to the varying perceptions and stigmas surrounding homosexuality and their influences on contemporary writers.

On August 14, 1944, Lucien Carr stabbed David Kammerer with a Boy Scout knife, twice, in the upper chest. According to James Gauerholz's essay, "Afterword to *And the Hippos Were Boiled in Their Tanks*," the volatile relationship between Lucien Carr and David Kammerer, a friend of Carr's mother, began in 1936 when Carr was only 11 years old and Kammerer was 25. The relationship however came to an abrupt end several years later when the two were 19 and 33 years old, respectively. An issue both overpoweringly omnipresent and carefully suppressed throughout American culture, homosexuality remains a subject so taboo that it sparks anxiety, violence, punishment, and inspiration among contemporary authors. The intolerance and prejudice towards alternative sexual orientations manifests itself in the works of writers all across the spectrum of sexual preference, but particularly in those of James Baldwin and William S. Burroughs. And though the writers present and deal with the problem of the invisible disciplining of modern society by other members of society and the internalization of that disciplining, Foucault's view of the Panopticon as a metaphor for an otherwise unseen problem is helpful in understanding the core of the problem.

The aforementioned crime, concerning the murder of David Kammerer, became the framework for dozens of stories and novels at the time, but proved particularly inspiring for Baldwin, author of *Giovanni's Room*, and the then-unknown authors Burroughs and Kerouac, who co-wrote *And the Hippos Were Boiled in Their Tanks*. The different renditions and narrations of the brutal crime, appealing to a range of emotions from sympathy to amusement, offer various insights and critiques of how homosexuality is represented both in individual and societal contexts.

It is important to bear in mind that up until the sexual revolution in America, misguided 19th century literature dominated public opinion about homosexuality.

Alder Blumer, a distinguished psychologist, was one of the first to report a case of “perverted sexual instinct” and labeled his patient, a transvestite who abhorred females but also didn’t practice sodomy, as “insane” and “possibly epileptic” (Bullough 587). This type of a description was frequently seen in medical literature about those departing from the accepted norms of sexual behavior. A year later, two physicians by the names of Shaw and Ferris tried to do what they called “educating members of professional groups in America” by making absolutely no original conclusions and even failing to acknowledge the existence of homosexuals in America. They implied that “such cases were not often seen on the North American continent” (587). Over the next several decades, “perversion” would be linked back to physical deformities of the brain, like in those whom we now commonly refer to as “idiots,” or to deformities of the genitalia, like in those to whom we now refer as “hermaphrodites.” In some cases, the cause of sexual deviancy was even declared a direct result of too much masturbation. That is why Baldwin and Burroughs use their novels to investigate this presumed perversion through very different points of view; Baldwin’s narration criticizes these mislead views, coming from a slightly homophobic protagonist who is actually gay himself while Burroughs essentially offers a strictly satirical justification for deeming an entire demographic as idiotic.

In the way Baldwin sees the Carr/Kammerer story, or rather decides to depict it, Giovanni, the character most representative of Lucien Carr, is a kindhearted, young man driven to insanity by the deceptions and slander fabricated by the character of Guillaume, who illustrates the characteristics of David Kammerer in that his old and lustfulness of an unattainable boy lead to his eventual murder. In Baldwin’s depiction of the events leading up to the murder, the actual murder itself is far from the only injustice addressed in the novel. Although Giovanni is the murderer, David (who is the narrator of *Giovanni’s Room*, and should not be confused with the actual victim David Kammerer) is not completely “innocent” either because he views himself in terms of societal standards maintaining the view of the bourgeoisie that heterosexuality is the only acceptable sexual orientation, never questioning his middle-class, white upbringing by his single, macho father.

He views his uncertainty of his sexuality in combination with his daring to experiment as a crime that is, in a way, comparable to Giovanni’s decision to murder Guillaume. His incrimination of homosexuality, i.e. himself, an ideal he blames society for instilling in him, is in itself is an elaborate prison. And “since to be in prison is simply not to live, the death penalty was the only merciful verdict any jury could deliver” (Baldwin 164). Placing death above self-denial, Baldwin describes Giovanni’s actual prison cell and his own mental one as “three tiers high inside... and everything is

the color of gunmetal. Everything is dark and cold, except for those patches of light where authority stands" (164-165). For the first time, he calls into question the idea of authority in terms of sexuality. David views himself in the lowest esteem possible, likening his situation to that of his incarcerated lover, Giovanni. Though Giovanni committed murder as a distraught attempt to resist sexual abuse from his employer, Guillaume, David sees his smothering of his true self as an equally severe offense. His constant condemnation of his identity puts him alongside Giovanni in the damp, dark detention where no light hits, except for outside where there are "patches of light where authority stands," implying that there is something institutionally wrong with his love for another man, not daring to question this unfounded law. But the question still remains of who is actually enforcing this law, society or the individual?

David's metaphorical prison parallels the idea of the Panopticon theorized by Jeremy Bentham. According to Foucault, the aim of the Panopticon is to strengthen social forces and raise the level of public morality by establishing a new kind of prison in which the key to monarchic success is surveillance. It is made up of a circular outer ring of prison cells with wall-sized windows on both the front and back but the other two opposite sides remain filled in so that the prisoners may be seen from a watch tower in the center of the ring but they cannot see each other. It allows an observer to observe all prisoners without the prisoners being able to tell whether or not they are being watched. "The panoptic mechanism arranges special unities that make it possible to see constantly and recognize immediately," Foucault says (200). He argues this system to be far worse than any traditional dungeon, for to be constantly lit up and supervised excludes the protection that comes with darkness. In his explanation, "visibility is a trap" (200).

Baldwin's placement of David in such a situation offers sympathy for the protagonist, but the question Baldwin is provoking is, "is this sympathy deserved?" How far is one able to blame society for one's situation? Though David is convinced that he is a victim of society, he seems much more to be a victim of himself. Of course one will feel some degree of sympathy for a man who has committed no legal offense but is still incarcerated in his own panoptic prison, but is David at all deserving of this sympathy? He is a man who twice betrayed his male lovers and deceived his fiancée and even his father throughout his entire life. He has thrice known love and thrice thrown it away out of the fear of actually having to accept who he is and whom he loves. Though it seems obvious that David is to blame for his own criminalization, it is again the internalization that society has brought upon him that seems to be at the root. In Burroughs' story, Phillip is the character who repeatedly denies himself of true love but he is not viewed in a light of pity like David is; in fact, he is made out to be

detestable for this exact reason. But somehow Baldwin's language is able to make the most deplorable qualities in David seem worthy of compassion. *Giovanni's Room* asks its reader to make the distinction between David as a character who is seen but does not see, and one who is seen but is unwilling to see. David's constant awareness of his situation and society's attempts to mold him makes his acceptance of such all the more despicable. This, Foucault argues, is the major effect of the Panopticon: to "induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power." One must remember, however, that he put himself in this metaphorical Panopticon, and that he may break free from it just as easily as he succumbed to it, for it is merely that: a metaphor.

It is David's unwillingness to accept and be open with himself which keeps him under the constant scrutiny imagined by the Panopticon. C.W.E. Bigsby asserts in his essay, "The Divided Mind of James Baldwin," the idea that "men form society not to protect their freedom, but to evade it" (105). He suggests that society accepts and puts forth the idea that it's better to compromise individual identity and maintain the order of the bourgeoisie than actually explore our "unknown selves," which is exactly what we see in David. Baldwin entertains the idea that order and submission are more important than individuality when he says, "[The guards] are in black, they carry guns, they are always afraid, they scarcely dare be kind" (165). Even the individuals who hold this authority, the ones in the position to watch instead of be watched, are still as blind and powerless as he for evading their own freedom to love just as David does. They only serve to perpetuate the problem of repressing society through intimidation. In Foucault's essay, "A Boy's Honor," he argues that to accept love is not disgraceful. Rather, to be both loved and beautiful, which David is, constitutes a double stroke of fortune, but it only remains for him to make right use of it. He asserts that love is never something that is absolutely good or bad, but it varies according to who practices it and he leaves its moral value to be determined by its use. David and Giovanni's mutual affection is something positive, but David's foolish rejection of it causes it to be something disgraceful. Foucault continues with the idea that "there is... no absolute right and wrong in love, but everything depends upon the circumstances; to yield to a bad man in a bad way is wrong, but to yield to worthy man in a right way is right." He makes no distinction as to the gender of the yielding party, but alludes only to his or her character.

Apart from David's misguided illusions of wrongfulness, there is also a very real crime present in this novel as well in *And the Hippos Were Boiled in their Tanks*, which raises an equally important question. The crime is cold-blooded murder and the

question is that of honor and right. Perhaps Gauerholz's most insightful argument in his essay is his assertion that in almost all of the retellings of this horrific murder story, David [Kammerer] is reduced to a pathetic caricature: the obsessive, older male homosexual stalker who increasingly oppresses his innocent, heterosexual victim, finally leaving the younger man no alternative but to "defend his honor" with violence. This was, in fact, the theory of Carr's legal defense, intended to be palatable to a judge, as well as to the public, especially in 1944 (188).

Though there are many strong similarities between Baldwin's characters and those created by Burroughs, the latter's do much more to justify this claim. While homosexuality is viewed in a tone of disgust and ignominy stemming from the politics of the 50s in *Giovanni's Room*, we see it further dichotomized between sympathy and farce in *And the Hippos Were Boiled in Their Tanks*. The same way Baldwin denounces being on the outskirts of society and bearing the scrupulous glares of the bourgeoisie, the beat writers celebrate counterculture.

William Burroughs, as one of the most easily recognizable queer beat authors, under the pseudonym of Will Dennison, offers narration sympathetic to Kammerer. In the novel he provides a highly detailed account of the lives of Phillip Tourian and Ramsay Allen, the aliases of Lucien Carr and David Kammerer, respectively, in a far more exaggerated, sarcastic tone than Baldwin. His farcical interpretation of such morbid events reflects the despondence felt by many queer authors and individuals alike when trying to change the ignorant milieu that surrounded attitudes towards homosexuality.

In contrast to Baldwin, Burroughs views himself outside of the context of and limitations imposed by society. Though he is certainly examined in some similar regards, he refuses to fall victim to the Panoptic disciplining of society by other members. Will Dennison, like every other character in the book, shows absolutely no regard or fear for prison. He owns a gun, arranges for a house to be burnt to the ground, and not only takes drugs whenever possible, but he suggests manufacturing them as well. He does not, however, want to be involved in any way with the theft of a single bottle of Canadian Club whiskey from a crowded bar. His attention to detail helps magnify the ludicrousness of his account. Will does not care about committing various felonies, but for some inexplicable reason petty theft is simply out of the question for him. It also parallels the general consensus of society in certain ways: many people will not hesitate to break an actual, written law but to break the mere societal expectation to be heterosexual like the majority constitutes a truly contemptible crime.

Shying away from Baldwin's desperation to be accepted by high society at whatever cost is necessary, Burroughs continually reverses and mocks traditional society through his descriptions of his surroundings. First, he describes his friend, Della, in a tone of mock wonder as "an experienced lesbian at twenty, with two or three soul-searing affairs behind her," only before mentioning her "four suicide attempts" (Burroughs 23). The deadpan humor of the juxtaposition of gay love next to suicide attempts can make us laugh or it can make us cringe, and Burroughs aims, quite successfully, to elicit both responses. He works to legitimize and downplay the irregularity of homosexuality when he disaffectedly notes: "fights kept breaking out in the men's room where drunken college boys suffered from delusions of homosexual persecution. Now there was nothing to distinguish it from any other place," For Burroughs, public places like bars are hardly any different from the Panoptic structure; everyone is being watched and judged wherever he goes, and everyone is more than away of this. This sardonic statement also works to show how not only did homosexuals suffer persecution, but it was so permeating at this time that straight men felt the need to prove their machismo at every corner for fear of mistakenly suffering the same persecution.

It's the very same delusional fear, again instilled by other members of society, which drives Phillip so mad that he actually believes that the only way to escape his own persecution of himself for having feelings towards another man is to terminate either his own life or that which caused his desire. He, of course, chooses to end Al's life. What is especially remarkable about this scene is that even though they two are completely isolated on the rooftop, free from the gaze of disciplinary forces, Phil still feels the pressure of the Panopticon, which is precisely its intention, for the Panoptic structure aims to redefine society in terms of constant surveillance.

What is equally as striking is the advice offered to Phillip after the murder by every character in the novel. Even Will Dennison, Al's closest friend, tells Phillip to turn himself in because he really has nothing to worry about. Since Phillip never openly identifies as homosexual and Al obviously does, Phillip is in some way innocent, or at least not entirely guilty. He was the heterosexual object of homosexual desire and for this, all his inexcusable actions suddenly seem not to matter. This is exactly what Burroughs is pointing at when not only fails to include an actual murder scene, but he concludes the novel a mere twenty pages after it takes place. He mimics society's attempts to avoid dealing with the situations and just sweeping them under the rug, never to be questioned. Although Al is the victim of the murder, it is made to seem as though his own presumed lack of morality and cultural values resulting from his attraction to men is to blame.

Even Will Dennison thinks it preposterous that Phillip will receive any kind of capital punishment, contrary to Giovanni who got the guillotine. He “sneered [at the thought of Phillip getting the hot seat.] You’ll be out in two years at the latest” (163). Will knows the futility in trying to antagonize a young male of 19 in the hands of an old pervert like Al so he adopts a tone of deadpan sarcasm in reaction to this horror. The situation itself and the circumstances surrounding the institutionalization of the fault of the homosexual, regardless his position, is in and of itself a farce, and so Burroughs treats it as such. Though Phil is never actually sentenced in the novel, in reality, Lucien Carr pled guilty to first-degree manslaughter, not murder. He received a maximum sentence of ten years in a reformatory.

In both novels, society is too powerful and too definitive to be subverted before it is too late for the good-natured protagonists. While Baldwin magnifies this injustice through realism, Burroughs attempts to bring this institutionalized corruption to light and overpower it by mocking the systems that are dominant over him. He almost appreciates the fact that it is funny to even try. Both novels do, however, work to bring to light the invisibility of authority coupled with the sense of constant surveillance that, as Foucault argues, is at the foundation of the bourgeoisie. Through examining the inability to overturn the dominant paradigm in an overly realistic setting next to a laughable one, we can realize that disciplinary society has a much greater influence over our judgment than most people realize while noting how easily our sympathies can be swayed through the simple use of language. Baldwin creates the impression of an overly victimized antihero, who continually betrays himself and his lovers, but Burroughs manipulates the story to read as an authentic, empowering account of martyrdom for love, and yet we somehow feel sorry for both victims and are inclined to blame society.

In his essay “James Baldwin’s Vision of Otherness and Community,” Emmanuel S. Nelson puts forward the idea that homosexuality, as well as any other sexual identity, can be “both a source of agony as well as a means of redemption; [it] brings suffering, but, if dealt with courageously, [it] can lead so self-knowledge, self-acceptance, and the forging of a genuine self-identity” (122). Whether we choose to overcome these boundaries by reducing them to laughable inventions like Burroughs does or by aggrandizing them with elaborate metaphors in Baldwin’s case, both stories offer the conclusion that “such determinants are deadly if they are not transcended” (Bigsby 104). If they are, however, one can allow oneself to find that identity resides in the acceptance of the self, not of injustice nor of public roles, and in the abandonment of illusion for reality.

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We're All in It Together: Construction of the Happy Dystopian State

Lester Isaac Simon

Writing as Anthony Lombardo, a character from the novel in progress: *A Mile High Sandwich*

In the past century, the dystopian story has grown as a common narrative form in the realm of speculative fiction. This narrative form is often used to satirize or comment on government, and subsequently human behavior and possible nightmarish futures that may come from our current systems. Dystopian fantasies are sinister, but often more functional twists upon the utopian genre. In this paper, I write through the frame of a character from a dystopian novella I am writing for my comp-lit honors thesis. The character's dilemma sets the stage for my comparative analysis of the construction of dystopian novels and films; he is charged with the choice of establishing a utopian or dystopian state, and chooses the dystopia as it is based in control and not freedom of humanity. In creating his dystopia the character reasons through the most effective devices used in fiction to establish homogeneity of identity and an easily manageable state. Through this critical narrative, I examine how different authors and filmmakers build dystopian states, and why these speculative stories have an inherent danger to them. As speculative satires, works such as *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley and Terry Gilliam's *Brazil*, dystopian fantasies seem realistic and viable, as opposed to their utopian counterparts. In my fictional analysis, the character does achieve his goal of establishing a dystopian society using fiction as a blueprint, showing the predictive and enabling power of fiction and art, and why the most frightening dystopian fantasies seek to blot out both, as well as anything that protects individuality against a desirable, unstopplable machine.

As I come closer to my inevitable end, I can safely crack a smile or so to my success. My city, Magnolia, that dystopian monstrosity seething hungrily before me, unaware of me, smiles back. This, because truthfully, the millions I've trapped here in endless bliss can do nothing else. What an event it was, bringing in the suffering multitudes from apocalyptic disaster, safeguarding them in a giddy dystopian narrative of my own design. And, to permit myself a moment of arrogance, the city works without fault. My poor, missing brother Ollie never believed I could do it: successfully act on his plans for a super-metropolis, a utopia of pleasure and ignorant joy. And why would he have? His original plans for Magnolia were completely *utopian*, whereas my revision was *dystopian*, and a mite sinister. He didn't want to submit to my strict, controlling design. The concept of a utopia is a boorish one, without any hope of functionality; even the name suggests failure, as the definitive meaning in Greek is "no place." Ollie's utopia was a fool's hallucination, one without phenomenal logic. Nevertheless, his vision seemed a relevant one, especially with the world around us crumbling into mismanaged chaos and impending cataclysm. I wouldn't have been the loving younger brother if I hadn't at least given his manuscripts and sketches an honest

chance.

His plans seemed the grandiose musings of an idealist madman. The concept centered on a pristine, mega-city with plentiful resources and no need for competition. It was a sensual paradise, but a sincerely impossible, unfathomable one. The growing crises in our time, though, forced me to consider Ollie's designs seriously. I, of course, took many a creative liberty and Ollie, appalled at my callous reorganization of his beloved Magnolia, fled, never to be heard from or seen again. It was a terrible shame that he disappeared, for his scheme worked. Magnolia blossomed from a war-torn earth, birthing a successful dystopian dream come true. It may seem strange, though, my use of the term dystopia. I was put off by this idea at first, as it would contort Ollie and myself into authoritarian dictators of a controlled state. And neither of us wanted that at the time, but my adaptation of Magnolia made it necessary, and I've rather warmed to the power. This was the favorable idea, though, because the construction of a utopia was complete fallacy. The problem was, as is the problem with utopian societies, that people would never accept it. It was based on equality, without power struggles and where happiness was the sole commodity. I realized that, if left to their own devices, people would rupture to hell everything about such a place, as they had time and time again. I strongly presumed that people could not be given all freedoms of humanity and still be totally happy. And happiness was the goal here.

Finally, after trying to please Ollie's desires, I came to the realization that a completely dystopian direction was imperative. This was not first brought about by any text of Orwell or Huxley, although they played their parts later on, but by Jane Wagner's play, *The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe*. In the play, the character Trudy, a homeless woman trying to explain humanity to her extraterrestrial friends, proclaimed:

*As soon as humankind began to discover the
Truth about itself, we began to find ways,
To cover up that truth. But maybe that's for the best: Our ability to
Delude ourselves may be an important
Survival tool. (131)*

And there it was: the solution, the key to engineering a working dystopia. With a utopia, I would have had to grant people every freedom and equal power until all sorts of catastrophes undid the work. But with a dystopian design, I could achieve universal, ignorant bliss only at the cost of truth, at the cost of humanity. The design had to base itself on deluding people until every bone, every muscle adhered to the systematic

machine, forcing upon them unquestioning happiness. Colleagues of mine revolted, saying happiness wasn't simplistic pleasure, but a more complex enterprise. My happiness, though, was an unquestioning, uniform feeling of security, a homogeneous, emotionless euphoria: collective happiness. I theorized that I had to blot out love and art, and everything that flowered from those troublesome, chaotic notions. Without the dangerous passions associated with love and artistic vision, people could live without worry and without existential pain. This too seemed an unrealizable fantasy, that is, until I found inspiration in fiction beyond Wagner.

My engagement with dystopian fiction and film laid the foundation for Magnolia's construction. In these works I found authoritarian governments and totalitarian powers vying for total control, censoring and torturing to their hearts content. Each piece of literature presented novel methods of control and subversion of the soul, and they all had in common the formation of homogeneity of identity through fear, subversion, and pleasure. Differences abounded in these nightmarish visions, but they all acted as suitable blueprints for my future. For instance, in *Brave New World* Aldous Huxley predicted that the government would take control utilizing cloning processes and mental conditioning, and would nullify any need to resist such control with emotionless entertainment, free promiscuity, and the hallucinogen *soma*. In 1984, George Orwell's post-war nightmare written ten years later, the dastardly Party used fear-based repression and staged attacks and revolutionary activity to root out insurgents. Any and all insurgents would be tortured until their spirits shattered and all that was left was a consuming love for Big Brother, Orwell's own personal Stalin figure. The most tantalizing, delicious of these fantasies, however, was Terry Gilliam's film *Brazil*. To me the best film adaptation of 1984, if at times a mite silly, Gilliam's dystopia was perfect for analysis because it has traceable flaws- correctible once actualized on living subjects- and pays cinematic homage to other dystopias previous.

To begin, in Gilliam's dystopian narrative, the 1985 cut of the film- there was an American version, but the romantic ending was nauseating and of little use- society is based primarily on distraction and terror. The blocky, horridly designed city is a hellish metropolis of bureaucracy and rampant consumerism. Set "Somewhere in the twentieth century," *Brazil* portrays the future as paranoid and forcibly content with a power system built upon mountains of paperwork and kilometers of red tape. Everything is depicted in mild, gray colors and a false sense of decadent, consumerist fulfillment poisons the upper tiers of society. A billboard seen partway through the film reads, "Happiness! We're all in it together." People are deluded into believing that one should trust in the system, and accept it as happiness, fearing anything but the prescribed, formulaic reality filed in as "pink and blue receipts" somewhere in the gray void. Sam

Lowry, the protagonist of the film, seems perfectly content to blend right into the system. Our hero Lowry works in the Department of Records, a “dead end department” with no chance of recognition, which is “marvelous, perfect” for him. He denies all offers of promotion, proclaiming, “I don’t want anything!” The system here seems to be doing its job; to those addicted to wealth and decadent tradition there are endless consumer outlets and for Lowry and others fine with office drudgery, that’s all there is anyhow. All information, the commodity of truth, is housed within the ministry. One of their slogans, “Who can you trust?” is plastered all over the city and the closed, billboard-filled highways. Fear and endless paperwork keeps the populace in check, and the excessive consumerism distracts them ever the more. According to literary critic Ben Wheeler, whose paper I found in a damaged volume left in the abandoned Columbia University library, *Brazil* exists “in a state of perpetual Yuletide” where the gift exchange, as well as the entire economic situation, becomes “habitual, hypnotic, and bereft of meaning” (101). All of these various methods of control, however, from the illusion of a constant Christmas to the fear of error and mismanaged paperwork, are cast in Gilliam’s absurd light and shown to be fallible.

According to John Erickson, another seemingly forgotten critic, *Brazil* portrays “instability at the core of the totalitarian system” (28). At the beginning of the film, a fly gets caught in a massive computer console, setting off a chain of events that leads to eventual tragedy, with Lowry at the end of the paper trail. Because the bureaucrats fear error above all else, this slight mistype is catastrophic. Mistakes, as well as “wasting ministry time and paper,” are considered criminal offences in this fantasy. In one sequence, Lowry is called to his boss, Mr. Kurtzmann’s, office to see about a Ministry of Information refund check, a mistake in the system, for a man killed during interrogation proceedings. Kurtzmann, who states, “I may as well hang myself now” regarding the error, represents a figure completely crippled by the system. He is pathetic and jittery, and often uses guilt to force Lowry into doing almost all of the work for him, even feigning a broken wrist to avoid traceable signature responsibility. About himself he states, “What a pathetic creature I am!” In this fantasy, people are inwardly feeble, a result of a fear-based system. Gilliam toys with a moral dilemma similar to the one I faced designing *Magnolia*; in *Brazil*, collective happiness is not truly achieved, despite all attempts to blot out troublesome souls. One must wonder if with all the subliminal measures taken anyone actually agrees that they are happy together, or even individually. Consumerism makes material possessions the desired goal—religion is even subverted, signified when a band of people walk through the Christmas decorated streets with a glowing “Consumers for Christ” insignia— but there are exceptions. Throughout the film, we are privy to Sam’s romantic dreams. In his dreams he envisions himself an angelic figure in pursuit of his “dream woman,” but giant

towers erupt from the earth and the personified citizens of the phenomenal world, shackled and dressed in filthy cloaks and wearing infantile masks, trap Sam's dream maiden and appear to him within and outside the dream.

Even with the constant stream of consumerist propaganda and bureaucratic business, Sam has the very human capacity to dream, signifying a triumph over the system. This ability to escape the machine in dreams is a flaw in the plan, along with the miniscule bug caught in a seemingly functional console. Sam is an exception to a society filled with empty buying mechanisms, due to love and the existence of a soul outside the collective happiness. His dreams reveal the inner workings of the *Brazil* monolithic power structure; the horrific baby masks are indicative of Sam's deep-seeded hatred of the rest of the consumerist society addicted to synthetic joy. *Brazil*, through Sam's dream gaze, is filled with infantile, simple pleasures, where people are mechanical and soulless, empty vessels. Another of Lowry's boss' states: "An empty desk is an efficient desk," promoting efficiency without feeling or thought. Again, though, Gilliam presents me with that irritating exception of Lowry. The fly that ruptures the system from within is correctible; machines are not all that difficult to tame. But people are a matter wholly unique. Love, art, the soul, all of it is a nightmare to erase or repress. *Brazil* tries to redirect it towards paper distractions and holiday shopping, but Sam shows how frail the system truly is. Sam is tortured towards the end of the film and subsequently trapped in his dream. In a material way, the system stands triumphant. According to Erickson, though, "Sam escapes his torturers." He cites Gilliam as stating, "Lowry's imagination is still free and alive; they haven't got that" (Bennetts, ctd. in Erickson 33). Even though the final frame of the film shows Sam strapped alone in a massive torture chamber, there is an aspect of escape. He stays locked in his dream, in which he and his dream woman find serenity in an imagined countryside, humming quietly to himself in the chamber. This ending, however morose, indicates that the system ultimately fails to obliterate art, love, and the soul entirely.

The government leaders in *Brazil*, for the most part, use overarching fear to manage the populace. Almost everyone is scared blindly into acceptance, and anyone caught subverting the machine is tortured until they are just as empty as their peers. This dystopian trope, used satirically in *Brazil*, nevertheless frightening, seems at fault throughout the canon. Erickson, in comparing *Brazil* to *1984*, deems Orwell's tragic masterpiece a functional dystopia. "However quaintly antiqued the machines of *1984*, the fact is, they generally work" (28), he states. Orwell's nightmare future, being a huge influence on Gilliam, is based solely on fear and what Wheeler calls "collective consciousness" (95). The Party in the novel takes great strides to instill an atmosphere of directed hate on the population, and also rewrites historical texts and takes executive

control of perception. Comrades, as citizens are called, are endlessly placed under surveillance and taught to trust solely in the party, even to the extent that citizens abandon logic altogether, clearly accepting that two and two could equal five if the Party so chose. Any insurgent is taken to Room 101 to be tortured mercilessly until they are broken, defeated, and hopelessly in love with Big Brother.

Winston Smith, the protagonist of the tale, seemingly escapes the system when he falls in love with Julia, another citizen of Oceania. She asserts that humanity can persist even in this hellish future, but at the end it is clear that Orwell's system is quite adept at ripping away the last hopes, dreams, and questions of the individual. After Winston is tortured at the hands of the Party, he wonders, "How could the immortal, collective brain be mistaken?" (277). I believe the optimal response to such a question, the answer I strove for with Magnolia, is that the total machine is correct and to be trusted wholeheartedly. Orwell achieves such a hive mentality through fear and censorship. However, my criticism of the esteemed writer is that his dystopia exists in squalor, perpetual sorrow and sad confinement. The atmosphere is bleak and hate is the dominant emotional state. One has to wonder if the administration is content with their diabolical control; I assuredly wouldn't be. So much effort is put into manufacturing fear, and all that comes of it is a crippled, empty, emotionless populace. This villainous attention to detail with a dismal finale, established solely for power, doesn't seem worth the effort. Power for power's sake is hardly fulfilling if everyone hates you for it. In Peter Weir's film *The Truman Show*, to analyze further, a synthetic nation, peopled by actors and technicians, is used to keep a man trapped unknowingly in a television show. Weir's film is a dystopia of one; it takes incredible amounts of work just to keep the protagonist, Truman Burbank, from realizing the truth of the place. According to a cast member, who Truman believes to be his best friend, "Nothing here is fake; it's merely controlled." The crew has to "manufacture ways to keep him" from leaving the false utopia. There is the constant discouragement of passion and dreams; in a flashback, Truman proclaims the desire to explore, and his teacher retorts, "There's really nothing left to explore." The flaw here is that repression only leads to heightened desire, more fervent love. Like in *1984* and *Brazil*, love is censored repressed. In a notable scene, Truman tries to woo a cast member, Sylvia, who the director thinks is unfit for him. Sylvia attempts to lead Truman away from cameras, but another member of the cast appears, pretending to be Sylvia's father and disappearing with her, removing her from the show entirely. No repression or conditioning the cast and crew have in their repertoire can possibly stem his unrequited love. He is not happy, fulfilled, despite all the effort to make him so. And, my question remains, why bother with this unsavory business if there isn't even so much as a forced joy?

Sam Lowry, Winston Smith, and Truman Burbank all have in common that exceptional ability to transcend the system. As frightening as these dystopian fantasies are, they all have this inherent flaw. Societies based on fear only feed love, art, and the soul. Actively trying to destroy the thing works only to a certain extent. A collective mind operating on sorrow alone can't be expected to function properly. *Brave New World*, however, alleviates these problems. In the novel, constant pleasure is heavily adhered to; love is viewed as unsavory but free, promiscuous copulation is encouraged. Art is sacrificed in favor of emotionless, sensuous activities, mindless games, and *feelies*. The soul becomes an expendable source of pain and misery. At the end of the novel, Mustapha Mond, the world controller, explains to John the Savage, Bernard Marx, and Helmholtz Watson that happiness must come at the cost of intelligence and abstract thought. Parents, emotion, love, art, all of these are tossed into the rubbish bin. Mond's mechanistic people are "blissfully ignorant of passion and old age" (220), all victims of the "irresistible machine" (222). According to Mond, art is "incompatible with happiness" (225). In the previously discussed dystopias, similar principles are used, but not as effectively as in Huxley's fantasy of pleasure. The choice between free will and empty pleasure is paramount here, and I chose for Magnolia vacant bliss. Collective happiness is still favorable to the pain that blossoms from manifestations of the soul. In *Brave New World Revisited*, Huxley's criticism of the novel, he states that, "a line of symbols [must be] carefully laid out so as to bypass rationality and obscure the real issue" (52). In Huxley's work, delusion is used to obfuscate truths of humanity, but the result, as opposed to other bleak nightmare futures, is perfect, primitive glee. Rationality and reality are coupled with worries, insecurities, and sadness, so I see it fit, as recommended in this fantasy, to suppress them completely.

Lois Lowry's *The Giver* presents a similar argument. In this tale all memory is stripped and placed into one unfortunate mind, while the rest of society practices "Sameness," meaning that color, deeper emotion, weather, all these are stricken from society. An obsession with safety forces a council to choose the fates of citizens; "We really have to protect people from wrong choices" (99) says the Giver, the recipient of memory. A pill is used to suppress love, and as a result the concept becomes "generalized" and "meaningless" (127). Similar tactics are used in other works to obliterate the threat of love, but in *The Giver*, these methods seem exceptionally effective. Jonas, the protagonist and apprentice to the Giver realizes the citizens, "have never known pain." Pain, then, is directly related to these concepts of the soul and humanity. Lowry relies on delusionary tactics to erase pain. These delusions, from Gilliam, Orwell and Huxley as well, became obligatory in my work for replacing humanity with total security and pleasure.

The city of Magnolia, my very own dystopian narrative forged into ugly, gorgeous existence, survives by manufacturing delusion. The citizens have been deceived into believing that the system is infallible, and distraction through pleasure keeps them from having an ounce of time to think otherwise. My victorious machine gives credit to fiction; emotion, love, art, and any other aspect of chaotic humanity has been extinguished at the command of Orwell, Huxley, Gilliam, and all the rest. I used their work to configure the most efficient, euphoric, diabolical city ever created, where there is no need for love, art is empty and incites nothing but blank pleasure, and emotions are obsolete in the face of ignorant, joyous routine. The dystopia of pleasure, citing *Brave New World* and *The Giver*, offers that collective, incredible delight at the cost, as said before, of these aspects of humanity. I remember now proclaiming the genius of it all to Ollie, expecting him to agree with my choice in the dilemma between expressive freedom and painless, robotic contentment. He believed it monstrous, horrifying. But I pressed on. For given the choice between a pleasurable Huxleyan nightmare and the chaos of insufferable humanity, I choose the former. And my people can't utter a single question about it. Collective happiness can only be sustained if the delusion plastered on billboards in *Brazil* is adhered to: "Happiness! We're all in it together."

From this wealth of literature and film, I was finally able to reach out to a dying world and welcome them to Magnolia. Quicker than expected, my people lost bits and pieces of their beloved, dangerous humanity, adopting hypnotic, empty routines instead. Instant gratification and perpetual distractions, such as constant advertising and rewards, safeguard these poor, gifted souls- not that they have souls left to speak of- from pondering love, from waging passionate battles over art, and from endangering themselves with emotion and abstract thought. Here, there are no worries, for there doesn't exist the capacity for such things. This nightmare owes a debt of gratitude to artists that would be appalled to see their work actualized. Ollie told me on the eve of his disappearance that I was reworking warnings, fevered attempts to divine the future and prevent such horrors from occurring. But the ideas were there; the narratives meant to satirize and counsel our future were so wonderfully rendered, so beautifully inspiring, blueprints for my new world. Wouldn't it be just lovely to see Orwell, Gilliam or Huxley's reaction to Magnolia? I suspect that they would be outraged, hugely mortified to know the sheer power of their work, their art, to enable the destruction of their ideals. Until, of course, they accepted it, artists together with everyone else, no different: same. The choice between humanity, with its pain and suffering, and the dystopia of rewards, like *Brave New World*, *The Giver*, and in its consumerist moments *Brazil*, where pain doesn't have to exist, is an obvious choice. Even if it means sacrificing love, art, any and all meaning in the face of tantalizing, irresistible, delicious survival.

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Writing the Unspeakable: Trauma and Narrative in the Post-War Fiction of Virginia Woolf, Ernest Hemingway and J.D. Salinger

Rebecca Sparrow

An estimated one in six Iraq war veterans return home to the States with posttraumatic stress disorder rendering awareness of the illness not just important but necessary. This essay turns to the literature of three post-war writers as a way to explore the effect combat trauma has on returning soldiers. Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, Ernest Hemingway's "Soldier's Home" and J.D. Salinger's "For Esme – With Love and Squalor" are constructed around an absent war story, leaving the reader to surmise what happened from the symptoms of the soldiers. The missing war story signals that the effect of trauma can be severe enough to prevent the reconstruction of a narrative out of a traumatic experience. Yet, according to clinical thought about posttraumatic stress reconstructing a linear narrative of a traumatic event is essential to the survivor's recovery. In this essay I explore the author's use of the dialectic between the wordless nature of traumatic memory and the survivors need to tell the story.

Tim O'Brien's "How to Tell a True War Story" is constructed around the dialectic between truth and memory. He describes why articulating the experience of war is so difficult to do:

In any war story, but especially a true one, it's difficult to separate what happened from what seemed to happen. What seems to happen becomes its own happening and has to be told that way. The angles of vision are skewed. When a booby trap explodes, you close your eyes and duck and float outside yourself. When a guy dies [...] you look away and then look back for a moment and then look away again. The pictures get jumbled; you tend to miss a lot. Then afterward, when you go to tell about it, there is always that surreal seemingness, which makes the story seem untrue, but which in fact represents the hard and exact truth, as it seemed. (O'Brien 71).

O'Brien concludes that events can only be told through the filter of the survivor's experience of the memory. Yet, the "untrue" nature of the story in the first place makes it to be difficult to pin down. In some cases the stress of the traumatic event fractures the psyche and relaying a "true" story becomes impossible for the survivor. The inexpressible nature of a traumatic event is the central piece in the narratives of Virginia Woolf, Ernest Hemingway and J.D. Salinger. Woolf in her post-World War I novel *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), Hemingway in his post World War I short story (1925), "Soldiers' Home", and Salinger in his post World War II short story "To Esme – With Love and

Squalor" (1948) construct their narratives around an absent traumatic incident. In each of their stories the authors explore the complex fate dealt to trauma survivors: attempting to create a narrative out of this wordless traumatic incident. Their narratives deal with the obstacles preventing the recreation of the event. Contrary to O'Brien's argument that the war story can be told, the absence of the story reveals Woolf, Hemingway and Salinger's viewpoint that the obstacles to the reconstruction of this narrative are complex and difficult to overcome.

The difficulty of sharing the memories lies in the soldier's inability to construct a coherent narrative out of the traumatic experience. Each of the authors explores a different aspect of the difficulty of "truth telling" in their stories. Woolf examines what happens when trauma divides the self so that the victim cannot create a cohesive narrative of the event. Hemingway's soldier comes home to find that people are so distanced from the war that they have no interest in hearing his story. Salinger's story focuses on what allows a trauma survivor to begin to find a way to piece his story together.

In their stories, Woolf, Hemingway and Salinger emphasize the survivor's experience, like O'Brien, over the actualities of the event. However, they do this not as a way to tell a "true" version of the story and instead use it to emphasize the difficulty of truth-telling. The absence of the traumatic event in Woolf, Hemingway and Salinger's stories causes a re-focalization of the traditional war story. Not being able to tell the story causes it to erupt in various symptoms. These authors bring their soldiers' trauma to the forefront of their narratives by shifting the action of the story from the incident to the character's reaction to the trauma and their fruitless attempts to talk about the experience. This relocation of the narrative from the war story to the survivor draws the reader's attention to the experience of the survivor, rather than allowing them to engage in the vicarious thrill of hearing stories of combat. When the war story is absent all that is left is the soldier's personal war.

Posttraumatic stress disorder has assumed many names throughout history: soldier's heart, battle fatigue, shell shock, and war neuroses. Posttraumatic stress is debilitating for the soldier and causes alienation from friends and family. During World War I and World War II the major philosophy of psychiatric medicine on the front was to fix the soldiers up and get them back to the battlefield. According to Penny Coleman, in her book *Flashback: Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, Suicide and the Lessons of War*, treatment for combat trauma in WWI was simple and short-term, the objective always to send the soldier back into battle as fast as possible. A soldier could expect "a hot meal, a goodnight's rest and some positive moral boosting" (31). During the Second

World War the treatment was similar: “food, showers and sleep [...] were the first line of defense” (Coleman 51). Morale boosting was coupled with the standard psychiatric practice of encouraging emotional repression. Teaching the soldiers to repress their feelings sometimes worked in the short-term; however, many of the soldier’s symptoms reappeared. As Coleman writes: “of the 300,000 disabled World War I veterans, some 50,000 were still hospitalized twenty years later for psychiatric illness” (46).

Trauma’s affect on the psyche is debilitating and far-reaching because it splinters the mind from the body. In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, Cathy Caruth writes “trauma is not locatable in a single violent or original event in an individual’s past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature – the way it is precisely not known in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on” (4). At times, the mind can recall the incident and yet be completely disconnected from the emotional experience of the event, while at other times, the body holds the memory and the mind has blocked it, creating a split between the rational mind and the emotional mind (Herman 34). According to Judith Herman in *Trauma and Recovery*, traumatic memories are difficult to express because “they are not encoded like ordinary memories...in a verbal, linear narrative that is assimilated into an ongoing life story” (37). Paradoxically, she claims, recovery from trauma often depends on recreating the story of the event in order for the traumatized person to reintegrate it into their life story (Herman 83). The survivor must create “a verbal, linear narrative” of the traumatic event out of their memories (Herman 183). Herman explains the difficulty of the process:

Out of the fragmented components of frozen imagery and sensation, patient and therapist slowly reassemble, an organized, detailed verbal account, oriented in time [...] the narrative includes not only the event but also the survivor’s response to it and the responses of the important people in her life (177).

The emphasis on the survivor’s response is vital because the traumatic event caused a rift between the emotions and the memories in the first place. The goal of telling the story is to reincorporate these dual aspects of their experience.

Herman goes on to explain: “as the narrative closes in on the most unbearable moments, the patient finds it more and more difficult to use words” and “may spontaneously switch to non-verbal methods of communication” (177). So, their stories must be told in order for the soldiers to recover yet the complex process of telling the story often prevents this. Woolf, Hemingway and Salinger all conclude that the story

cannot be told except in a non-verbal way by only allowing the symptoms of the survivors to tell it, rather than the soldiers themselves.

In Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* she explores the fractured nature of traumatic memories. The splintered quality of these memories prevents them from being articulated in a meaningful way that conveys the experience of the survivor. Throughout the novel, her soldier Septimus Smith, a veteran of World War I, attempts to talk about his experiences in the war. But, because he is suffering from severe posttraumatic stress he does so in such "a highly emotional, contradictory, and fragmented manner" that it causes those around him to dismiss his experience (Herman 1). Septimus exhibits all the classic symptoms of combat trauma laid out by Abram Kardiner in his seminal clinical text *The Traumatic Neuroses of War*: "symptoms of shock," "maniacal reactions," "excitements and fugues," "delirious reactions" and sensory disturbances" (Kardiner 7). His psychosis comes in waves of auditory and visual hallucinations. At times "he could not taste, he could not feel" (Woolf 132) and at other times the world "wavered and quivered and threatened to burst into flames" (Woolf 21). He wavers between feeling nothing and being overwhelmed by emotion. Yet, Septimus had been the model soldier during the war:

He had gone through the whole show, friendship, European War, death, had won promotion [...] The last shells missed him. He watched them explode around him. When Evans was killed, just before Armistice, in Italy, Septimus far from showing any emotion or recognizing that here was the end of a friendship, congratulated himself on feeling very little and very responsibly. The War had taught him (Woolf 130). In order to survive the experience, Septimus separated his emotions from the events of the war. When he watched his friend Evans die he felt nothing. However, dissociating prevented the integration of the memories after he first experienced them. Now, visions of Evans walking toward Septimus right before he was killed intrude on the present. A Vietnam veteran who later took his own life wrote about using this protective mechanism: "To survive my part of the Vietnam War, I detached myself entirely from what I saw and completely forgot the battles and the names and the faces of the men I served with," and yet he cautioned that "I have come to understand this type of detachment is not something stepped into and out of easily" (Coleman 59).

Septimus' mind and thoughts remain split and incoherent, reflected in Woolf's stream of consciousness narration. Woolf's technique shows the fragmented nature of the traumatized mind. The interplay of reality, thoughts and memories mimics "traumatic memories" which come "in the form of vivid sensations and images" (Herman 38). In this text what is "real" and what is imagined blend fluidly together. We

can see Woolf's novel as experimenting with Tim O'Brien's description of how war memories are "difficult to separate what happened from what seemed to happen. What seems to happen becomes its own happening and has to be told that way" (O'Brien 71). Septimus cannot parse these memories, thoughts and reality into a cohesive narrative. If Septimus had not held himself together on the battlefield he may have faced severe consequences. Soldiers could be shot for what was believed to be cowardice, given shock treatments or court-martialed. The psychiatric symptoms of trauma are now understood to have a biological basis, but these were not the prevalent attitudes during World War I. The reaction to trauma was generally believed to be caused by the soldier's weak constitution (Coleman 30).

These beliefs prevent Septimus' illness from being understood and taken seriously. His bravery in combat keeps his wife, Lucrezia, and the doctors she takes him to from understanding him. They believe that he acted just as a good soldier should. When the doctor asks him whether he "served with great distinction" Septimus responds that "in the war he had failed." Lucrezia disagrees and insists that "he served with great distinction [...] he was promoted" (Woolf 145). If Septimus had been a coward they could reconcile his mental distress with his memories, but their image of the brave soldier prevents this. They cannot reconcile this man who is falling apart with the soldier he had been. This denial of his experience renders them incapable of helping him heal. Without any support Septimus is unable to assemble his fragmented memories and commits suicide at the end of the story. His suicide represents the destructive nature of unassimilated trauma. Without assimilating the event into their life-narrative the survivor cannot convey it and therefore the memories of the trauma become inescapable. Septimus survived the war but becomes a victim of his traumatic memories.

Ernest Hemingway's "Soldier's Home" examines the difficulty of telling a true account of a war story when there is no one able to listen or understand it. Hemingway never tells the story; instead his narrative is the story of his protagonist's inability to voice his experience. In Hemingway's "Soldiers' Home," Krebs is a soldier who comes back from World War I to find that he no longer fits into the world that he left behind. Krebs searches for a way to tell his stories from the war; however, he cannot find a means of communicating them so that he is listened to. The lack of the story in "Soldiers' Home" attests to the in-articuable nature of traumatic memory. Hemingway writes:

At first Krebs...did not want to talk about the war at all. Later he felt the need to talk but no one wanted to hear about it. His town had heard too many atrocity stories to be thrilled by actualities. Krebs found that to be listened to at all he had

to lie, and after he had done this twice he, too had had a reaction against the war and against talking about it. A distaste for everything that had happened to him in the war set in because of the lies that he told. (69).

Throughout the story Hemingway uses these repetitious attempts by Krebs to tell the story in order to mimic the perpetual recurrence of traumatic memory. He creates a pattern using these words, phrases and images. It is because the memory is so extraordinary that it must be experienced over and over.

This separates him from the townspeople because “the world they were in was not the world he was in” (Hemingway 72). He watches the town at a remove, sitting on his parent’s front porch as young pretty girls walk by. Watching the girls is a pattern that Hemingway repeats furthering the sense that Krebs is trapped in the pattern of his memories. He does not want to get too close because “he did not want to have to do any courting. He did not want to tell any more lies. It wasn’t worth it” (Hemingway 71). Krebs cannot find anyone to listen to him so he is silenced, shutdown and disassociated from his feelings. The only sensations throughout the story Krebs experiences are nausea from the lies that he’s told (Hemingway 70).

Hemingway’s exploration of Krebs alienation culminates in a scene in the kitchen between Krebs and his mother. She is desperate for him to do something besides lay in bed, watch the girls from the porch, read, and play pool. She tells him, “God has some work for everyone to do... There can be no idle hands in His Kingdom.” Krebs replies, “I’m not in His Kingdom” (Hemingway 75). Herman explains this feeling: “wounded soldiers [...] cry for their mothers, or for God. When this cry is not answered; the sense of basic trust is shattered. Traumatized people feel utterly abandoned, utterly alone [...] thereafter, a sense of alienation, of disconnection, pervades every relationship” (Herman 52). When his mother tries to motivate him by asking, “Don’t you love your mother, dear boy?” Krebs responds: “I don’t love anybody” (Hemingway 76).

By the end of the story, Krebs’ emotional detachment is complete. He doesn’t love anymore, even his mother, and he has no interest in a romantic relationship, and feels that even God has abandoned him. The story concludes with a decision by Krebs’ to move away from his family. He wants to build a life without any complications, which means avoiding close relationships like those with his mother that might make him have to “tell lies.” At the end of “Soldiers’ Home” Krebs is isolated and adrift because his war experiences prevent him from connecting with the post-war society.

Of the three writers Salinger comes the closest to actually telling the war story in "For Esme – With Love and Squalor" and offers hope for the reconstruction of his soldier's life-story. "For Esme" begins with the narrator, whose name we never learn, informing the reader that he's just received a wedding invitation that he cannot attend so instead he's going to "jot down a few notes." He tells the story of meeting a young girl, Esme, right before D-Day and spending a pleasant half hour chatting in a lunchroom with her. She has been orphaned during the war. Before she leaves, she tells the narrator, who is an amateur writer: "I'd be extremely flattered if you'd write a story for me sometime. I'm an avid reader." It can't be "'childish and silly,' she reflected, 'I prefer stories about squalor...I'm extremely interested in squalor'" (Salinger 108). After their meeting the narrator interrupts the story to tell the reader:

"This is the squalid, or moving part of the story and the scene changes. The people change, too. I'm still around but...I've disguised myself so cunningly that even the cleverest reader will fail to recognize me" (Salinger 103).

The distancing of the narrator from himself, who he calls "X" in the second part of the story, reveals the extent of the trauma that he suffered. He is removing himself from the "moving" and painful part of the story. The use of dissociation as coping mechanism is a form of protection and compartmentalizing the trauma.

After this interruption the narrator picks up the story following his D-Day mission. Salinger creates an ellipsis in the narrative by omitting the traumatic incident. Instead, the extent of the trauma his character suffers is emphasized in the descriptions of his symptoms. These symptoms stand in for the war story forcing the reader to observe the aftermath of warfare rather than the action. "X" is not the same self-assured man that chatted with Esme at the diner. Instead, the reader meets up with "X" sitting in his room, after a stay in an army hospital where he was recovering from a nervous breakdown. His hands are trembling and he is unable to read or write. Salinger writes that he is "a young man who had not come through the war with all his faculties intact" (Salinger 104).

Sitting in his room "X" makes an attempt to read letters from the people back home. The letters reveal that they are incapable of comprehending what he has gone through. He receives a letter asking him to send yarn for his mother-in-law and his brother writes "now that the g.d. War is over and you probably have a lot of time over there, how about sending the kids a couple of bayonets or swastika's?" (Salinger 106). For "X" though, the war seems far from over and it still inhabits his body and his mind. In the midst of these letters sits one from Esme.

Esme asks about "X" in her letter. She tells him "we hope that you were not among those who made the first initial assault upon the Cotentin Peninsula. Were you?" She wants him to "reply as speedily as possible" (Salinger 113). Esme's concern offers "X" a chance to tell his story. "X" knows that Esme is willing to listen to his story because she has also been touched by the war, unlike the people back home. Esme's offer gives him the hope that someone will listen, should he be able to compose himself enough to tell it; however, the refracted way in which Salinger conveys "X's" war experience shows his pessimistic view that creating a cohesive narrative is not possible even with a willing and understanding listener like Esme.

O'Brien believes that war stories can only be told in these subjective and contradictory ways because that was how the event was first experienced. However, according to Herman's clinical view the survivor cannot overcome the incident until they are able to place it in a linear narrative. Woolf, Hemingway and Salinger explore the dialectic between these two ways of telling and conclude with the absence of a cohesive traumatic narrative that the "war story" cannot be told at all. However, this absence has an effect on the reader that perhaps is even more powerful than telling the story itself. In removing the actual narrative the authors are bringing the reader closer to the experience of war itself. The reader cannot be distracted by atrocities and comes face to face with actualities. These authors challenge the reader with the task of trying to locate the story even if it should come as Judith Herman warns: "in a highly emotional, contradictory way" (Herman 1). The absence of the war story moves the reader away from the position of a voyeur to a witness, and a witness who is willing to hear their tale is exactly what the trauma survivor needs to begin their recovery.

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Sexuality, Sensuality, and Power in the Sacred Texts of Inanna

Brittany Sullivan

This paper discusses the goddess Inanna as a civilizing force in Sumerian society. Focusing strongly on her sexuality within myths and poetry, this essay dispels the myth of Inanna as a fertility goddess and brings to light her role as a model for humanity.

Inanna is the best-represented deity of the Sumerian pantheon, and she is by far the most important goddess, serving as the goddess of war as well love and sexuality (Kramer 73). As the Venus goddess, Inanna was associated strongly with nature, cyclical forces, and held amazing transformative power. Though these qualities in the ancient goddess tempt many into claiming that she is another mother, earth, or fertility goddess, it could not be farther from the truth. Inanna herself never produces vegetation or offspring. Inanna does not transform semen into fetus, but she transforms men into gods and kings; and it is her husband who is responsible for the fertility of the land, not her. Inanna's sexuality is about potency rather than fertility, and her sphere of power extends beyond growth and reproduction to Sumerian social, political, and sexual life and the very essence of civilization.

The most complete translated texts about Inanna date from the third millennium BCE, and they draw on a mythical tradition that had already been in existence for a millennium (Meador 103). The texts reflect the incredibly multifaceted nature of Inanna as a representation of the feminine in all its aspects. The poems of Enheduanna, the Sumerian high priestess of the twenty-third century BCE, reflect the dual nature of Inanna as bringer of pain, suffering, and destruction as well as the bringer of peace, safety, and joy. "Lady of Largest Heart" in particular reveals Inanna's duality and transformative powers: "to destroy, to build up/ to lift up, to put down/ are yours Inanna./ To turn a man into a woman/ are yours Inanna" (Meador 127). The poem focuses primarily on Inanna as a force to be feared both by gods and men, proclaiming that An and Enlil cannot defy her word. I find it especially striking that Inanna is not and cannot be controlled by male forces, especially as she is so closely associated with disorder: "Her overturned fury/ Holy Woman's rage/ is a rampaging flood/ hands cannot dam./... Woe is the city under her frown/ its fields lie barren/ the Queen dances in its furrows/ weeds spring from her footsteps./ Even if he wanted/ An could not do a thing" (Meador 119-120). Usually when goddesses or other female figures are so strongly associated with destruction or chaos there are one or more male powers in place to control them and act as the force of order. For Inanna the older and higher

ranking gods, including the greatest god, An, are unable to exert any type of control over her.

The idea that Inanna does not need to be controlled is in sharp contrast with the far more common patriarchal notion of controlling women's power because of its destructive and unpredictable nature. This discrepancy is in part due to the Sumerians view of the nature of chaos; it like all things fits into a cycle, which allows it to be compartmentalized and self-regulating. Inanna's association with death, destruction, and all things dark corresponds with the darkness of the moon, thus the return of the moon means a return of the light:

On the seventh day when the crescent moon reaches its fullness,/ you bathe and sprinkle your face with holy water./ You cover your body with the long woolen garments of queenship./ You fasten combat and battle to your side;/ you tie them to a girdle and let them rest. (Wolkstein 96)

This hymn to Inanna makes it clear that after the new moon Inanna's destructive nature must subside, making way for the other aspects of her nature. The lunar cycle allows the chaos brought on by Inanna to be almost predictable, making it easier to accept. No order can be enforced by any outside source, and when it comes it runs its course though the darkness until returning to light. The order of the universe is intrinsic: chaos and order are self regulating. Order does not need to be enforced by the masculine because the "dangerous" aspects of the feminine are part of the cyclical nature of reality that not even the most powerful god could hope to alter. Although the moon itself is ruled by a male diety, Inanna's father Nanna, the god himself is never able to influence Inanna and I do not believe that it could be successfully argued that he controls her. The natural, immutable cycle is the only thing that governs her, she is regulated as much as everything earthly is regulated by cycles, and Nanna lacks any agency to manipulate it or the actions of Inanna.

But where did Inanna get her power? How did Inanna, beginning as "a woman who walked in fear of the Sky God, An" (Wolkstein 5), become a defiant goddess in front of whom "An fear-stricken/ trembles" (Meador 125). The answer seems to lie primarily in the myth "Inanna and the God of Wisdom" and Enheduanna's first poem, "Inanna and Ebih" which describes Inanna's defeat of the mountain. On the mountain is the fore-runner of Eden, a perfect garden on the slopes of Ebih which threatens Inanna because it is "an unnatural, idealized, conflict free" version of nature in total opposition to the wild nature she governs (Meador 85). In the poem Inanna seeks the aid and approval of An in her quest to destroy this mountain but is denied, forcing her

to step out of An's shadow and take power for herself for the first time. When she comes to An she says, "An, you are he who/ gives my words weight/ over all others/ in heaven and on earth/ who gives my iron cold ax/ dominion to heaven's outer edge" (Meador 95); this statement reflects just how much Inanna has relied on An in the past, always coming to him before she acts. Until now An has been her source of power, but she cannot tolerate the threat of Ebih so she must act without him. It is important to note that An denies her request out of fear: he says, "I am fear-struck/ at their lavish brilliance/ I will not go there with you./ O maiden Inanna/ I will not set my head with yours/ against the fiery radiance of the mountain" (Meador 99). Inanna separates herself from An by her lack of fear, and her willingness to defend her own domain and destroy whatever threatens her power: Even though "a red hot terror paralyzes [her] whole country/ fiery terror of the mountain Ebih/ rages in the lands around us" (Meador 99), "Inanna came near the mountain and did not fear" (Meador 93). Unlike An, the disruption of the natural order does not make her afraid but angry. The lines "like the FIRST SNAKE/ I come out of the mountains" (Meador 96) refer to the *mus-sag-kal*, the primeval snake (Meador 203) in order to convey Inanna's connection with nature as it has been from the beginning. After Inanna has defeated the mountain she explains to it that she did so "because [it] puffs [it]self up/ because [it] stand[s] so high/ dress[es] up so beautiful/ make[s] [it]self so green and luscious" (Meador 101). Ebih exists without the natural cycles of life and death or light and dark, and is intolerable to Inanna who is so closely identified with the cyclical and the transformative, like the snake. When An refuses to join her and fight for the natural order, "fury overturns her heart" (99) and she is able to destroy the mountain and establish her independence from An.

In the myth "Inanna and the God of Wisdom" there is another instance of Inanna first gaining her power from a male god and then surpassing him. Before Inanna destroys Ebih, she receives her powers from Enki, the god of wisdom. One day "rejoicing at her wondrous vulva, the young woman Inanna applauded herself. She said: I, the Queen of Heaven and Earth shall visit the God of Wisdom" (Wolkstein 12). When she arrives at his shrine she sits with Enki and they get drunk and "they toast each other; they challenge each other" (Wolkstein 14). Enki then proceeded to bestow on Inanna the *me*, allowing her to rule over almost every earthly power, some heavenly power, and giving her the ability to descend and ascend from the underworld. Inanna accepts these great gifts and quickly puts them into the Boat of Heaven and sails toward Uruk. Before she reaches Uruk Enki gets sober and, realizing what he has done, attempts to bring the boat and the *me* back into his shrine and his control. Enki sends various monsters and giants to attempt to recover the *me* but Inanna and her maid servant Ninshubur are able to fend them off. When they finally reach Uruk and bring

the *me* into the city's shrine, Enki says, "In the name of my power! In the name of my holy shrine! Let the *me* you have taken with you remain in the holy shrine of your city.... The people of Uruk are allies of the people of Eridu. Let the city of Uruk be restored to its great place" (Wolkstein 27). This is an incredibly telling passage; even though Enki does all he can to stop Inanna from keeping the *me* he is unsuccessful and clearly beaten, yet he still attempts to make it seem like he has allowed this to happen. The gods have no control over Inanna, and the best they can do is to stay in her favor and align themselves and the people of their cities with her.

Inanna's transference of the various arts, skills, crafts, and offices of the *me* to Uruk was an expression of her civilizing power. Yet her civilizing power is expressed largely through her sexuality, which distinguishes her from the populating power of fertility goddesses. Images and metaphors of fertility are present throughout the myths of Inanna, yet she is never their source. In Sumerian texts masculine figures are responsible for fertility, and the female figures are responsible for the other aspects of sexuality: "While the phallus represented fertility, the vulva represented sexual potency and became the primary focus of Mesopotamian eroticism" (Leick 96). This assertion holds true for Inanna and Dumuzi; he is always the agent of the fertility of the land, while she is associated with the affairs of lovers and the city. Through her sexuality, rather than increasing or assuring fertility, Inanna exerted social and political influence throughout Sumer.

The civilizing power of Inanna's sexuality is especially important in how she relates on an individual level with humanity through her priestesses. In the temples of Inanna priestesses regularly engaged in sexual activity with the men who visited the temple, and are often referred to in modern scholarship as sacred prostitutes or hierodules. But these words seem inappropriate in describing the priestesses, as they were not engaging in these acts for money nor were they slaves of the goddess; to understand their function one must return to the original meaning of the word prostitute, "to stand on behalf of" (Barring 197). For the Sumerians the experience of ecstasy was associated with the bliss of the divine mind (Barring 197), thus the priestesses were able to give men a sexual experience with the goddess herself, allowing them to experience divine ecstasy and commune with the goddess. So in this way the priestesses were able to educate men about divinity and the feminine through the goddess in a way that their wives and lovers could not. Priestesses also served an important function standing in for the goddess during the sacred marriage rite. Every New Year the king would take on or renew his kingship through *hieros gamos*; the king and the priestess as Inanna would recreate Inanna's marriage to Dumuzi, where upon his having sex with Inanna Dumuzi was transformed from shepherd into a god-king.

The myths of the courtship of Inanna and Dumuzi serve as the basis for the sacred marriage rite, and within it Inanna clearly spells out her role in the leadership of the king. Just before Inanna and Dumuzi have sex for the first time she says to him, “in battle I am your leader,/ in combat I am your armor-bearer,/ in the assembly I am your advocate,/ on the campaign I am your inspiration./ You, the king, the faithful provider of Uruk/ you, the light of An’s great shrine,/ in all ways you are fit” (Wolkstein 45). She proclaims Dumuzi, and thus all kings she initiates sexually, to be fit to be receptive of her influence in their leadership and to take on a sort of mutual power; through this ritual union with the goddess the king is given legitimacy (Moon 73). For Inanna sex was the divine language through which her priestesses allowed her direct access to her worshippers and solidified her influence politically and socially.

Another important feature of the sacred marriage rite is the experience of the audience. The dialogue performed by the priestess as Inanna and the king was incredibly erotic, and it is unclear whether or not the priestess and king actually had sex as part of the ritual. Even with the words alone, the performance would have been arousing, making it clear that another function of the ritual was to incite sexual energy and activity among the people of the city. In this respect Inanna could be considered to have an association with fertility, if one thinks that the purpose of inciting increased sexual activity in the community is necessarily to stimulate population growth, but she is still far removed from the traditional mother or fertility goddess. She possesses no great womb or fertile power herself and she does nothing to make women more capable of pregnancy or childbirth, she only encourages pleasure and the fulfillment of desire. The sexual relationship of Inanna and Dumuzi had to have served as model for human sexuality.

For Inanna and her partners sex is always mutually pleasurable and beneficial for both parties, and the focus is purely pleasure and the fulfillment of desires rather than reproduction or a power struggle. Inanna seeks power and control in many texts, yet in her sexual life there is no example of either party trying to dominate the other. In fact, even the cliché expression of sexual control through top/bottom position is largely absent; in the clay figures and terracotta reliefs depicting intercourse, the couples are largely seen standing up or lying side by side (i.e. plates 6 and 9, Leick 143-4) and any discussion of position is left out of the sacred texts. The text does make it very clear that the attraction and satisfaction of both partners is of the utmost importance in sexual and marital relationships. The best insight into this aspect of Inanna’s model sexuality is the bridal songs. In the myths, hymns, and epics of Sumer Inanna is represented most frequently as a young woman just before she is married, and thus is featured in many of the bridal songs which “enforce the traditional values of harmonious marital relations,

based on sexual fulfillment" (Leick 68). The bridal songs detail the courtship that takes place before marriage and make it clear that the bride and groom-to-be must have a sexual attraction in order for a marriage to take place (Leick 71). The bridal songs also include fantasies of sexual encounters with the future husband, which promise fulfilling and satisfying sexual experiences after the wedding. The sexuality that Inanna offers as example to her worshippers is one that is accompanied by incredibly strong desire, but it is not to be feared or viewed as chaotic. Inanna's sexuality always remains entirely raw, but it is also always sensual and pretty.

The texts depicting sex between Inanna and Dumuzi are characterized by highly charged sexual energy fueled by physical desire, but they are also marked by an incredible emotional tenderness. The sweetness between them is unexpected and striking. In a poem about the sacred marriage rite, Dumuzi lies down beside her on the bed./ Tenderly he caresses her, murmuring words of love:/ "O my holy jewel! O my wondrous Inanna!" / After he enters her holy vulva, causing the queen to rejoice,/ after he enters her holy vulva, causing Inanna to rejoice,/ Inanna holds him to her and murmurs:/ "O Dumuzi you are truly my love." (Wolkstein 108)

The tenderness in scenes such as these makes Inanna's consistently raw sexuality much more approachable, and they endow the poem with a sense of realism that speaks toward the humanity of Inanna's condition. The natural imagery included in the sex scenes functions in a similar way; rather than viewing these images as simply a fertility metaphor, we can view them as we do in other romantic poetry. The garden has always been a metaphor for sensual pleasure, and "in Sumerian texts 'garden' and 'bed' are used in very similar contexts" (Leick 74). Especially in the arid climate of Sumer, the garden also represents the victory of humans over the environment (Leick 73) and brings us back to the nature of Inanna as a civilizing goddess. The garden is a version of tamed nature, and when sex takes place there it connotes the idea of wild sexuality as manageable and enjoyable. So in this way the natural images surrounding Inanna's sex serve to make it approachable, just as the sweetness does. The idea of a completely fulfilled sexuality has the potential for chaos, but the fact that its nature has a sweet, somewhat contained side makes it possible to be viewed as wholly positive.

Whitesell writes, "Where the goddess reigns, the personal aspect of sexual interplay does not fully emerge. Every man is the god; every woman, the goddess. General bounty and well being is the goal; full cooperation with the sexual instinct is the mean of pursuing it" (94). Though I agree that men and women are transformed and are able to communicate with the divine through sex, I do not believe they lose

themselves. The sex is so much about their own pleasure and experience of ecstasy that I do not believe they could be lost. They are working for the general well-being by becoming satisfied individuals, not by procreating. The sexuality in the myths of Inanna is the sexuality of young women and wives, not mothers. The stress in the texts is on the pleasurable aspects of sex, not on the possible resulting birth. In the myths of the courtship of Inanna and Dumuzi the focus of their sexual energy is on foreplay and oral sex, rather than vaginal intercourse. Inanna is in no way the mother, fertility, or earth goddess that many claim she is today but something far more relevant: she is the goddess of personal fulfillment, healthy sexual relationships within marriage and society, and civilization itself.

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