

IMAGINATIONS

REVUE D'ÉTUDES INTERCULTURELLES DE L'IMAGE ▪ JOURNAL OF CROSS-CULTURAL IMAGE STUDIES



IMAGINATIONS

JOURNAL OF CROSS_CULTURAL IMAGE STUDIES |
REVUE D'ÉTUDES INTERCULTURELLES DE L'IMAGE

Publication details, including open access policy
and instructions for contributors:

<http://imagination.csj.ualberta.ca>

Issue URL

<http://imagination.csj.ualberta.ca/?p=2866>

May 21, 2012

To link to this issue:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.17742/IMAGE.stealimage.3-1>



The copyright for each article belongs to the author and has been published in this journal under a **Creative Commons Attribution NonCommercial NoDerivatives 3.0** license that allows others to share for non-commercial purposes the work with an acknowledgement of the work's authorship and initial publication in this journal. The content of this article represents the author's original work and any third-party content, either image or text, has been included under the Fair Dealing exception in the Canadian Copyright Act, or the author has provided the required publication permissions.

IMAGINATIONS

REVUE D'ÉTUDES INTERCULTURELLES DE L'IMAGE • JOURNAL OF CROSS-CULTURAL IMAGE STUDIES

ISSUE 3-1 STEALING THE IMAGE • 2012

GUEST ARTIST • TANYA URY

WRITING BY
MICHAEL RODGERS
GENEVIÈVE CLOUTIER
ANTONIO VISELLI
MARIA-CAROLINA CAMBRE
CHRISTOF DECKER
SUSANNE KELLY
SARAH MCGAUGHEY



Managing Editor • Stealing The Image • Daniel Laforest

Editor in Chief | Rédacteur en chef: Sheena Wilson

Editorial Team | Comité de rédaction:

Daniel Laforest, Dalbir Sehmy, Carrie Smith-Prei, Andriko Lozowy

French Content Editor | Contenu français: Daniel Laforest

Copy Editor | Révisions: Dalbir Sehmy

Designer and Technical Editor | Design et technologie: Andriko Lozowy

Web Editor | Mise en forme web: Carrie Smith-Prei

Reviews Editor - Elicitations | Comptes rendus critiques - Élicitations: Tara Milbrandt

French Translations | Traductions françaises: Alexandra Popescu

Editorial Advisory Board | Comité scientifique:

Hester Baer, University of Oklahoma, United States

Mieke Bal, University of Amsterdam & Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, Netherlands

Andrew Burke, University of Winnipeg, Canada

Ollivier Dyens, Concordia University, Canada

Wlad Godzich, University of California Santa Cruz, United States

Faye Hammill, University of Strathclyde, United Kingdom

Anton Kaes, University of California Berkeley, United States

Dominic McIver Lopes, University of British Columbia, Canada

Sarah McGaughey, Dickinson College, United States

Peter McIsaac, University of Michigan, United States

Marie-Dominique Popelard, Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris 3, France

Christine Ramsay, University of Regina, Canada

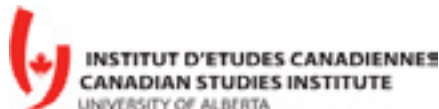
Laurence A. Rickels, Academy of Fine Arts, Karlsruhe, Germany

Will Straw, McGill University, Canada

Imre Szeman, University of Alberta, Canada

Founding Editors: William Anselmi, Daniel Laforest, Carrie Smith-Prei, Sheena Wilson

Sponsor:



3-1, Summer 2012

Stealing the Image

Editor: Daniel Laforest

Table of Contents | Table des matières

Dossier • Stealing the Image

Imaginations Interview with Tanya Ury • p. 4-9

Dialogue over Skype between Tanya Ury and Claude Desmarais • p. 10-16

Relationships of Ownership: Art and Theft in Bob Dylan's 1960s' Trilogy • p. 17-29

Author: Michael Rodgers

Portraits d'un imaginaire de l'avant-garde : le Carré noir sur fond blanc
de Kazimir Malevitch et ses réincarnations artistiques • p. 30-43

Author: Geneviève Cloutier

In Possession of a Stolen Weapon: From John Gay's
Macheath to Rubén Blades' Pedro Navaja • p. 45-60

Author: Antonio Viselli

Stealing or Stealing the Image?

The failed branding of the Guerrillero Heroico image of Che Guevara • p. 64-87

Author: Maria-Carolina Cambre

General Contributions

Trauma Narratives, Mixed Media, and the Meditation on the Invisible • p. 92-104

Author: Christof Decker

Perceptions of Jewish Female Bodies Through
Gustav Klimt and Peter Altenberg • p. 109-122

Author: Susanne Kelley

Review Essay

(E)merging Discourses: Architecture and Cultural Studies • p. 123-131

Author: Sarah McGaughey

Front and Back Cover Images by
Tanya Ury



SPECIAL DOSSIER: STEALING THE IMAGE

How to define the ownership of an image at a time when the media themselves are in a state of constant flux; where they have become the objects of a profound reorganization in the economy of visual exchange, distribution, and consumption across cultures? How to pinpoint the moment in such a context when a visual citation becomes an ironic appropriation? Or when an image is actually being *stolen*? And more bluntly, how to simply conceive of an image that has the ability to remain private in the early 21st century? This special dossier on “Stealing the image” is *Imaginations*’ first contribution to these questions. Much has been said in the past decade on the alleged downfall of the music industry caused by a new stage in its mechanical (or rather digital) reproduction. But things remain unclear when it comes to images and their relationship to the same upheaval regarding the notions of property, representation, and circulation in the brave new world of today. Arguably, they are also more complex.

With this issue, we are also proud to present an exclusive multimedia portfolio of works by Anglo-German artist Tanya Ury. Through a dazzling variety of forms ranging from visual poetry to video, from immersive sound experiments to field photography, and from re-contextualized visual archives to intimate performance, Ury offers crucial questionings on the state of the cultural as well as the personal self in a world where national identities are being challenged by the shifting boundaries between media, between public and private, or even between the senses themselves.

DOSSIER SPÉCIAL: SUBTILISER L'IMAGE

Comment définir la propriété d’une image à une époque où les supports médiatiques sont saisis dans un flux constant; à une époque où eux-mêmes sont devenus les objets d’une réorganisation profonde dans l’économie des échanges, de la distribution, et de la consommation culturelle du visuel? Comment, dans un tel contexte, identifier le moment où une citation visuelle bascule du côté de l’appropriation décalée? Où alors le moment où une image devient l’objet d’un vol pur et simple? Plus expressément encore, comment concevoir qu’une image puisse simplement demeurer de l’ordre du privé à l’aube du XXI^e siècle? On a dit beaucoup de choses durant la dernière décennie sur ce qui est perçu comme l’effondrement de l’industrie de la distribution musicale, résultat d’un nouveau stade dans l’évolution de sa reproductibilité technique (ou maintenant digitale). Toutefois l’affaire demeure beaucoup moins claire en ce qui a trait aux images en tant qu’elles sont désormais l’objet d’un bouleversement similaire dans leur rapport à la propriété, dans leur circulation, et dans leur représentation. À tout prendre, on peut supposer que les choses prennent alors une tournure beaucoup plus complexe. Ce dossier spécial intitulé « Subtiliser l’image » entend constituer une première contribution de *Imaginations* au champ constitué par ces questionnements.

Dans ce numéro, nous sommes également fiers d’accueillir un portfolio exclusif des œuvres de l’artiste anglo-germanique Tanya Ury. À travers une variété étonnante de formes qui vont de la poésie visuelle à la vidéo, de l’expérimentation sonore immersive à la photographie de terrain, et de l’archive photographique recontextualisée à la performance intime, Ury suggère des questions cruciales quant au statut des identités personnelle et culturelle dans un monde où l’idée d’une appartenance nationale nette se voit remise en question par les frontières désormais mouvantes entre les technologies médiatiques, quand ce n’est entre les sens mêmes dont nous disposons tous afin de circonscrire notre place au monde.

TANYA URY

STEALING THE IMAGE GUEST ARTIST

CONCRETE POETRY SERIES (2011)

[P. 18-20-24-26-31-33-35-37-39-46-48-50-52-54-56]
SEE ANNEX 1 - P. 132

ALIBIJUDE (2011)

[P. 44]
SEE ANNEX 2 - P. 133

FADING INTO THE FOREGROUND SERIES (2006 -)

[P. 61-62-63]
SEE ANNEX 3 - P. 134

WHO'S BOSS SOUL BROTHERS & SISTERS SERIES (2006 -)

[P. 88-89-90-91-105-106-107-108]
SEE ANNEX 4 - P. 135

HERME (2010)

[P. 139]
SEE ANNEX 5 - P. 137

(* 1951 in London) is a British - German artist and writer. Ury studied fine art at Exeter College of Art and Design from 1985 to 1988 and in 1989 1 semester at the Institute for Theatre, Film and Television Studies, Cologne University (D). In 1990 she graduated in Master of Fine Arts at Reading University. From 1991 to 1992 she was a guest lecturer at Sheffield Hallam University, with the Colin Walker Fellowship in Fine Art and from 2010 a PhD. in Humanities candidate, with Prof. Ernst J. van Alphen, Faculty of the Humanities, Leiden University Institute for Cultural Disciplines (LUICD) (NL). She has been living and working in Cologne, Germany, since 1993. Most of her family lived here before having to flee into exile to London because of their Jewish origins. As a writer, activist, and in her photography, installations, performance and video art Tanya Ury deals with questions of Judeo-German identity, the handling of German society with its history, the role of subaltern women against the background of migration and racism. Prostitution, voyeurism and the Holocaust are issues in a large number of her works. <http://tanyaury.com>

(* 1951 à Londres) est une artiste et écrivaine britannogermanique. Elle a étudié les beaux-arts au Exeter College of Art and Design de 1985 à 1988, et a complété un semestre en 1989 à l'Institut for Theatre, Film and Television Studies de l'Université de Cologne. Elle a obtenu une maîtrise en beaux-arts de l'University of Reading en 1990, puis a occupé un poste de maître de conférence invité à la Sheffield Hallam University de 1991 à 1992, grâce au Colin Walker Fellowship in Fine Arts. Depuis 2010, elle est candidate au doctorat en Humanities au Leiden University Institute for Cultural Disciplines, sous la supervision du professeur Ernst J. van Alphen. Tanya Ury vit à Cologne, en Allemagne, depuis 1993. La plupart des membres de sa famille ont vécu en ce lieu avant de devoir s'exiler à Londres en raison de leur origine juive. En tant qu'écrivaine et activiste, de même qu'avec ses photographies, ses installations, et ses performances sur vidéo, Tanya Ury se confronte aux questions de l'identité judéo-germanique, au traitement par l'Allemagne de son passé historique, au rôle subalterne joué par les femmes en regard de l'immigration et du racisme. La prostitution, le voyeurisme, et l'Holocauste sont également abordés dans un grand nombre de ses œuvres. <http://tanyaury.com>

IMAGINATIONS INTERVIEW WITH ARTIST TANYA URY

Q: *Fading into the Foreground* depicts the everyday wear of camouflage; does this represent to you a decontextualization of war and violence? You spoke of your shock and horror witnessing the display of nationalism at the 2006 World Cup quarterfinal between Germany and Argentina, where fans were draped in the flag and singing the German national anthem. How did this affect you and the work you had just begun? What are your thoughts on German nationalism in our present age? How does this decontextualized use of camouflage influence movements like “Occupy”?

A: It’s a long haul since the Beatles paraded colourful, military-style jackets, emulating a past Victorian and colonial era in 1967, on their *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* record cover. Was the clothing worn in protest to the Vietnam War? Or was it some sort of glorification of the military? What will this statement have been telling the thirty-two million purchasers of the album? “We won the war,” the phrase referring to the Second World War on fascism in Germany, was still being spoken on British lips, after the World Cup Final in 1966, when Great Britain won against Germany. The war was still being fought in fields of popular culture. I was a teenager at the time and can remember that it was fashionable to carry paper shopping bags flaunting the British flag. The military look and nationalism have, hand in hand, remained evergreen in fashion, but it is difficult to tell when this has been about parody.

Andy Warhol created many camouflage prints in 1987. In 2005, *DPM (Disruptive Pattern Material)* was published by Maharishi in London. It is a large, two-book, bound edition on camouflage patterns of the world, which was about army uniform and weaponry concealment design, but also fashion and art that made use of the camouflage motif. It seems that the military fashion hasn’t waned completely, although the heyday of a few years ago, when it was seen represented by high fashion companies and on magazine covers, is past.

Army surplus, on the other hand, is an inexpensive way to dress and what’s more, lends the wearer a look that suggests power and standing. I have photographed such clothing being worn on the streets internationally for the ongoing *Fading into the Foreground* series and it is often the marginalised, road workers, who wear camouflage, not as a fashion statement, but because it is durable and cheap to purchase. In each situation, the symbolic gesture of the dress code is about masquerade.

In some situations, when I have captured the moment on photographic film, the symbolism appears to be loaded. During the FIFA World Cup being held in Germany of 2006, (in which Germany finished third) for the first time, a new generation of Germans allowed themselves the celebration of nationalism (draped in the veil of patriotism) that was previously considered to be in bad taste. It was, in fact, the display of flags seen in Germany on such an overwhelming scale at the time that prompted me to start the photographic series. So many people were waving flags and some of these were simultaneously wearing camouflage—it certainly caused me to question this incongruous display. I have lived in Germany for over twenty years, and when I came here, I respected Germany’s vigorous attempt to process and account for its National Socialist past. And then suddenly what had been absolutely taboo the day before, I mean the flaunting of the German flag, was being relished with relief the following day, on all German streets. I could understand a German need for a sense of pride, but I cannot relate to nationalism of any sort.

A previous blow had been when Joschka Fischer of the Green Party announced that the German army would again be seen in action, even if primarily, merely as observers in Kosovo. The Green Party, which had made it to coalition rule in 1998 (Joschka Fischer became Vice Chancellor and Foreign Minister of Germany), emerged in late 1970s Germany with a policy of pacifism (negotiation through peaceful discussion was to be attempted in preference to aggressive military action); it was clear that the peacekeeping role in Kosovo would become a slippery slope (which eventually led to real

action supporting NATO manoeuvres in Kosovo and later Afghanistan in 2001).

I have taken over 1,600 photos for *Fading into the Foreground* (most of which, still have to be sorted). The most recent were made in Strasbourg at the Occupy demonstration in front of General Kléber's memorial in the central square, on 15th October 2011. In my experience, there will always be someone found in any crowd sporting camouflage fatigues (either civilians or army members on leave); in the context of Occupy, the wear attains its own particular symbolism. With the display of camouflage, the civilian possibly betrays a desire to immerse her/himself in an unregimented army of the masses that by taking to the streets, to a demonstration, expresses people power, an as yet unharnessed *vox populi*.

Q: In 2009 you were part of *Art of Emergency*, an exhibition with the mandate of “artists who care about the mutual tragedy of people in the Middle East.” How does this mandate inform or misinform people about your art? Are there still lasting effects upon your present work, or is your present work still informed in a meaningful way by that period of your life?

A: For *Art of Emergency*, I presented a photograph of my two nieces, who live in London. *Sibling Rivalry* depicts Elà on the left wearing a Kefiya (Arab) scarf and the younger Leylà on the right, wears a Star of David round her neck; their parents are Jewish and Turkish (Deniz, their mother is a non-practising Muslim). I feel that this image represents well the conflict still raging in Palestine, which might nevertheless be resolved if Israelis start to recognise the Palestinians as brothers and sisters living on the same plot of land, and who should be respected and granted equal rights as citizens.

In the *Emergency Room* exhibition of 2006, also in Berlin, I presented sixteen photos from the *Fading into the Foreground* series of people wearing camouflage, on Cologne streets in Germany but also on the streets of Jerusalem. In Israel, the significance was compounded because it was a war zone—the authentic members of

the military seen there in uniform were on active duty; since more or less every citizen will have been a member of the army at some time in her/his life however, the distinctions were unclear—the casual wearers of camouflage on the street will also have actively been soldiers at some time, unless they were merely a tourist.

Germans have always spoken to me, as though I, a Diaspora Jew from England, was somehow responsible for the afflictions of Palestinians, under Israeli mandate in Palestine. My artist's scrutiny had been directed in the main to how Germany has dealt with its fascist past. More recently it has, however, become clear to me that as a Jewish person, I do have a responsibility to at least voice my disagreement with the aggressive and unfair Israeli policies towards the Palestinian people, as publicly as possible. Activism can take several forms—I have made several more art works on these issues but importantly, am affiliated with activist groups in Great Britain and in Germany: JfJfP (Jews for Justice for Palestinians) and the Jüdische Stimme für gerechten Frieden in Nahost, EJJP Deutschland (Jewish Voice for a Just Peace in the Middle East)—as a group, our voice has a far more vigorous effect in public discourse.

Q: Identity and nationality are key themes in part of your work. You have been identified as an English-Jewish and German-Jewish artist. Do these titles or descriptions hold power for or over you? In postcolonial theory and discussions of globalization, hyphenated identity is a key term for understanding the modern or postmodern experience. In keeping with such discussions, does one identity hold sway over the other for you, or how would you describe the amalgam of identities that we all, hyphenated or not, carry within us?

A: I find it not possible to be an escapist artist. And like anybody, I get called all sorts of names; the legacies (British, German, Jewish, female, older), accepted at least in part, can be deployed usefully as tools, when reflected back to a general spectatorship, as images of cliché, to demonstrate and underscore stereotypical thinking.

Q: Some of your latest work, including the photographic collection of *Soul Brothers & Sisters*

depicts artists, activists, and musicians sporting a shirt with your modified Hugo Boss logo. The models seem to deconstruct the conventional fashion magazines' advertisements; having them photographed in different locations in the world gives the work a global feel. Was this your goal? It reads like a public service piece of art, informing people of the troubled heritage of a massive clothing designer. How do people react to the news that Hugo Boss produced uniforms for the National-Socialists? Does the reaction change when they learn that the 2008/9 Hugo Boss collection revisited the past; for example, one full-length leather coat seemed to parody the German Luftwaffe uniform from the National-Socialist period? Is this collection another extension of your shift into works about and on the body, using the model's bodies to display your art?

A: I started with the multi-media series *Who's Boss*, 10 years ago. In conversation, it still often occurs that people do not know of the connection between the contemporary Hugo Boss Company and Hugo Ferdinand Boss's original company, which produced Nazi uniforms in Germany, prior to and during WW2. I wanted to inform the public and had plenty of examples to choose from. Within the extensive bounds of post-war German industry or from leaders in senior executive positions, the German heritage may be seen as the seamless continuation of a culture based on exploitation. And industry continues to gain in global power. This is the certainly case with the Hugo Boss Company, an international company.

I have had the good fortune to be able to travel, and when I do, I take my work with me. Photographing other people in the *Soul Brothers and Sisters* series (wearing T-shirts with the subverted Boss logo, altered to include the SS rune) was also an extension of my artistic practice, so often expressed by my own body. The T-shirt, yet another kind of uniform, worn to protect or merely disguise the body, may become disruptive; when it is also seen to be making a statement, it becomes more than merely a fashion item. And it is great being part of a chorus; too often one stands alone as an artist.

Q: *dark room* is a very personal, reflective multimedia piece done after your fight with cancer. How does

this piece reflect the personal journey you undertook surviving your bout with the disease? Do you see your body—and to a larger extent, the entire physical body—any differently now?

A: The recording for the installation *dark room* is of all sound reduced to ambient atmosphere, around and including the body. You hear breathing and sounds in the room, over a prolonged time. But *dark room* is as much about meditation as anything. In meditation, one goes within the body to the centre of life energy. I started with the practice of Guru Maharaji's meditation in 1973. During the discovery and immediate treatment for breast cancer in 2010, meditation became an even more profound experience for me. I was able to keep centred on a point of joy and relaxation, when my outside world seemed to be falling apart. *dark room* is the absolute reduction of an art work which suggests more; however, the sound of breathing and the title, point to activities in a sex club. Everybody's reaction to illness is individual. In my case and in spite of my age, it has been towards the celebration of the somatic, as well as the spiritual. If my reflections on the body have altered at all, it is to focus on life and not on illness or infirmity.

Q: The historical photograph in your work *Alibijude* likewise uses the personal as a starting point, as the photographs feature your great-grandparents as well as your grandparents. How do you feel about having an ancestor that the National-Socialists profited from?

A: In January this year (2012), my aunt Annette Pringle (née Felske) came over from the USA, after the death of her brother Gerd. They were both born before the war. She told me that she had found a copy of the very same photograph that I recently adopted to make an artwork of, amongst her brother's possessions, but was surprised at my interpretation of the image; living in Boston, Annette had not yet heard of the Neven DuMont scandal some six years ago. In 2006, it had emerged that Kurt Neven DuMont, who ran the Cologne daily *Kölnische Zeitung* before and until shortly after the end of the war, had Aryanised several houses, property belonging to Jewish people forced to sell well below value; this fact had been kept under covers by the DuMont family.

I entitled the press photo of my family in 1955, *Alibijude* (Alibi Jew); it reveals my grandparents and great-grandparents, survivors of Theresienstadt, being embraced by a young Alfred Neven DuMont, son and heir of the previous newspaper magnate; his paper was later renamed the *Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger*. My great uncle Wilhelm, who wrote a *Stadtanzeiger* feuilleton for the rest of his working life, was also present at the scene. With the text I wrote to accompany the artwork, I expressed my ambiguous feelings regarding the family connection with the DuMonts—my grandfather Alfred together with Wilhelm had organised a new newspaper license for the DuMonts, from the American authorities, after the war.

In a conversation with Annette when she was here in January, she informed me that the Neven DuMonts had done much to assist family members who were in hiding in Cologne, during the war, something that I had not been aware of. So I must again review this complex, symbiotic relationship.

Q: In some ways similar to *Alibijude*, the video *Intimacy* uses footage of yourself and another person. How do you see the interstices between the personal and art in this piece? Is there a reason that much of your work includes the personal? For instance, do you have the feeling that parsing or leaving out the personal is dishonest or is it a barrier to artistic achievement? Or does it have to do with honesty about the source of your inspiration?

A: There is the case of Maxim Biller's novel *Esra*, which was banned shortly after its publication in 2003, after members of the family of a former lover he had described in the book (too closely for their comfort) sued for defamation. It was beyond my comprehension how courts in Germany could propagate this kind of censorship, when doubtless all literature is based on personal experience. How distanced from reality must literature be before its source becomes unrecognisable? This risk-free publishing culture, to my mind, evokes a time not so long ago when what the authorities considered to be degenerate literature was delegated to the bonfire.

With *Intimacy*, as with much of my self-portraiture, I decided to cut corners and use source material: personal footage from 1991 of the sexual act with a lover on video, but accompanied by very honest, literary texts, describing the carnal in human relationships (I employed quotations from *Intimacy* by Jean-Paul Sartre and *Intimacy* by Hanif Kureishi). The contrast between image and text, visual representations of the cerebral and the physical, leaves the viewer questioning which trajectory to follow—it is impossible to follow both, at the same time.

Q: You state that you have created most of your work in English and German. Words and names carry so much weight and power. How important is it to you to have your work interpreted in these two languages? Have you ever made, or felt the need to make a linguistic nod to your Jewish heritage, say through the use of Yiddish?

A: German was the language that I first heard as a child. My parents and grandparents were German. I learned German alongside English in Great Britain in the early fifties. When visiting the family in Cologne as a child, a few Yiddish words may have fallen, but these will have been picked up from elsewhere. It was not our means of communication. My heritage, like klezmer music, is not folkloristic (my father was a composer; my grandfather was a writer, both in the classical tradition).

I find language, whether visual or written, a battleground; it doesn't come easy living in parallel universes, trapped between image and text, or the different meanings implied in the two languages; but the fact that I work so much with wordplay, an essential part of Kabbalist practice, is a nod to a Jewish heritage.

Q: Throughout your career, you have been invited to give talks and presentations around the world. In our global age, how has globalization affected your work?

A: It has been by means of e-mail and the Internet that I have often been informed of and been able to apply to conferences internationally. Networking has certainly become a very important aspect of artistic life. The same prejudices still apply in a market-oriented art (and

literary) world: sexism, ageism, racism and political prejudice—even amongst activists there are fashionable and unfashionable causes, fighting for attention. I have experienced discrimination to the left and to the right. With the Internet, one has a greater than ever means to connect on a democratic basis; websites, like messages in virtual space bottles, occasionally get discovered by others, with similar objectives.

I write and make art now with wider horizons in mind. Eight years ago I decided, rather than investing effort in publishing art catalogues, I would produce a website that should be constantly maintained and updated. For someone like me, working on the outer edge of non-conformity, this publicity tool has been vital in the fight against invisibility.

My website has become a true labyrinth—an artwork in itself. There are 800 pages of text descriptions of the work (in English and German), trailers to all my videos, images of most of the photographic and performance work; the articles, stories or poems are rarely presented in full, however.

I have also been invited to present work on academic and art websites in Berlin, the USA, and Canada, and there is an interview online on a site in Norway and Cologne. Unusually, though it does happen, I have been contacted by people on the other side of the world, who have discovered my website online.

Q: *concrete party* is a collection of misread and misunderstood texts, a juxtaposition of words and titles out of context. What made you decide to tackle this project? “Feminination,” for instance, is described as being shaped like a fan to represent the feminine body, but it could also be understood to represent a breast. How does this reading fit what you have been working on in the last few years, or your battle with breast cancer, and what has caused your shift to photographic art and concrete word poetry?

A: *concrete party* is a collection of misread, misheard and misunderstood texts—it also includes wordplay,

concrete, absurd and some more traditionally considered verse; but mostly the poetry is the expression of thoughts that run around constantly, usually uncontrolled, through the mind. It is one of six editions of poetry (each including twenty-eight stanzas) that I have written over the last two years—a recording of *cement*, a similar work, is included on the *Imaginations* website.

Although I had previously written a small amount of poetry, it was during a depression at the end of 2009, followed shortly after by the cancer illness, that I started writing poetry constantly—mostly in English, but some in German too. At the time, I was physically and mentally unable to continue making art, researching, and writing. I actually had to cancel approximately five large projects, which I have still not returned to, but discovered that it was also impossible to shut the creative process down, completely.

In my situation, I had become rather hyper; I needed to express myself immediately and concisely. Extraordinarily, I found myself able to locate a kind of collective thought wave, what musicians who practice improvisation call “the flow.” And it was during this period that I was also, by chance, invited by musicians to improvise with them at sessions. It has become a regular activity over the last year, in Cologne and Düsseldorf: I perform with a pool of up to fifty musicians, every couple of weeks, in small groups for five to ten minutes before rotating. It is a fascinating and exhilarating experience and so different than anything I have previously known. Being a group activity, it contrasts to that of the writer/artist who, like the long distance runner, is lonely. These group projects require an absolute trust in the abilities of the other artists. Collectively, we toss off our finest and then just let it go.

Where *feminination* was written in the form of a fan (which you can print up and fold), *silly cone* (also on the *Imaginations* website under concrete poems) from *cross word* (an edition, which I am still working on) was specifically designed in the form of a breast and also refers to cancer—the recent scare in December of 2011 to be precise—when it was discovered that many

women in England and France had experienced silicone leakage from their breast implants. Although breast augmentation involves cosmetic surgery, it is not only conducted for the sake of a fashionable look. Several friends have had breast cancer and the initial tumour removal is often followed by reconstruction surgery. Fatty tissue may be taken from the stomach area, to replace removed breast tissue, but more often than not, silicone implants are utilised.

Regarding photographic work, it has in fact been part of my practice for the last fifteen years.

Q: In the past, you have brought hidden historical facts back into the public conscious through your art. Your latest work now shifts into the contemporary and into issues of the body. What is the main force driving your art now?

A: When dealing with historical facts in past work, I have been careful to go beyond merely repeating documented facts. I have always attempted to refer to contemporary dealings in context with the past. *Who's Boss*, for instance, was not just about the company's Nazi history. In my texts accompanying the artworks (which are accessible on my website), I discuss Germany's most recent policies of compensation to former forced labour troupes: a fund was instituted into which industrial criminals were to pay at least a token recompense to their victims. The amounts were pathetic and the fund was instituted far too late, making a travesty of the venture. Hugo Boss was one of the companies that did not reward compensation, on its own initiative, but was finally forced to recompense the few surviving former forced labourers because of legal decisions handed down by the courts.

The body still remains a constant agenda for me, as it has been over the last twenty-five years. I guess what drives my art and writing now is not one force but a wider than ever range. The rapidity of the poetry writing especially enables me to tackle any issue with a one-liner commentary that may, nevertheless, attain the depth of long-researched work. Illness has helped me

to grasp the elusive nature of life but has also happily resulted in an explosion of activity. Although I am well, I will not be able to realise all my plans because there are just too many. In spite of all that, over the coming year, as well as continuing to write, I hope to become more involved in spoken texts (written and improvised poetry), accompanied by musicians.

Tanya Ury, Cologne, February 2012

www.tanyaury.com

The interview questions and editing of the text are by Claude Desmarais, Reichwald Professor in Germanic Studies in the Faculty of Creative and Critical Studies (FCCS), University of British Columbia, Okanagan campus. Rebecca Brady, undergraduate research assistant at UBC Okanagan, has provided valuable assistance on this project.

DIALOGUE: TANYA URY AND CLAUDE DESMARAIS

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 7TH 2012.
COLOGNE, GERMANY /
KELOWNA, BC, CANADA.

TANYA: Something really weird happened. It might be appropriate or not. I'll just quickly tell you. A couple of weeks ago, I was contacted by a theatre director in Ulm, which was the town my father came from. Basically, they told me about something that was already a fait accompli: a theatre production about the life of Rommel with a Jewish ghost, and they chose my grandmother Hedwig Ury to be the Jewish ghost. It was very, very weird because they told me this, like, a week before the premiere. I have to admit that it was a bit upsetting, but anyway, on Sunday I'm going to go to Ulm to see the piece. Sort of strange; it was a bit like being visited by a ghost of the past.

CLAUDE: Do you know why they picked your grandmother?

TANYA: No. I don't know why. They didn't say why.

CLAUDE: What do you know about her?

TANYA: There is some documented material, and the strange thing is because I'm translating articles that I wrote for the book I'll be producing this year, I was looking at that article again. A woman called Resi Weglein, who came from Ulm, was a friend of the family. She was with my grandmother in Theresienstadt, and she has written about all of the people that she knew in the camps she survived; she was a witness, so to speak, and wrote about everybody she knew, including my grandmother. And this paragraph, which I read for the first time about 20 years ago about her and my grandmother in Theresienstadt was really very upsetting. It was about how she and another accompanied a wagon of corpses to the edge of the concentration camps with the rabbi, saying their prayers. And I know now that it made a picture of my grandmother very real, although I had never really known anything about her

before. Before she was sent to Theresienstadt, she went to a home where the Jewish people in Ulm were sent to before they were sent to [the camps]. She looked after all the people there before she was sent to Auschwitz. The place had previously been in Esslingen, a house where Rommel had lived. And that's why this theatre piece involves two aspects of what happened in the house. I thought you might be interested.

CLAUDE: No, that's quite fascinating. If you think about it, now we're talking about quite a number of years since the war and the Holocaust, the Shoah, and yet these things are still so present in Germany, you know.

TANYA: Yes, I know.

CLAUDE: I find it very interesting the discourse in North America is still very much about the Cold War, and Germany as part of the war has to do with the Second World War of course and the Cold War, but... um... around me and in all this area are the First Nations. In fact, British Columbia is the place where the fewest treaties have been signed.

TANYA: What do you mean by treaties?

CLAUDE: Well, in the Eastern part of North America (and Canada) treaties were signed between the First Nations peoples of Canada and the colonizers, basically reducing indigenous people's land claims to reserves. But here in B.C., there are very few treaties, so that means that the claims of the First Nations to the land are still very much real. You can't just take the land, and not have a treaty and think that it's yours. And the thing is, we do not have the Shoah, but we definitely had a genocide here [Editor's note: This is sometimes falsely reduced to a cultural genocide, whereas in reality this genocide involved many different reprehensible and criminal acts, including murders] and the one large-scale event most discussed is the residential school system as an assimilationist tool to destroy the First Nations culture. Whereas in Germany, it is part of the official discourse that this [the Shoah] happened, and then there's negotiating in that society. Here, there's part of the society that recognizes that, but the official discourse, apart from the few of the "Oh, we're sorry about what

happened,” there’s really not anything as advanced as in Germany.

TANYA: That’s disgraceful. Why is it? I don’t understand that. I mean if you think about what’s still going on in Turkey, where the Armenian genocide is still being denied, and I mean, I know a Turkish writer here, Dogan Akhanli, who lives in Cologne. He actually has done a couple of prison terms in Turkey because he has publicly voiced his personal disapproval that the genocide is not being talked about and admitted to. Ignoring something completely is impossible. It’s just so disrespectful to the people and the memory of the people in the following generations.

CLAUDE: Yes, well there’s that moral imperative, and I think it’s sometimes in our world we have a really hard time making those moral imperatives valued. And there’s another side to it, and that’s simply that a society that doesn’t look at its past critically and deal with the past is always going to be losing out. There’s a very real loss, which isn’t just one person, isn’t the original victims, but it’s all those cycles of victimhood, which are just perpetrated and re-perpetrated. I look around here; this is a beautiful area, and I look at how the area is dealt with and I say to myself, this is because that whole colonial and I don’t say colonial in the sense of all the people back then, I’m talking about this life right now, the colonial experience hasn’t been worked through and Germany shows that this working through such things is almost always difficult—and then there is the continuing discrimination in Germany and all other countries—, but..

TANYA: —but it’s possible—

CLAUDE: Oh yes, and Germany has gone through all sorts of stages and still needs to work through quite a few things though. But back to your story, you are going to Ulm; they invited you to come to Ulm?

TANYA: That is incognito (laughs). I’m going incognito, on my own and in my own opinion...

CLAUDE: Did they invite you or did they tell you about it? Did they ask or did they say we’d like you to come?

TANYA: Yes, but I mean, personally, I would have preferred it if they’d been in touch a couple years ago when they started writing the project; that would have been respectful.

CLAUDE: And what do you think kept them from being respectful? I think this might point to one of the dilemmas Germany is facing; before the Shoah and before WWII, Germany/Eastern Europe was full of vibrant Jewish-German communities. If you ever go to Yad Vashem you see all the communities that were destroyed in the genocides and for me, that was a more telling experience because it wasn’t about a number, it was about all these communities that had been destroyed and—

TANYA: —and the culture.

CLAUDE: Yes of course, the culture. And the impoverishment of the culture –

TANYA: —the general culture.

CLAUDE: Yes, definitely. And the present state of Germany to be described by comparison as one where there are very few Jewish people living in Germany. And if you live outside of Berlin and Cologne...

TANYA: —there is a community in Munich.

CLAUDE: Yes, Munich and Frankfurt. There are communities, and I think once you start looking, you will be surprised at how many Jewish communities there are in Germany; there’s many more than one would think, right? Maybe it’s surprising, but the day-to-day interaction with people who are of Jewish heritage, culture or religion—this is much less than it was prior to the war and the Shoah and so here comes my question, do you think that in Ulm they’re just without contact with any people who are Jewish-Germans or Jewish, and therefore, they didn’t think of it?

TANYA: Yes, and I will tell you what I feel and it’s utterly unfair towards them, but I have my own emotional response before I’ve seen the piece. They just didn’t think, and I wrote them an e-mail saying they are privileged, belonging to the generation after an entire nation of criminals. And they have the privilege of

choice, whether to deal with this subject matter or not, and I don't have that choice and I think that is why I felt rather upset. They have a choice and of course it's wonderful that they are dealing with this subject matter, but they didn't really think about the implications and what it might mean to the families. It only occurred to them a week prior and it would have been so easy to have done some research. We know the former head of the NS-Dokumentationszentrum der Stadt Ulm (National-Socialist Documentation Centre in Ulm), Silvester Lechner, who is now retired—he would have put them in touch with us and they would have just, you know, one e-mail to the Documentation Centre ...

CLAUDE: Can I push you a bit on that point in two ways? One is that I would say, actually, although they might not be as personally implicated—I'm not counteracting your idea—they have a choice because they're in the majority culture, right? And they have all sorts of privileges attached to that, but in a way, Germans don't really have a choice if one is looking at it from a point of view of their own well-being. Because if one looks to the so-called national liberated zone in Mecklenburg, I believe it is, where these people with the neo-Nazi ideology are trying to take over the schools and such things, they don't have a choice, because with this heritage, there are two choices—you either work through this heritage in a critical way and try to go beyond it or it is going to come back and revisit you.

TANYA: Yes.

CLAUDE: So, would you . . .

TANYA: Okay, maybe they imagined that they have a choice (laughs).

CLAUDE: Okay (laughs), that's interesting. The other thing I would say is they imagine they have a choice and the idea that Germans can live their lives in the main as part of the majority culture without really thinking about the minorities among them and this can be true about the Turks, the East Germans, Jewish-Germans—German-Jews whatever terminology one wants—and this creates a kind of blindness. I'll give a comparison. Here, where I live in the Okanagan valley, you *could* possibly think about incorporating someone from the

Silyx First Nation into a story or theatre piece without consulting with them; you could, but it would be pretty hard—

TANYA: Incorporate into what?

CLAUDE: I could imagine a play about some character from the past, and I could incorporate a Silyx First Nation character without consulting that community; but it would be very hard [and wrong] for me to do [so], because they're quite present and it would be disrespectful in my view. So what I'm saying is in Ulm, is it possible that the Jewish community, the Jewish past is not present, because even in Munich and Frankfurt where there are Jewish communities, people can live their lives without any real interaction with that community?

TANYA: I can't really say, because I have nothing to do with Ulm, so I really can't answer. But I do know that in England, when I was living in England, this is going back twenty years or so, nobody then would have dreamt of writing a play without consulting a community because it wouldn't have been considered PC, whether it's really about people's feelings or not is another matter, but it's sort of part of the culture now that you have to be politically correct and that means talking to the people before you write a play.

CLAUDE: Do you feel that speaks to a cultural difference in Germany or just a lack of awareness of what that kind of appropriation of a history does or can do, or the dangers behind it? [In other words,] is it a cultural difference between England and North America and Germany, or is it about not being aware of the tricky territory of appropriating cultural memory?

TANYA: I guess Great Britain has had longer to deal with their colonial history and the immigrants who came from Jamaica or Pakistan or India are very vocal and have been since the 60s and in Germany there wasn't a community to be vocal; all of the talk was going on outside Germany. I reckon because there's been less discourse about communicating and the Germans have done their re-appraisal (reprocessing) [Editor's note: in Germany, the term commonly used to describe this process of confronting this past has been *Wiederaufarbeitung*] on their own more or less, because

the Jewish communities are smaller. It often doesn't occur to people there might be a community there at all, or people who are relatives of those who were murdered in the Holocaust.

CLAUDE: So if you go and they invite you up to say a few words at the end...

TANYA: I'm going incognito. I would have loved to have done something if they had contacted me a year or two ago, but I feel very awkward, and actually I feel awkward now talking about this in the way that I am, because I should be showing more gratitude. It is really wonderful that my grandmother is being remembered in this way. But I think, you know, she's not being insulted at all (laughs), but I am.

CLAUDE: Yes, it's a process. Tanya your appearance in a group announces your commitment to art right? If I'm in a group of people and I see you, I would say "Okay, this person is an artist" and I'm thinking of Ulm, the theatre crowd that's going to be there, people who know each other, right? And then there's going to be this artist person there, yourself, who people don't know and they have probably seen photos of you, right? The people who are organizing it—

TANYA: I'm not famous.

CLAUDE: I know, but still, people can go on the Internet. So I'm just guessing they're going to know it's you; they're going to speak to you; they're going to thank you for coming; they're going to ask you how you feel about it, and they might ask you to talk. So, just saying this all happens, and they do ask you to talk, what would you say to them?

TANYA: Well, I wouldn't say what I've just said to you (laughs). Of course, I need to see the play first, but assuming that it's a good play and I'm sure it will be, because I looked on the Internet and the people who wrote it and the director have an interesting history behind them. [Editor's note: The play *Rommel—Ein deutscher General*, by Stephan Suschke and Michael Sommer (director), first played January 25, 2012 at the Theater Ulm]

CLAUDE: Do you think it's going to be a good piece?

TANYA: I expect it will be a very interesting and well-written piece, and I think if I were asked to make a comment, I would express my gratitude. I'd talk about re-appraisal [reprocessing] in Ulm, that it's great that they're doing that. I'm really unsure because they did tell me in an e-mail that the woman who is taking on the role of my grandmother, the Jewish ghost, has a double role and will also be playing Hitler.

CLAUDE: Will also be playing Hitler?

TANYA: Yes, I'm sort of confused and wondering how on earth that is going to work.

CLAUDE: That could be very interesting (laughs).

TANYA: I think at the moment it does upset me. I think I just want to go incognito and make my own mind up and maybe I'll get in touch with them afterwards.

CLAUDE: This might be a big jump, but it's something that wasn't covered in the questions, yet they are similar in some ways. The materials you've brought to the Cologne Archives—on the artistic or the German art scene— all the documentation you brought to the Cologne Archives; it was a very conscious decision about preserving history and history being tied to its locality. Then what has happened there with the accident and I'm wondering—although I'm sure it's very fresh in your mind—where your thinking is about all that right now and how that's maybe impacting your art and your work?

TANYA: The whole episode for people who don't know what happened here in Cologne, on the third of March 2009, the Historical Archives in the city of Cologne just collapsed. And this was a very important archive, one of the largest this side of the Alps, with documents which were up to 2000 years old and many documents from over the last hundred years of lots of artists, writers, people like Heinrich Böll, whose entire archive was there and I don't think they have recovered that yet— same with Günter Wallraff.

CLAUDE: Those two writers give an idea of the importance of the archives.

TANYA: Peter Busmann, who is the architect of the Museum Ludwig Köln and the concert hall in Cologne, his archive was lost.

CLAUDE: Could you talk now a bit about the actual event and your personal interest?

TANYA: That is what happened: it collapsed. For me, it was an extremely emotional thing. I was very upset by this. It was the history of a Jewish family that had been exterminated. I had options, but I decided they (the archival documents of various family members) should all be together in Cologne, rather than [go] to the Leo Beck Institute in New York or the Jewish Museum in Berlin. Then to lose it was really dreadful, and I became very active shortly after that: wrote four articles for a newspaper; I did a couple of television interviews. In the archive, [there were] a lot of photographs, super 8 films of my childhood but also (material) of my great uncle, photographs of his generation going back to before the war. My father had been a composer when he was a young man—he had worked together with Peter Zadek when they were young and in Great Britain before Zadek went back to Germany and became the most important theatre director in Germany, up to a couple years ago when he died. But he and my father were friends in England in the 50s and my father wrote music for all of his productions in England—so all the original material was in the archive. And my grandfather was a writer, and also a scriptwriter for the Ufa (film) Studios; he was the *Chef Dramaturg (Head Scriptwriter)*, so I'm talking about all of his material. A couple of months back, the archive got in touch with me to say some material had been recovered.

CLAUDE: Oh okay, that's excellent. How did you feel when you heard that?

TANYA: I'm not sure if this should be in the interview, but I'll leave that up to you. As I said, the whole thing upset me so much, and I actually decided to distance myself from the whole subject. I haven't actually gone to look at the material yet; I need to get on with my life and the work that I'm doing. So I've been overwhelmed

with work and that's just one of the things that I have not dealt with yet.

CLAUDE: Well, I don't think you need to apologize for that. I think what you're saying about your own work is important. I mean, if you look at your family, your grandfather and your father, they didn't have an impact by saying, "Well, I'm going to look at what my father did"; they did something. And by giving the materials to the Cologne archive, you gave it to specialists whose job it is to look after things.

TANYA: Exactly and they failed miserably.

CLAUDE: Yes so, I guess what you're saying is that if it does play a role in your work right now, it's not really something that you thought about at length or because you know, your work, if one contextualizes your work, you're an artist in Germany, but you could also say you're an English artist in Germany, you're a Jewish artist in Germany, you're a German-Jewish-English artist in Germany; I don't know how that framework for interpretation has changed over the years, because you've now been in Germany for a number of years. So how long have you been in Germany and how have you seen the development now that you've lived in Germany for a longer time?

TANYA: Which development?

CLAUDE: Well just how the context has changed from when you first arrived in Germany and where you are now.

TANYA: I've left Great Britain behind, you know. I'm there very rarely, maybe once a year just to see friends or my nieces or relatives. It doesn't interest me that much, and I'm pretty well established here. In the last year, a lot has happened for me in Cologne, so I would say that I'm actually definitely established in Cologne. This is the place I belong to, though I would never say a place is my home or that I have a feeling about a country that it's my homeland; this is where I'm at home; my friends, they're here; I have friends here; I have friends in Berlin too; I have friends in Canada.

CLAUDE: Yes (laughs), so are you a *Lokalpatriotin* (a patriot/supporter of the city you live in) or is that word just as anathema to you?

TANYA: Yes, I wouldn't want to use that kind of word (laughs). I'm a local matriarch, sorry.

CLAUDE: Yes, okay, a local matriarch. I can see that. How has your interaction and discourse with Germans and Germany and with art changed over the years. If you're asked to look back, what do you see as a kind of development, what would you say if you were trying to create a grand narrative?

TANYA: My goodness. I think in the last twenty years I've said a lot of what I needed to say and then I got ill and I think I mentioned in the interview that there were a couple of projects that were quite important to me which I just stopped doing because it was too much. And now I'm doing this poetry which is almost like improvised poetry, but I'm also doing improvised poetry with musicians and although I don't do that more often than once every 3 weeks, that is a really big difference; it's completely new in that I've only been doing it for the last year. And I allow myself subject matter that can be anything. It can be really absurd, it can be funny, serious, and it can be any topic, so it can include the serious topics that I used to handle. But it can also just be on absolutely anything, and to be honest, it's a real relief to be able to do that. And I wouldn't say that I'm making poetry about silly love songs or anything like that; you can still try to achieve some sort of depth in the moment—that is also possible. And nevertheless, it is such a relief to let go of the very, very heavy subject matter that I have been dealing with for the last twenty years. Having said that, I'm not going to leave it behind at all; I'm going to be doing both parallel, so that is a difference, yes.

CLAUDE: So, this new sense of freedom and of not having this obligation to constantly deal with certain matters with the past, is what “feminination” is about?

TANYA: There are two versions. The other one is “femininity” and the reason it was called “femininity” was because there's “Nini” in the centre of it, and my sister's name is Nini, short for Ninette.

It's an initiation; it's about initiation.

CLAUDE: Okay, yes. It also has “nation” in it.

TANYA: Yes.

CLAUDE: And if you think of the whole discourse about identity and the past, this whole idea of Germanness, which is still at work in Germany and other countries, this sort of ethno-racial fallacy is essentialism; inserting the feminine in nation is also an act of disrupting that essentialist identity construct, right? Because the national identity construct that's essentialist is predicated on excluding the feminine, the Other, etc. It uses those things as the Other, but doesn't include them in its construct. So, what I'm getting at it is, here's the local matriarch, who has reclaimed the feminine, the womanly, whatever term we use, then it's about the nation being forced to really play a secondary role to that.

TANYA: Well, I can shout as loud as I want to; it usually gets ignored. I'm not really sure it's making any impact, at all. Still carry on.

CLAUDE: How do you find, in Germany, the openness to wide ranging discussions about the roles of women, the roles women can take or have in society, and the political discourses? Do you find it's quite progressive or do you find it's quite retrograde? I mean in terms of the whole discourse of women's rights and such things?

TANYA: My goodness...

CLAUDE: I'm asking this because I'm wondering how that inflects on your role as an artist.

TANYA: Well, what came to mind just then is a friend of mine who is a professor of Art History at The Hochschule für Bildende Künste (HBK) Braunschweig (Braunschweig University of Art), Katharina Sykora. The last time we met up for dinner in Berlin, she mentioned how privileged she was; she said the fact is that in Germany only six percent of the professors are women, so that tells it all about the cultural scene. One would be blind to say equality is there. It's something that one has to fight for, even if young women would like to think that feminism is something that belonged to an era past. Unless everyone involves themselves in it, now as well, things are not going to improve.

TANYA URY

CLAUDE: And how is the art world for you, in that sense?

TANYA: Similar. And I remember I was involved in a very large art exhibition some years ago, about 6 years ago, at the Museum Bochum. They decided to do a sort of retrospective of artists coming from a Jewish background, and now I don't have the statistics at hand, but there were many artists invited or represented from the past as well—I remember, I felt honoured to be part of the project and I then sort of added up all of the names, and again, it was this six percent. It just pops up, of women—from a marginalized group.

Skype dialogue transcript edited and abridged by Claude Desmarais, Reichwald Professor in Germanic Studies (FCCS) at UBC, Okanagan Campus. Thanks go to Margo Tamez, Professor of Indigenous Studies and Gender-Women's Studies at UBC, Okanagan campus for her insight into the genocide against indigenous peoples in North America/Turtle Island.

RELATIONSHIPS OF OWNERSHIP: ART AND THEFT IN BOB DYLAN'S 1960S' TRILOGY

MICHAEL RODGERS, UNIVERSITY OF STRATHCLYDE

Abstract

Bob Dylan's corpus is one continually engaged with appropriation and pilfering. This paper will look, predominantly, at three songs from his 1960s' trilogy – 'She Belongs To Me' from *Bringing It All Back Home* (1965), 'Visions of Johanna' from *Blonde on Blonde* (1966), and 'Desolation Row' from *Highway 61 Revisited* (1965) – arguing that, in these songs, Dylan problematizes the interrelationship between art, theft, and ownership. I argue that, similar to the urban artist Banksy, Dylan challenges, toys with, and appropriates cultural images in order to continually question the concept of proprietorship whilst rescuing cultural images from esoterica and attempting to put them back into the public domain.

Résumé

L'œuvre de Bob Dylan continue à être sujette à l'appropriation et au pillage. Cet article évalue, principalement, trois chansons qui font partie de la trilogie d'albums parue pendant les années 60 – *She Belongs To Me* de l'album *Bringing It All Back Home* (1965), *Visions of Johanna* de *Blonde on Blonde* (1966), et *Desolation Row* de *Highway 61 Revisited* (1965). Je cherche soutenir qu'à travers ces chansons Dylan propose des nouveaux problèmes quant à l'interrelation entre l'art, le vol et la propriété. Mon argument est que, à l'instar de l'artiste urbain Banksy, Dylan joue avec les images culturelles et se les appropries en même temps qu'il les met à l'épreuve afin de mettre en doute le concept de propriété. À travers ses œuvres, Dylan récupère ces images à partir de leur marginalité, pour les replacer dans un espace publique.

In the sleeve note to *Bringing It All Back Home* (1965), Bob Dylan, in his Ginsbergian free-form poem, claims that “the Great books’ve been written. the Great sayings have all been said” (6). Dylan, however, seems too self-assured an artist to accept this idea, too fertile an artist to accept the finality of artistic output. Instead, Dylan appears to rebel against the notion of closure through interweaving the themes of art and theft—letting (what seem to be) apparent antonyms complement one another as a way of creating new work. This paper will argue that Dylan’s corpus challenges, toys with, and appropriates cultural images, in order to continually question the concept of ownership. Rather than be content with letting images set, Dylan seems to avoid allowing artistic icons, images, and rebuses to stagnate or become fixed and, instead, subjects them to radical metamorphoses and proffers phantasmagorical alternatives or adaptations. What is problematic, however, is whether the radically altered forms he presents belong to Dylan himself, act simply as tools for his poetic expression, or are an ensemble of *others’* work. This paper will look, predominantly, at three songs from his 1960s’ trilogy (“She Belongs To Me” from *Bringing It All Back Home*, “Visions of Johanna” from *Blonde on Blonde* (1966), and “Desolation Row” from *Highway 61 Revisited* (1965)) arguing that, in these songs, Dylan is theorizing the topics of art, theft, and ownership. In doing so, I argue that Dylan appropriates and rescues cultural images from esoterica and attempts to put them back into the public domain. For Dylan, however, this accessibility does not equate to easiness. Although he asks his listeners to work hard for particular references, importantly, he rewards them if they are prepared to do so. In allowing his listeners to contribute to the songs through their own cultural knowledge, in defamiliarizing and lampooning normal perspectives and preconceptions, and in modifying images, Dylan persistently alludes throughout his works to what he calls “relationships of ownership” in “Gates of Eden” (1965). As Jonathan Lethem argues, “It becomes apparent that appropriation, mimicry, quotation, allusion, and sublimated collaboration consist of a kind of sine qua non of the creative act, cutting across forms and genres in the realm of cultural production” (60). Ultimately, I wish to illustrate the extent to which



Dylan’s imagistic lyrics are integral to the ways in which notions of theft and ownership are theorized.

The degree to which Dylan’s *songs* ‘steal’, or borrow, can be seen, for example, in the similarities between “I Dreamed I Saw St Augustine” (1975) and Alfred Hayes’s poem “I Dreamed I Saw Joe Hill Last Night” (1930), and “A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall” (1962) and the ballad of “Lord Randall” (Trager 234). Jon Pareles details one particularly alert Dylan fan who noticed numerous references between *Love and Theft* and Junichi Saga’s *Confessions of a Yakuza* (1991) (1). The title itself comes from Eric Lott’s study of minstrelsy (Lethem 59). However, this topic is not always talked about disparagingly. Often, theft is one equated with humour, justification, delight even. What is interesting is

that the topics of art and theft appear to be completely dichotomous—art is something that one makes, creates, and gives, whereas theft entails taking, stealing, and appropriating. In this respect, Jonathan Lethem argues that:

The cardinal difference between gift and commodity exchange is that a gift establishes a feeling-bond between two people, whereas the sale of a commodity leaves no necessary connection... Art that matters to us – which moves the heart, or revives the soul, or delights the senses, or offers courage for living, however we choose to describe the experience – is received as a gift is received. (65)

Art theft is a well-known and not uncommon crime, yet the possibility of art appropriating, or stealing, *other* art is even more contentious. When art starts to thief (for example, when it harnesses something already existing through pastiche or bricolage such as in ‘Pop Art’), it is often viewed negatively (as if its worth is somehow impure or mongrelized). The law of intellectual property may protect a work of art through copyright or patents, yet the cerebral concept itself cannot be subjected to proprietorship. As Pareles argues, “Courts are not the best place for aesthetic distinctions” (2). Indeed, for reader-response criticism, once something is published it can be said to belong to the public domain at large. In light of this, what seems crucial is the interrelationship between art, theft, and ownership. Are there limits to what can be stolen? Should we steal if it has beneficial or aesthetic merit? Are artists exempt from moral law?

Art, Stealing, and Morality

The relationship between art and morality has been an ongoing topic since the time of the ancient Greeks and is still being passionately contended in the present day by critics such as Noël Carroll, Tom Sorell, and Rosalind Hursthouse.¹ There are two arguments. One is that art, in its representation of real life, should be bound by the same moral laws that govern our own world. Novels that present evil figures who wreak havoc only to be thwarted by the protagonist or be subjected to some kind of divine retribution have been pervasive because, essentially, they provide us with some kind of moral lesson (“this

will be the result if you act without a moral schema”). Such didactic fiction, however, sits alongside other (predominantly twentieth-century) novels that present ambiguous denouements and “let-offs” for culprits—which is a lot harder for readers to deal with (arguably, because the moral laws that we are governed by do not take effect). Aristotle, espousing the opposing view that literature has a beneficial role to play in our lives, argues that literature allows the temptation in our lives to be alleviated so that we can live out or experience such moral deviance. It can be argued that the realm of art—like that of comedy, say—is exempt from moral law. After all, although we have censorship and bowdlerisation for books that contain questionable material (*Lady Chatterley’s Lover* [1928] or *Lolita* [1955] come to mind), we do not have (at least in the West) something resembling the world depicted in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1948), where characters, or authors for that matter, are suppressed in what they are allowed to write about; in other words, we have no moral criteria for what a text *should* contain. Such freedom of speech allows writers and musicians to write about, enact even, scenarios that would otherwise be forbidden in the real world.

A Dylan song that amalgamates the themes of art, theft, ownership, and morality is “She Belongs to Me” from *Bringing It All Back Home*. The image on the front of the album cover, containing a distinctive lens-type framed shot of Dylan and a mysterious female, surrounded by a menagerie of magazines, albums, and paintings, serves to immediately articulate the album’s concern with recursion or *mise en abyme* (the idea of “pictures within pictures”) — something that foregrounds the song’s relationship with theft. “She Belongs to Me” is the second song on the album and contains five six-line verses concerning a female artist and another figure (referred to only as “you”) who is in complete admiration of her. The lyrics of the first two verses are as follows:

She’s got everything she needs
 She’s an artist, she don’t look back
 She’s got everything she needs
 She’s an artist, she don’t look back
 She can take the dark out of the nighttime

And paint the daytime black

You will start out standing
 Proud to steal her anything she sees
 You will start out standing
 Proud to steal her anything she sees
 But you will wind up peeking through her keyhole
 Down upon your knees (Dylan 1965, L1-12)

The use of anaphora in the first verse (repeating the pronoun “she” at the start of the first five lines) is partly due to Dylan’s appropriation of the Blues’ form and serves to highlight just how much an impact the woman makes on the speaker — which is somewhat ironic given how he or she seems to lampoon the extent to which the *other* figure covets the woman. The fact that ‘she’ is repeated so often serves to cement her anonymity and also reads as a highly possessive and misogynistic pronoun (an idea strengthened by the song’s title). Dylan seems to suggest that, as an artist, the woman appears to have everything she needs; that is, there is not anything in the world that does not belong to her because of her occupation. Given that he tells us “she don’t look back”, Dylan establishes a relationship between her artistic prowess and a visionary element. It seems that only banal people would be bothered looking at the past or be content with past achievements.² It also suggests (but negates) having to “run from the law” — something that adds to this feeling of artistic assuredness and self-possession. Dylan then alludes to the artistic technique of *chiascuro*, given that “she can paint the daytime black” but refers to it in such a way that it simultaneously reads simply as hyperbolic description of her artistic powers in being able to transform night into day and vice versa. The speaker goes on to describe the gradual reduction in height of the other figure (starting off “standing” and ending on his “knees”) which may suggest genuflection (an idea that is linked to the “bow” and “salute” in the last verse). This lionizing of the woman is preceded by the line, “proud to steal her anything she sees”. What is interesting here is that the only things that could really be stolen (in a traditional context) would be physical objects, yet the “anything” seems to include, literally, *anything* she sees — things such as landscapes, people,



and weather (which cannot literally be stolen). The fact that he “ends up peeking through her keyhole”, although suggesting sexual innuendo, seems instead to simply demonstrate his curiosity at what changes or adaptations the woman will make to these things once inside her workroom (which, presumably, he cannot gain access to).

The third verse strengthens the woman’s seeming assuredness but also raises the issue of consequence:

She never stumbles
 She’s got no place to fall
 She never stumbles
 She’s got no place to fall
 She’s nobody’s child
 The Law can’t touch her at all
 (Dylan 1965, L13-18)

The suggestion that “she’s got no place to fall” might appear to be foreboding whereby the need for poise, and a lack of safety (suggestive of tightrope walking), may impede her ability or, alternatively, suggest an element of hubris. Apparently birthless (“She”s nobody’s child”), and otherworldly as a consequence of her lack of ties, alongside being outside the law, this female artist seems to have an empyrean status. The fact that Dylan gives her immunity from the “Law” (something important enough to deserve a capital letter) furthers the extent to which she appears to be of a higher order than the other figure, yet, ultimately, she is still possessed by Dylan himself through the creative act. Presumably, the other figure, governed by society’s virtuous Christian morality (where “Thou Shalt Not Steal” has been imbibed), will have consequences to deal with at a later date because of his actions. An element of self-reflexivity emerges as we progress through the song, since the idea that art is situated outside the moral realm sits alongside the suggestion that art may be thought of as recursive ownership (the addressee who steals for the woman and whom she “collects”, the speaker who claims to possess the woman, Dylan’s creation of the speaker).³ The toing and froing between different claims to ownership, of course, even extends to the listener, who is in doubt as to whether he or she can be said to lay claim to their own imaginative conception of the woman. The idea of the buck of ownership stopping at Dylan is a curious one, something forever problematized through both cover versions and creative reimaging.

A similar song that interweaves the themes of art, theft and morality is “4th Time Around” from *Blonde on Blonde*, a song which is notable for the speaker’s inability to understand reciprocal exchange or the acts of giving and receiving. The idea that “4th Time Around” might be a parody or homage to The Beatles’ “Norwegian Wood (This Bird Has Flown)” (1965), given their similar melody and lyrical quality, is suggested by Trager (195) and Wilentz (118). If true, it continues the tradition of Dylan borrowing when comprising his own songs.

“4th Time Around” contains five nine-line verses that again focus on an unnamed woman but, this time,

includes the ‘I’ of the speaker. Concerning an anonymous trio’s love triangle — a speaker’s remembrance of a break-up with a past lover (of which this is perhaps the fourth occurrence) — the song is notable for its vitriol and how much the speaker acts the clown:

When she said
 “Don’t waste your words, they’re just lies”
 I cried she was deaf
 And she worked on my face until breaking my eyes
 Then said, “What else you got left?”
 It was then that I got up to leave
 But she said, “Don’t forget
 Everybody must give something back
 For something they get”

I stood there and hummed
 I tapped on her drum and asked her how come
 And she buttoned her boot
 And straightened her suit
 Then she said, “Don’t get cute”
 So I forced my hands in my pockets
 And felt with my thumbs
 And gallantly handed her
 My very last piece of gum (Dylan 1966, L1-18)

In the first verse, we are told that the speaker “got up to leave” in the midst of their argument, hums, taps on her drum and asks “How come?” after being told that “Everybody must give something back/For something they get.” These childish responses are amplified when the speaker tells us that he “gallantly handed her [his] last piece of gum” (Dylan 1966, 6, 10, 11, 17-18) in response to her assertion about exchange. The speaker’s offering acts as a cruel reply that illustrates the extent to which he thinks he will solve the reciprocal conundrum, but instead, it only serves to infuriate her. Indeed, it is specifically this lack of understanding reciprocal exchange that, ostensibly, makes the speaker morally reprehensible. As a result, we can perhaps infer that what the speaker has received far outweighs *his* paltry gift. After the woman chokes on the gum and falls to the floor, the speaker decides to cover her up, looking through her drawer, “filling up [his] shoe” and bringing

it to the addressee, presumably female, again referred to only as “you.” The last verse, dwelling on the speaker’s relationship with this new woman, mentions that he “never took much.” Again, the speaker seems to suggest that he is one who continually pilfers, conveying an image of someone completely reprehensible. However, this image is also one heavily distorted by boyish naiveté and Socratic irony and actually works in such a way as to make the whole affair extremely humorous.

It may be that the speaker is acting as *raisonneur* for Dylan’s peculiar relationship to ownership and artistic licence. In the song, the speaker realises that he has left his shirt and goes back to retrieve it (has this been *given* and then thought better of or is the realization post-coital?). He asks for some expensive rum, is refused, but then steals from the woman’s drawer. In the final verse, when he returns to the new lover, the speaker appears to give this new woman the previous lover’s money (“I filled up my shoe and brought it to you”). He then details never “taking much,” not asking for her help, and chastising the new lover for wanting support from him. The idea of the new lover’s image being “supported” by the previous lover (albeit by “Jamaican rum”), something that the elliptical silence seems to suggest (“I tried to make sense”), demonstrates a lack of understanding related to receiving and giving.

As previously mentioned, the speaker’s feigned naiveté has worked well in being able to mask just how morally reprehensible he appears to be and in avoiding having to lose what is his. However, this feigning does not mask the seeming epiphany he has when he sees the picture of his new lover. His silence, his ‘trying to make sense’ of the picture, amalgamates the themes of art, theft, reciprocity, and morality. What must be kept in mind, however, is that the song itself, something that moves us as a piece of art, can be thought of as *Dylan’s* gift (related to what Lethem calls “gift economy”). In this light, Dylan escapes accusations of siding wholeheartedly with a suspect speaker given that the song acts as artistic compensation for the kleptomania of the speaker.

Appropriating the Image

Dylan’s concern with theft extends not only to issues of belonging and possessiveness but also to the artistic image itself. “Visions of Johanna,” the third song from *Blonde on Blonde*, is arguably Dylan’s most poetic composition, referred to by the former British Poet Laureate Andrew Motion as “the best lyric song ever written” (Burns 23), and is distinctive for Dylan’s nasal, sibilant delivery which serves as a kind of musical impasto. Indeed, the song’s relationship with the artistic image, and its cryptic lyrics, evokes Horace’s idea of *ut pictura poesis*. In the fourth verse, the speaker refers to the image of Leonardo da Vinci’s *Mona Lisa* (1503-1506):

Inside the museums, Infinity goes up on trial
Voices echo this is what salvation must be like
after a while
But Mona Lisa musta had the highway blues
You can tell by the way she smiles
See the primitive wallflower freeze
When the jelly-faced women all sneeze
Hear the one with the mustache say, “Jeeze
I can’t find my knees”
Oh, jewels and binoculars hang from the head of
the mule
But these visions of Johanna, they make it all seem
so cruel (Dylan 1966, L29-38)

Having lamented the inside quiddity of museums—places that, for the speaker, serve only as static compendiums of life—he quickly conjures up the image of a gallery (another quiet place for solemn reflection) by introducing the *Mona Lisa*.⁴ Having introduced this well-known image, Dylan then seems to go off tangentially, referring to moustaches and knees. However, with the image of the *Mona Lisa* only recently given to us, listeners may be able to make the connection to Marcel Duchamp’s painting *L.H.O.O.Q.* (1919), which is simply a replica (or “ready-made”) of the *Mona Lisa* adorned by a child-like moustache and goatee-beard. The Duchamp reference, therefore, can be seen as an example of the kind of appropriation and reworking of an iconic image that Dylan perpetrates.⁵ Further, the apparent nonsensicality of the “one with the mustache” not being

able to find her knees is again lessened if we remember that the *Mona Lisa* canvas extends to just below the waist. Thus, Dylan has not only introduced the realm of art explicitly by referring to the *Mona Lisa*, he has also subtly alluded to another artist whose preoccupation was with changing and challenging ubiquitous cultural images. The fact that Dylan does this so obliquely, almost at a third degree of separation from the initial image, allows this new reference to the *Mona Lisa* to be seen as yet another reworking of an already appropriated image — allowing Dylan’s *own* objective to be articulated through hybridizing or adopting two existing cultural markers and making something new. In this respect, it could be said that Dylan avoids any accusations of theft given the obliqueness of the allusions. Dylan’s allusion to Duchamp here is subtle, yet if the listener is prepared to work for it, he or she is rewarded a rich bounty of meaning. For example, in referring to Duchamp and the Surrealists, artists who “believed that objects in the world possess a certain but unspecifiable intensity...dulled by everyday use and utility” (Lethem 62), we can perhaps determine what this verse of “Visions of Johanna” is “getting at” is the ability to look at the world differently and defamiliarise, critique even, our normal reactions to it. In the line succeeding the Duchamp reference — “Oh, jewels and binoculars hang from the head of the mule” - it again appears cryptic enough to suggest oblique meaning. The situation that the verse places us in — looking at art in some kind of gallery inhabited where women are being critiqued — evokes T.S. Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” (1915), specifically the refrain in which Prufrock refers to the “women [who] come and go/Talking of Michelangelo” (Eliot 11). Just like the cruel lampooning of these women’s assumed or ostensible knowledge in “Prufrock,” Dylan seems to appropriate Eliot’s well-known image yet appears to use it briefly before hybridizing Duchamp and Eliot’s images into his *own* acerbic account of the folly of these particular spectators. As a result, Dylan harnesses people’s pre-existing thoughts of these cultural markers, but asks them to couple, or reconcile, them in a literal blending of art and theft.

When, in the succeeding, and final, verse, the speaker refers to a “fiddler” who “now steps to the road/He writes everything’s been returned which was owed,” it is as if Dylan is also returning the images he has “borrowed” in the song. In this respect, we could argue that the song itself does the opposite of the museum it criticises by collecting, or collating, fresh things in a state of continual flux, rather than putting them in a place where dust settles on antediluvian exhibits. As Pareles argues, “Ideas aren’t meant to be carved in stone and left inviolate; they’re meant to stimulate the next idea and the next” (Pareles 1). One important feature, in this respect, of the *Blonde on Blonde* album is a photograph of Dylan with a pair of pliers in one hand and a painting in the other that appears both on its back cover and in the sleeve note:



Fig. 1: Photograph from back cover, and inside sleeve note, of *Blonde on Blonde*, 1966.

The photograph seems to suggest that Dylan is about to change, through creative force, the original image and therefore serves as a pictorial metaphor for Dylan’s objective to appropriate, and modify, cultural images and return them to the public domain to allow people to look at them in a different light.⁶ When Nicholas Roe talks of Dylan’s hunger being for “another’s world and others’ words”, referring to him as a “cultural ragman,” (Corcoran 86), it strengthens the view that Dylan’s ulterior artistic motive is in hybridizing art and theft in creating anew.

Changing the Image

One particular song that seems perpetually preoccupied with the appropriation, defamiliarization, and modification, of cultural images is that of “Desolation Row” from *Highway 61 Revisited*. Where “Visions of Johanna” can be seen as a song that touches upon the idea of appropriating images, “Desolation Row,” which is also keen to avoid stasis and the idea of images setting, is a song seemingly devoted to it. The final song on *Highway 61 Revisited*, “Desolation Row” is highly unusual in its length and particularly distinctive in its harmonic coupling of Dylan’s acoustic playing and Mike Bloomfield’s electric improvisation. It is a song where Dylan continually mixes the “image-cement” of the past and present, always offering new takes on what seem omnipresent cultural references. Frank Kermode and Stephen Spender argue that, in “Desolation Row,” “history [is] seen flat, without depth, culture heroes of all kinds known only by their names, their attributes lost by intergenerational erosion” (qtd. in Corcoran 34). “Desolation Row” has ten twelve-line verses that contain what seem “a deliberate cultural jumble” (Corcoran 34) — something equivalent almost to the technique of *horror vacui* employed by painters such as Hieronymus Bosch. John Burns, making another connection to Eliot (who appears in the song alongside Ezra Pound), observes that “With its lovely, beguiling melody and its seemingly endless parade of bizarre characters, it is one of Dylan’s most memorable songs, presenting perhaps his most sustained and complex evocation of a phantasmagorical modern wasteland of the soul” (36).

The song’s opening lines act to introduce listeners to the strange world they are about to enter: “They’re selling postcards of the hanging/They’re painting the passports brown.”⁷ This macabre defamiliarization of normal activity sets the mood of a song in which numerous references to familiar activities take on sinister new forms. What seems extraordinary, however, is the number of allusions and references that the song makes to mix high art and popular culture:



‘Cinderella’ - title character from classic folk-tale about recognition after oppression.

‘Bette Davis’ - American actress famed for playing cold characters.

‘Romeo’ - one of the two ‘star-crossed lovers’ in Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* (1597).

‘Cain & Abel’ - the two sons of Adam and Eve (in the Hebrew Bible). ‘Hunchback of Notre Dame’ - novel by Victor Hugo (1831).

‘Good Samaritan’ - biblical reference, connotes ‘loving thy neighbour’.

‘Ophelia’ - character in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (1603), potential wife of the eponymous hero.

‘Noah’ - biblical figure

‘Einstein’ - theoretical physicist and intellectual.

‘Robin Hood’ - heroic rebel in English folklore.

'Phantom of the Opera' - novel by Gaston Leroux (published serially between 1909 and 1910).

'Casanova' - Venetian adventurer and author synonymous with womanizing.

'Titanic' - doomed steamship that sank in 1912.

'Nero' - Roman emperor.

'Neptune' - Greek god of the seas.

'Ezra Pound' - major poet/figure of the modernist movement.

'T.S. Eliot' - major poet/figure of the modernist movement, famed for *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* (1915) and *The Waste Land* (1922).

What is notable is that these references are not simply given in a list fashion as provided above. Instead, characters adorn costumes, cloaks, and disguises, often of other cultural figures (Cinderella puts her hands into her back pockets "Bette Davis style." Einstein is disguised as Robin Hood. The Phantom of the Opera is in a "perfect image of a priest"). The effect is one that hybridizes these disparate dramatic personae in ways that are both hugely entertaining and particularly defamiliarizing.⁸ As with the passages discussed from "Visions of Johanna," it is as if Dylan once again commandeers existing preconceptions of cultural figures and transmogrifies them into *new* characters (but with all their precedent meaning). As Kermode and Spender note, it seems to be only their names that have currency in this apocalyptic world, perhaps testament to the persistence of cultural icons in the public psyche.⁹ One particularly interesting scenario related to this appears in the second verse:

Cinderella, she seems so easy
 "It takes one to know one," she smiles
 And puts her hands in her back pockets
 Bette Davis style
 And in comes Romeo, he's moaning
 "You Belong to Me I Believe"
 And someone says, "You're in the wrong place my friend
 You better leave"
 And the only sound that's left
 After the ambulances go
 Is Cinderella sweeping up
 On Desolation Row (Dylan 1965, L13-24)

When Romeo enters the scene and proclaims "You Belong to Me" to Cinderella, he seems to be conforming not to the title character from *Romeo and Juliet* but to the braggadocio image of our modern-day conceptions of a "Romeo" (very close to the lustful, licentious Casanova figure who enters in the seventh verse). The meeting of these two cultural sources (Shakespeare and fairytale) is wonderfully apt given the romantic theme of both texts. However, when the Romeo of Dylan's song makes his possessive claim, it seems that the sentiment is not acceptable to others in the song given that the ambulances soon come to collect the wounded character. The fact that this "someone" tells Romeo that he is in the "wrong place" is laden with dramatic irony: does the "someone" know who Romeo is (and the play from which he comes), or is he simply asking him to leave this peculiar place, one where ownership and possessing simply do not exist, because of what he has said? The paradox suggested in this verse is reminiscent of "She Belongs To Me" not only through Romeo's assertion "You Belong to Me I Believe" (note the capitalization), but also through the themes of theft and art: is possession impossible in this realm, or is it that everything belongs to everyone, therefore making private ownership defunct?

The theme of ownership is also evoked in the penultimate verse:

Praise be to Nero's Neptune
 The Titanic sails at dawn
 And everybody's shouting
 "Which Side Are You On?"
 And Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot
 Fighting in the captain's tower
 While calypso singers laugh at them
 And fishermen hold flowers
 Between the windows of the sea
 Where lovely mermaids flow
 And nobody has to think too much
 About Desolation Row (Dylan 1965, L97-108)

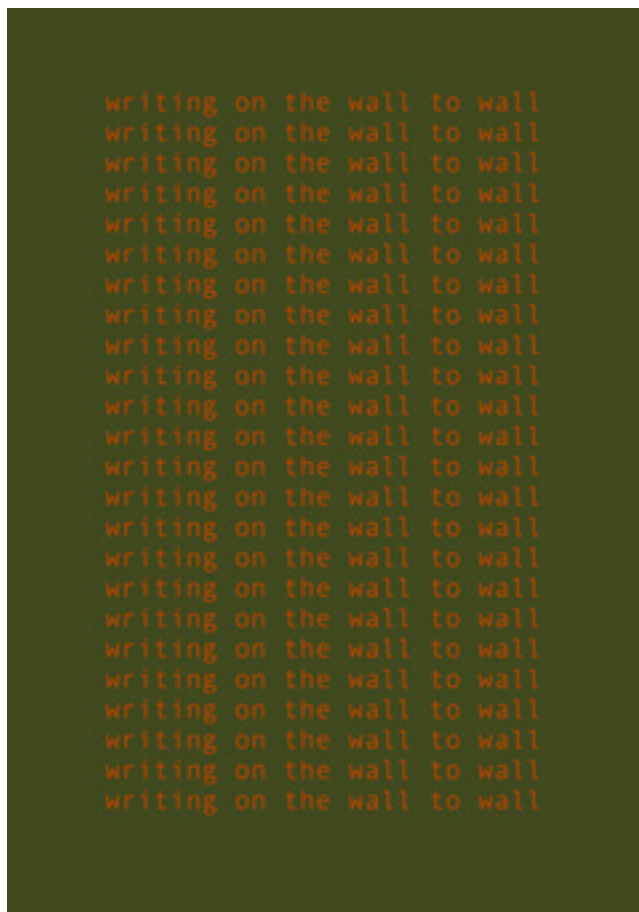
The above verse opens with an allusion to “Nero’s Neptune” and refers to the two major poets of the Modernist movement fighting it out in the captain’s tower, perhaps for control over the direction of Modernism. The explicit reference to Eliot is accompanied by a series of references to the sea and seagoing, including one that appears to allude to the conclusion of “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”:

I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.
I do not think that they will sing to me.

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back
When the wind blows the water white and black.

We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
Till human voices wake us, and we drown. (Eliot
L124-131)

Eliot’s poem, like “Desolation Row,” is a dramatic monologue: “A kind of poem in which a single fictional or historical character other than the poet speaks to a silent audience of one or more persons. Such poems reveal not the poet’s own thoughts but the mind of the impersonated character, whose personality is revealed unwittingly” (Baldick 72). Arguably the most famous exponent of the genre was Robert Browning and, given the reference to “Nero’s Neptune,” the theme of ownership (through the genitive case), and the genre of “Desolation Row,” “My Last Duchess” (1842), Browning’s most famous dramatic monologue, may also be evoked. In Browning’s poem, the Duke of Ferrara, who is in pursuit of a new duchess, tells the story of his last duchess, whose portrait is hidden behind a curtain, to an emissary (presumably of the prospective duchess). His possessive nature, shown as a result of the poem’s genre (as well as its content), reaches its peak at the poem’s denouement where he points to one of his prized art objects: a bronze statue of Neptune taming a seahorse (could the duke’s Neptune be equated to “Nero’s Neptune?”). “Desolation Row,” then, might be said to make a set of generic and imagistic allusions to



“My Last Duchess.” The song’s literary allusions to Eliot and Browning once again indicate how Dylan seems to appropriate literary images and characters, only to subject them to the same distortion and doctoring as the other popular or mythological figures. Eliot, for example, is being laughed at as he struggles with Ezra Pound (figures presumably unknown to the calypso singers). Once more then, figures from high art are mixed with, and undermined by, purveyors of popular culture.¹⁰

The theme of ownership evoked by the Browning allusion is continued in the final verse, one that brings the song to a climax:

Yes, I received your letter yesterday
 (About the time the doorknob broke)
 When you asked how I was doing
 Was that some kind of joke?
 All these people that you mention
 Yes, I know them, they're quite lame
 I had to rearrange their faces
 And give them all another name
 Right now I can't read too good
 Don't send me no more letters, no
 Not unless you mail them
 From Desolation Row (Dylan 1965, L109-120)

This verse serves to articulate just how despondent the speaker has become and chastises the letter-sender for his or her question because of how obvious the answer seems to be. More interesting is the fact that the speaker says that he knows the people that the letter-sender refers to (arguably all the people that the listeners have heard about in the previous eleven verses) and that they are all “quite lame” (banal or worthless) and that to spice them up he had to rearrange their faces and give them all another name. What is important, however, is that, by having the ability to change their faces, personalities, and names, Dylan foregrounds his own artistic prerogative of reworking and re-enlivening cultural images of the past.¹¹ The fact that these people have been metaphorically brought into Dylan's own workshop and subjected to rigorous mannequin-work, suggests that Dylan (and/or the speaker) now lays claim to *owning* the reworked images. His frustration at how stagnant these cultural figures of yore have become (before the reworking) acts as a precursor to the final two lines of the song, “Not unless you mail them/From Desolation Row.” Given the second-person address, it may be that Dylan is now referring to the listeners of the song and, thus, it suddenly changes their position from casual spectators to involved inhabitants of “Desolation Row.” In doing so, Dylan not only changes the images we thought we knew but also ends the song by suggesting that his listeners, given their new proximity to the aforementioned figures, may be subjected to the very same metamorphosis, making the delayed inversion all the more powerful and terrifying.

In the free-form poem included in the sleeve note to *Bringing It All Back Home*, Dylan includes a question supposedly asked by his recording engineer: “i'm here t' pick up you and your latest works of art. do you need any help with anything?” (3). There follows a “pause,” a page of Dylan's thoughts poured onto paper where he tells us that “I am about t' sketch You a picture of what goes on around here sometimes,” and an “end of pause” which is then followed by Dylan's response “yes. well i could use some help in getting this wall on the plane” (6). Dylan alludes to the fact that everything he has just talked about, the subject matter of his songs, have been splattered, Jackson Pollock-style, on a cement canvas that he now wants to transport. Thus, this apparently static object, a hunk of wall, is being loaded onto a plane bound for an unknown destination, and arguably acts as a metaphor for how his images have been collected and are in perpetual motion.¹² Dylan has appropriated these images and references and leaves it up to the reader to guess where they will be dropped again and, if so, what they will look or sound like. When, in “It's Alright Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)” (1965), Dylan sings “he not busy being born is busy dying,” he seems to mean that things must be constantly reinvented in order to escape decay. It seems to perfectly summate his artistic practices and intentions: a predilection for appropriating images, subjecting them to cultural reworkings, and in perpetually challenging the concept of artistic ownership.

Notes

1. See Noël Carroll, *Beyond Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001) and “Art and the Moral Realm” in Peter Kivy, *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004); Tom Sorell, *Moral Theory and Anomaly*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001); and Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999).
2. D.A Pennebaker's documentary about Dylan's 1965 tour of Britain, was entitled “Don't Look Back” (1967). Also, in the sleeve note to *Bringing It All Back Home*, Dylan talks about not wanting “t' be bach. mozart. tol-

stoy, joe hill, gertrude stein or james dean/[as]they are all dead" (6), yet his proclivity for looking at the past for inspiration is unquestionable.

3. A similar kind of meta-appropriation occurs in the narration of Vladimir Nabokov's short story "Recruiting" (1935).

4. The fact that "Mona Lisa musta had the highway blues" establishes a relationship between da Vinci's painting and the stretch of highway that runs from Louisiana to Minnesota, known also as "U.S Route 61." It appears a pun is being made here given the tradition of blues music to appropriate.

5. The irony is that Duchamp's "ready-made" work is being used again. His other most famous "ready-made" is *Fountain* (1917).

6. "Tombstone Blues" (1965) is similar in this inversion of perspective and sense ("The sun's not yellow it's chicken") and its inclusion of cultural figures (such as Paul Revere, John the Baptist, Cecil B. DeMille). Also, the line "bent out of shape by society's pliers" from "It's Alright Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)" seems similar to figure 1's sentiment; however, the song is concerned with the stifling, negative effect of society rather than a creative reworking.

7. These lines may refer to, respectively, the Duluth hangings of the 1920s and that US government agents' passports at this time were brown.

8. This switching of cloaks and disguises, reminiscent of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* [1601-1603], also occurs in "Lily, Rosemary, and the Jack of Hearts" (1975).

9. In *Bob Dylan: Chronicles Vol 1* (2004), Dylan observes: "I'd been raised in a cultural spectrum that had left my mind as black as soot. Brando. James Dean. Milton Berle. Marilyn Monroe. Lucy. Earl Warren and Krushchey, Castro. Little Rock and Peyton Place. Tennessee Williams and Joe DiMaggio" (35-36).

10. Dylan's cultural jumble of creative output can be

thought of as analogous to William Burroughs and his "cut-up" technique — a figure who "was interrogating the universe with scissors and a paste pot, and the least imitative of authors was no plagiarist at all" (Lethem 60).

11. The idea of Dylan not allowing images or words to stagnate can be seen in several instances, such as in "Subterranean Homesick Blues" (1965), where the words that appear in the video differ from the published lyrics (for example, "20 dollar bills," "suckcess," "man whole," "It don't matter," "It's hard," "Watch it!," "Here they come!," "Dig yourself"). In the difference between live performance and the published lyrics (for example, specific words and emphasis in his performance of "Desolation Row" in *Live 1966: The "Royal Albert Hall" Concert*; and in "Lily, Rosemary and the Jack of Hearts" (1975) where the idea of "drillin' in the wall" (verse one), keeps pace with the narrative through verse eight ("drillin in the wall kept up") until the very end of the song ("and cleaned out the bank safe, it's said they got off with quite a haul").

12. A literal re-enactment of this scenario has taken place now on numerous occasions in relation to Banksy's work, where people whose walls have been painted on have cut out the wall in question (see Works Cited).

Works Cited

Baldick, Chris. *The Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001.

"Banksy Graffiti Removed from Wall." *BBC News Online* 11th Feb 2008. <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/bristol/7238555.stm>>. Web 12th August 2010.

Burns, John. *Series of Dreams: The Vision Songs of Bob Dylan*. Kirkcudbright: Glen Murray Publishing, 2008.

Corcoran, Neil. *'Do You, Mr Jones?' Bob Dylan with the Poets and Professors*. London: Chatto and Windus, 2002.

Dylan, Bob. *Bob Dylan: Chronicles (Vol 1)*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004.

--- *Blonde on Blonde*, Columbia, 1966. CD.

--- *Bringing It All Back Home*. Columbia, 1965. CD.

--- *Highway 61 Revisited*, Columbia, 1965. CD.

Eliot, T.S. *Selected Poems*. London: Harcourt Brace, 1964.

Lethem, Jonathan, "The Ecstasy of Influence: A Plagiarism." *Harper's Magazine*, Feb 2007, 59-71.

Pareles, Jon. "Plagiarism in Dylan, or a Cultural Collage?" *New York Times*, July 12th, 2003. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/12/arts/music/12DYLA.html>>. Web. 7 August 2010.

Trager, Oliver. *Keys to the Rain: The Definitive Bob Dylan Encyclopedia*. New York: Billboard Books, 2004.

Wiletz, Sean. *Bob Dylan in America*. London: The Bodley Head, 2010.

BIO

Michael Rodgers is in the final stages of his PhD undertaking a Nietzschean analysis of Vladimir Nabokov's writings. He works as a Graduate Teaching Assistant at the University of Strathclyde and is currently editing a volume on 'Nabokov and Morality' derived from a conference that he organized last year. His article 'Lolita's Nietzschean Morality' was published in *Philosophy and Literature* in 2011 and he has another forthcoming on the topic of Nabokov's posthumous novel *The Original of Laura*. He is a contributor to *The Literary Encyclopedia*, the *Slavonic and East European Review* and the *Nabokov Online Journal*.

BIO

Michael Rodgers est sur le point d'obtenir son doctorat avec une analyse nietzschéenne des œuvres de Vladimir Nabokov. Il occupe un poste d'auxiliaire d'enseignement à l'Université de Strathclyde, où il édite actuellement un volume dérivé d'un colloque qu'il a organisé l'année portait de» by «s'intitulait de « Nabokov et la moralité ». Il a publié un article intitulé *Lolita's Nietzschean Morality* dans *Philosophy and Literature* en 2011, et il attend la publication d'un autre texte sur le livre posthume de Nabokov *L'original de Laura*. Il est contributeur à *The Literary Encyclopedia*, *Slavonic and East European Review* et au *Nabokov Online Journal*.

PORTRAITS D'UN IMAGINAIRE DE L'AVANT-GARDE: LE CARRÉ NOIR SUR FOND BLANC DE KAZIMIR MALEVITCH ET SES RÉINCARNATIONS ARTISTIQUES

GENEVIÈVE CLOUTIER, UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC À MONTRÉAL

Résumé

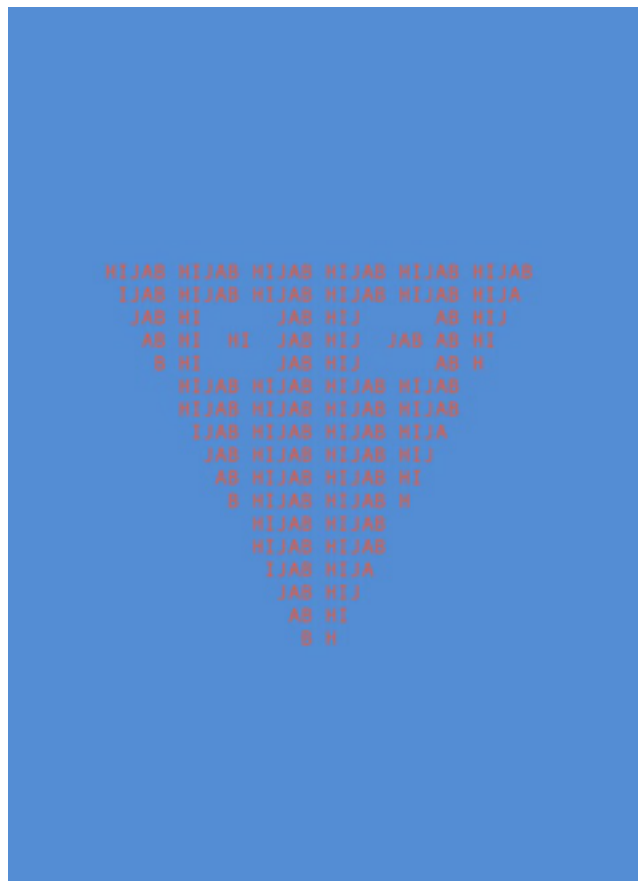
Le *Carré noir sur fond blanc* de Kazimir Malevitch (1915) est l'un des tableaux les plus « récupérés » dans l'histoire récente de l'art. Avec plus ou moins de bonheur selon les cas, avec respect ou ironie, les artistes de divers horizons l'ont allègrement copié, parodié, détourné, recyclé. En Russie, l'ampleur du phénomène est telle depuis les quelque trente dernières années que, de l'art contemporain russe, on a pu dire qu'il était non pas un art *après* Malevitch, mais un art *sur* Malevitch. Dans cet article, qui prend la forme d'un parcours à travers la longue et tumultueuse histoire du *Carré noir* et de ses multiples « réincarnations » artistiques, je m'intéresse à ce que ces pratiques de récupération viennent nous dire sur l'attitude des artistes à l'égard du *Carré noir* lui-même, mais aussi, et peut-être surtout, sur leur relation avec une avant-garde à l'héritage controversé dont ce tableau est devenu l'icône.

Abstract

Kazimir Malevitch's "Black Square" (1915) is one of the most recycled paintings in recent art history. More or less successfully, respectfully or ironically, artists from all around have gleefully reproduced it, ridiculed it, embezzled it and recycled it. In Russia, such has been the gravity of this phenomenon for the last thirty years, so that, it led to contemporary Russian art not being perceived as *derived from* Malevitch but *on* Malevitch. By retracing the long and tumultuous history of "Black Square" and its numerous artistic 'reincarnations,' this essay focuses on what these practices of reproduction tell us about the attitude of artists towards "Black Square" itself but also, perhaps mainly, about their relationship to an avant-garde with a controversial heritage of which this painting became the icon.

Le Carré noir sur fond blanc: réception et récupération
 « Un carré noir, légèrement penché, énergiquement élané sur un fond blanc » : voici, sobrement décrit dans les mots de Victor Chklovski (Nakov, 2007:56), le contenu du tableau que Kazimir Malevitch présenta d'abord sous le titre de *Quadrangle*, et que l'on connaît désormais comme le *Carré noir sur fond blanc*. Depuis sa première apparition publique en 1915, à Petrograd, dans le cadre de la *Dernière exposition futuriste 0,10*, et jusqu'à aujourd'hui, près de cent ans plus tard, ce carré quelque peu irrégulier a suscité un flot presque ininterrompu de réactions et d'interprétations. Cette inflation verbale, inversement proportionnelle au dépouillement esthétique de l'œuvre, s'explique sans doute par ce dépouillement même : dès le départ, le *Carré noir* a été un *tableau noir* sur lequel les artistes et le public ont pu voir ce que leurs intérêts et leurs besoins les amenaient à projeter.

C'est Malevitch lui-même qui a initié la ronde des interprétations en disant de son œuvre qu'elle était l'« icône de notre temps » et en lui assignant par le fait même au milieu de ses autres tableaux, lors de la *Dernière exposition futuriste*, la place qui est traditionnellement réservée à l'icône dans l'isba russe. Les slavistes et les historiens de l'art ont amplement glosé sur ce rapprochement avec l'icône, par lequel cette œuvre à première vue iconoclaste se voyait rattachée par son auteur aux sources mêmes de la tradition picturale russe. Ce geste nous rappelle d'abord que dans la pratique de Malevitch, comme dans celle de nombreux peintres abstraits de son époque, l'art et le spirituel étaient intimement liés. Le *Carré noir*, comme l'icône dans la tradition orthodoxe, était pour Malevitch plus qu'un tableau; c'était une fenêtre ouverte sur une autre réalité, invisible et irreprésentable. Mais cette étiquette d'« icône de notre temps » trahit aussi les ambitions colossales du peintre qui, comme nombre de ses collègues de l'avant-garde russe, aspirait à inaugurer avec son art nouveau une ère nouvelle dans l'histoire de l'humanité. En ce sens, l'expression « icône de notre temps » évoque une époque placée sous le signe du *Carré noir* et du système philosophico-pictural dont Malevitch en a fait l'origine et la destination : le suprématisme.



En plus d'être l'objet d'une abondante littérature critique, le *Carré noir* est sans aucun doute—et c'est là ce qui m'intéressera plus spécifiquement ici—l'un des tableaux les plus récupérés, sinon le tableau le plus récupéré dans l'histoire récente de l'art, et ce sur tous les modes que peut prendre la récupération. Des artistes et des designers de tous horizons l'ont allègrement copié, repris tel quel dans un geste conscient ou non, parodié et détourné (trafiqué, changé de contexte à des fins critiques ou humoristiques), cité en tant que signe chargé de sens ou recyclé, tout simplement, comme élément constituant d'autres œuvres¹. Prises séparément, ces différentes œuvres d'art inspirées du *Carré noir* sont, il va sans dire, loin de toutes se valoir. Certaines sont désespérément simplistes ou relèvent du pillage éhonté, d'autres se

révèlent étonnamment complexes et témoignent d'une authentique démarche créatrice. Prises toutes ensemble, pourtant, et ce quelle que soit leur valeur artistique propre, elles acquièrent un intérêt particulier dans leur manière de nous renseigner sur l'évolution, dans l'espace comme dans le temps, de l'attitude des artistes et du public à l'égard du *Carré noir* lui-même, bien sûr, mais aussi, et peut-être surtout, de ce qu'il représente. Car au-delà de l'exceptionnelle « ouverture » du tableau tel qu'il se présente au spectateur encore étranger aux théorisations de son auteur, au-delà, aussi, de l'ardeur de ce dernier à promouvoir son œuvre, une autre explication à la surenchère de discours autour du *Carré noir* réside dans le contexte historique quasi-mythique dans lequel celui-ci a été créé. En 1915, deux ans seulement avant la révolution d'Octobre, la Russie était dans un exceptionnel état d'ébullition, tant dans le domaine artistique (avec la montée des avant-gardes) que dans le domaine politique. Le *Carré noir*, œuvre radicale entre toutes, incarne à sa façon, et sans doute mieux que toute autre, le caractère excessif de cette époque qui a profondément marqué l'imaginaire collectif. Aussi, ce que chacun lit ou projette dans ce tableau tend à témoigner de son rapport à cette époque et à ses réalisations.

Le présent article prendra la forme d'un parcours forcément lacunaire à travers la longue et tumultueuse histoire du *Carré noir* et de ses multiples « réincarnations » artistiques, principalement en Russie/Union soviétique et en (ex-)Europe de l'Est. Je m'y intéresserai surtout à la manière dont les œuvres mettant en scène le célèbre tableau de Malevitch traduisent certaines facettes d'un imaginaire collectif de l'avant-garde—imaginaire qui, dans cette partie du monde, tend d'ailleurs à incorporer un imaginaire de la Russie soviétique, comme si l'un et l'autre étaient intimement liés. Le choix d'aborder ainsi une œuvre-phare de l'avant-garde historique à travers ses multiples « récupérations », même en employant ce terme avec neutralité, peut toutefois appeler quelques explications préliminaires. C'est que la récupération a souvent été accusée d'être cela même qui a tué l'avant-garde, dont à peu près tout le monde s'entend aujourd'hui pour dire qu'elle est morte depuis longtemps. En vertu des théories de l'avant-garde les

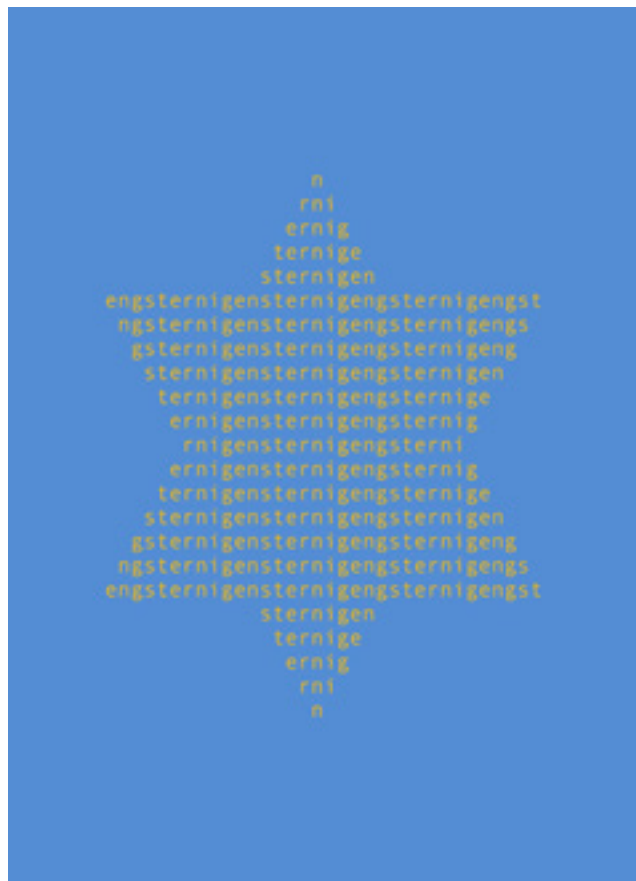
plus communément acceptées, celle de Peter Bürger au premier chef², répéter les réalisations de celle-ci dans sa période dite « historique », comme l'ont fait entre autres les représentants de la néo-avant-garde aux États-Unis dans les années soixante et comme le font les artistes et les œuvres dont il sera question ici, c'est contribuer à leur banalisation, c'est les dépouiller de leur force active, puisque ce qui relève de l'avant-garde ne peut avoir eu lieu qu'une seule fois pour toutes. La récupération s'avère ainsi néfaste et pour l'avant-garde, et pour les artistes « récupérateurs » eux-mêmes, du moins si leur ambition, en reprenant les œuvres, les idées ou les façons de faire de l'avant-garde, est de s'inscrire d'une manière ou d'une autre dans la lignée de celle-ci. Dans les années quatre-vingt et quatre-vingt-dix, toutefois, un point de vue différent sur cette question a été mis en valeur dans les travaux de Benjamin Buchloh et de Hal Foster sur la néo-avant-garde, qui ont choisi de mettre l'accent sur la part de différence qui surgit dans toute répétition³. Et si la récupération, au lieu d'être considérée comme un phénomène entièrement négatif ou, au mieux, stérile, était perçue comme un enrichissement, comme un ajout de sens par rapport à l'œuvre récupérée? Dans son essai *The Return of the Real : The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*, Foster a décrit l'avant-garde, de par son aspect radical, comme un « traumatisme » qui ne peut être vraiment compris qu'après un certain délai et par l'intermédiaire de circonstances extérieures qui le ramènent à la mémoire. « *[T]he avant-garde work* », écrit-il, « *is never historically effective or fully significant in its initial moments. It cannot be because it is traumatic—a hole in the symbolic order of its time that is not prepared for it, that cannot receive it, at least not immediately, at least not without structural change* » (29). Par rapport à l'avant-garde historique, la néo-avant-garde qui, dans les années soixante, l'a empêchée de sombrer dans l'oubli et l'a remise à l'avant-plan, aurait précisément joué ce rôle d'élément déclencheur essentiel à sa pleine révélation. Ainsi, « plutôt que d'annuler l'avant-garde historique », elle en aurait « actualis[é] le projet pour la première fois » (Foster, 1995:73). Cette manière d'envisager la réitération de l'avant-garde comme un phénomène producteur de sens et digne d'intérêt en soi est bien celle que je me propose d'adopter ici.

2005 — Un sondage à la Galerie Tretyakov (en guise de préambule)

En mars 2005, en lien avec la préparation de l'exposition « Russia! » au musée Guggenheim de New York⁴, un sondage fut réalisé auprès du public russe à la sortie de la galerie Tretyakov, le plus important musée d'art de Moscou. L'objet du sondage était de savoir quelle œuvre, d'une part, incarnait le mieux « l'image de la Russie » aux yeux du public et, par le fait même, méritait le plus d'être présentée à New York, et quelle œuvre, d'autre part, méritait le moins cet honneur. Les résultats de l'enquête furent éloquentes : si, avec 8% des voix en sa faveur, l'icône de la *Trinité* d'Andreï Roublev a honorablement remporté le titre d'œuvre la plus digne de représenter la Russie, le *Carré noir* de Malevitch, avec un écrasant 25% de voix à son encontre, a quant à lui remporté haut la main la palme de l'œuvre jugée la moins apte à jouer ce rôle.

Dans un article consacré à ce sondage⁵, la revue *Artkhronika* présente un échantillon des commentaires faits par les répondants, qui étaient invités à expliquer leurs choix. Il en ressort, sans grande surprise, que le public russe estime reconnaître en la *Trinité* de Roublev (décrite entre autres comme une œuvre exceptionnellement « lumineuse ») les racines mêmes de sa propre culture. Pour ce qui est du *Carré noir*, en revanche, nombreux sont les répondants qui soulignent son caractère « étranger » à la culture russe et à l'image qu'ils se font de la Russie. Sa « noirceur » même est rejetée comme « non russe », lorsqu'elle n'est pas associée à quelque chose de vaguement honteux, l'une des personnes interrogées allant jusqu'à exprimer sa crainte à l'idée que le public placé devant une telle œuvre en vienne à se représenter la Russie comme un « trou noir ». En fait, ce que ce sondage révèle, ce n'est sans doute pas tant que le *Carré noir* est étranger à la culture russe, mais qu'il entre en conflit avec l'image de la Russie que le public souhaite exporter. Autrement dit, l'icône correspondrait à la Russie fantasmée, tandis que le *Carré noir* représenterait plutôt la Russie refoulée.

On ne manquera pas de noter l'ironie du fait que le *Carré noir* occupe dans l'opinion publique russe le pôle



opposé par rapport à l'icône « traditionnelle » dont il prétendait justement prendre la place. Ce phénomène peut évidemment être associé à un rejet en bloc de l'art moderne ou d'avant-garde par les visiteurs de la galerie Tretyakov—un rejet dont témoigne éloquentement le fait qu'à l'exception de la *Cathédrale Saint-Basile* d'Aristarkh Lentulov, aucun tableau abstrait ou contemporain ne figure parmi les choix du public pour ce qui est de l'œuvre la plus digne de représenter la Russie. Il est toutefois possible de voir dans le rejet du *Carré noir* la manifestation d'un rejet plus généralisé de l'histoire russe du vingtième siècle. En effet, cette œuvre, de par sa prétention même à remplacer l'icône, renvoie indirectement à la profanation dont, de l'avis de plusieurs, la culture russe « authentique » aurait été victime sous le communisme. Nous verrons dans la

suite de ce texte comment cette association du *Carré* au « mal russe », étendue à l'avant-garde en général, ressort jusque dans la production artistique contemporaine.

1924 — La première copie

L'interprétation du *Carré noir* comme signe négatif qui ressort nettement du sondage réalisé à la galerie Tretyakov remonte aussi loin que la première sortie publique de l'œuvre. À l'époque, elle fut répandue notamment par le peintre et historien de l'art Alexandre Benois, opposant notoire aux idées de l'avant-garde qui, dit-on, est à l'origine du détournement du titre du tableau de Malevitch, passé de « Quadrangle » à « Carré noir » (Nakov, 2007:63). C'est en effet dans ces mots que, dans un article critique sur l'exposition *0,10* publié dans la revue *Rech'*, Benois désigne cette œuvre, illustration selon lui du « sermon du zéro et de la mort » de son auteur (Sharp, 42). Cette transformation du « Quadrangle » en « Carré noir » n'est pas anodine, en ce qu'elle coïncide avec la transformation du tableau comme œuvre matérielle en un objet discursif que tout le monde connaît et que plus personne n'a besoin de voir. Il est facile, en effet, de croire que tout a été dit une fois qu'on sait que Kazimir Malevitch a peint un carré noir sur fond blanc. Cependant, le *Carré noir* est une œuvre qui doit être mise en contexte. Présentée par Malevitch comme la clef de voûte du système suprématisme, elle doit être considérée dans la perspective de ce système ainsi que de l'ensemble de la production de l'artiste qui y est rattachée. Ainsi, Benois n'a sans doute pas tort lorsqu'il associe le *Carré noir* au zéro, Malevitch lui-même ayant associé sa création à la notion de « zéro des formes ». La source du malentendu réside toutefois dans le sens qu'il faut donner à ce zéro. Tandis que Benois l'associe à la mort et au nihilisme, Malevitch, de son côté, en avait fait le symbole de l'économie, comprise comme l'art de la conservation de l'énergie et élevée par lui au rang de « cinquième dimension » de l'univers. La différence est de taille, entre cette compréhension du zéro comme emblème de la gestion efficace des ressources et celle du zéro comme synonyme de coupe à blanc. Il n'est d'ailleurs pas anodin de rappeler, à l'encontre de l'interprétation nihiliste du tableau, que, dans les termes de Malevitch, le *Carré* n'était pas seulement l'« icône

de notre temps », mais aussi l'« embryon de toutes les possibilités » et le « primogéniteur d'un monde nouveau » (Nakov, 2007:56). Encore plus éloquent à ce sujet, peut-être, est ce passage de l'article « Du cubisme et du futurisme au suprématisme—le nouveau réalisme pictural » où, après avoir associé sa découverte du *Carré noir* à sa propre transformation en « zéro des formes », Malevitch affirme être arrivé « au-delà du zéro, à la création, c'est-à-dire au suprématisme » (Malevitch, 198). Dans ce texte, il apparaît clairement que le zéro, loin de se réduire à un cul-de-sac, joue dans le système malevitchien un rôle de pivot : le zéro est cela même par quoi il faut absolument passer pour aller « au-delà du zéro », dans cet autre ordre de réalité vers lequel pointe le suprématisme⁶.

Andréi Nakov, dans l'imposante somme qu'il a publiée sur Malevitch⁷, suggère que la mésinterprétation du tableau comme simple « carré noir » arrogant et vide de sens peut aussi avoir été renforcée par les premières copies de l'œuvre, qui furent le fait de Malevitch lui-même. Cette hypothèse est intéressante dans la perspective de mon propos et mérite d'être mentionnée ici malgré son caractère quelque peu ésotérique—disons à tout le moins qu'il est difficile de la reprendre à son compte en s'appuyant uniquement sur les reproductions disponibles. Toujours est-il qu'entre 1924 et 1930-32, Malevitch s'est trouvé à devoir faire (ou à faire faire par ses élèves) trois nouvelles versions à l'identique de son *Carré noir* pour les besoins d'expositions diverses. Nakov attire notre attention sur le fait qu'outre leur meilleur état de conservation, ce qui frappe lorsqu'on compare les trois versions plus récentes du *Carré* à l'original dont elles s'inspirent, c'est leur aspect bien discipliné, tandis que dans le *Carré* de 1915, dont la légende veut qu'il ait été peint dans l'urgence d'une révélation⁸, l'expressivité prime visiblement sur le respect des principes géométriques.

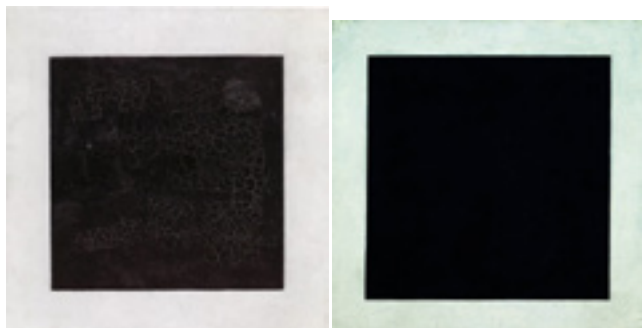
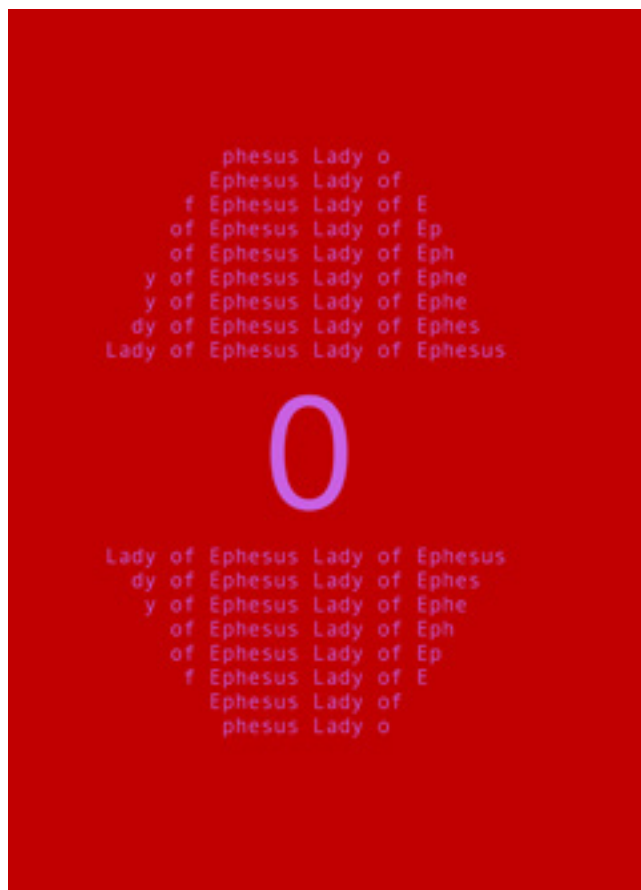


Fig. 1: Le Carré noir de 1915 et celui de 1924

De l'avis de Nakov, ces copies sont malheureuses, justement à cause de leur manque de spontanéité. Le carré y figure certes de manière plus conforme à son idéal géométrique, mais, par le fait même, il perd sa légèreté, son dynamisme, dont Chklovski avait bien su rendre compte, dans la description citée en introduction, en parlant du tableau de 1915 comme d'un carré « énergiquement élané sur un fond blanc ». Le fait que ce dynamisme soit, *a priori* du moins, un aspect important du *Carré noir*, ressort d'ailleurs de manière évidente lorsqu'on met l'œuvre en parallèle avec les autres tableaux suprématistes de Malevitch, où les formes semblent flotter librement dans l'espace à deux dimensions qui est le leur, à l'abri de la force d'attraction terrestre. En fait, pour en revenir aux explications de Nakov, ce qui distingue les copies du *Carré noir* de l'original, c'est peut-être qu'elles se fondent sur un *Carré* déjà « mythifié », devenu dogmatique : dans la répétition, le *Carré noir* se transforme en symbole infiniment reproductible d'une doctrine aux prétentions universalistes⁹.

1960 — le *Carré noir* mythifié et démythifié

Le récit est connu : peu après l'arrivée au pouvoir de Staline, vers la fin des années vingt, l'avant-garde est tombée en disgrâce aux yeux du régime soviétique et ses porte-étendards ont été réduits au silence. Ainsi en fut-il du *Carré noir*. Pendant des décennies, son existence fut niée : il est demeuré caché dans une cave de musée, inaccessible au public. Si, à l'Ouest, on a pu



le voir ressurgir, sous une forme altérée, expurgée de tout mysticisme, dans l'esthétique minimaliste de la néo-avant-garde¹⁰, en URSS, il a fallu attendre les années soixante pour que les artistes, sinon le grand public, commencent, très graduellement et très partiellement, à regagner accès à la riche production de Malevitch et de ses collègues. Cette redécouverte devait aller de pair avec l'émergence d'un véritable culte dans les milieux de l'art non conformiste, comme en témoigne entre autres la « lettre à Malevitch » publiée par le peintre Eduard Steinberg en 1981, alors que le *Carré noir* était enfin montré au public soviétique. Dans cette lettre, Steinberg associe le tableau de Malevitch au destin tragique de la Russie du vingtième siècle, mais il en fait son antidote plutôt que son symbole. Dans un style emphatique, traçant un portrait de la Russie soviétique comme

d'une nation « *excommunicated from Beauty, a nation numb from the broken link with the Eternal World* », il parle du « langage » de Malevitch comme d'un moyen d'exister « *in the night that you call the Black Square* », et présente celui-ci comme étant cela même vers quoi « *the human memory [...] will always return to [...] when mystically experiencing the tragedy of God-forsakenness* » (Steinberg, 31).

Chez Steinberg, comme chez d'autres artistes associés au même milieu, cette « mythification » de l'avant-garde historique s'est traduite par une revendication explicite de son héritage, dont il croyait pouvoir reprendre le flambeau. Ses œuvres, dont on peut douter du caractère avant-gardiste mais qui se distinguent néanmoins de manière frappante de la masse de la production artistique « officielle » d'Union soviétique, se présentent ainsi comme des variations suprématises sur le mode mineur. On y retrouve les formes géométriques chères à Malevitch, dont le carré noir, mais les couleurs sont en général moins franches : les teintes de gris, de beige, de bleu pâle, dominant là où Malevitch privilégiait les couleurs primaires. Ce choix esthétique a valu à Steinberg les railleries d'une partie de ses collègues davantage tournés vers l'art conceptuel, dont Ilia Kabakov, qui rejeta fermement cette idée selon laquelle il serait possible de reprendre le travail des avant-gardes historiques là où il a été interrompu de force, comme si rien ne s'était passé dans l'intervalle. Tandis que, chez Steinberg, l'avant-garde est perçue sous son jour héroïque, comme une production placée au-dessus du monde et non souillée par lui, Kabakov soutient que les réalisations de l'avant-garde ne peuvent plus être regardées de la même façon, dans le contexte post-stalinien, qu'à leur époque de création. Désormais, nous dit-il, le dogmatisme et l'autoritarisme des mouvements d'avant-garde font désagréablement écho aux mécanismes mêmes du régime totalitaire qui fut responsable de leur disparition.

C'est de cette manière de voir qu'est issu, dans les années soixante-dix, le mouvement du Sots Art, qui, dans une esthétique postmoderne, se caractérise par sa propension à mettre en parallèle les icônes de l'avant-garde et celles du très officiel réalisme socialiste. C'est ainsi que,

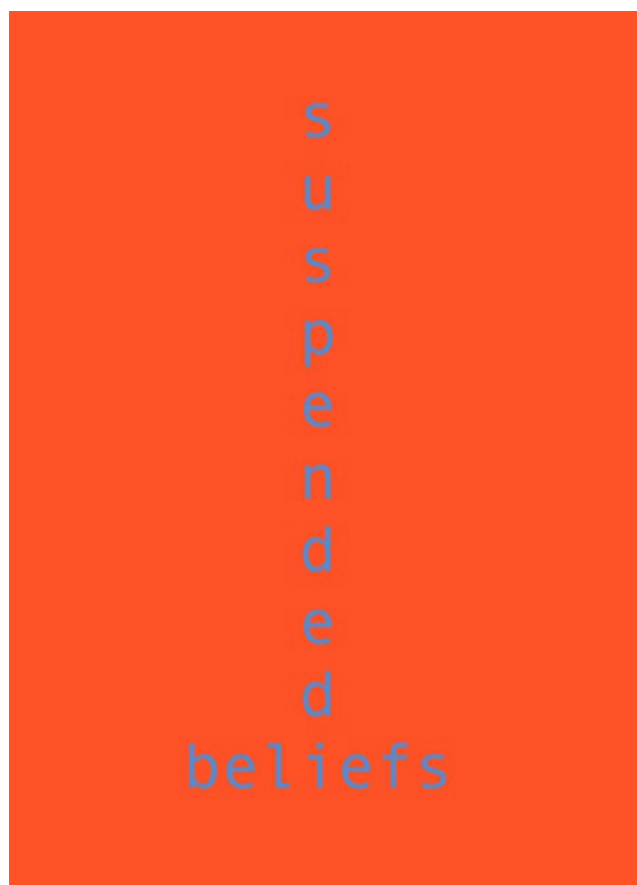
dans le cadre de cette production, le *Carré noir* s'est vu juxtaposé notamment aux images de Staline et de l'étoile rouge (*Carré noir avec liséré rouge* d'Eduard Gorokhovski, 1998) et à celle de Lénine (*Lénine et le Carré noir* de Leonid Sokov, 2002). L'approche du Sots Art s'est rétrospectivement vu donner un fondement théorique dans les travaux de Boris Groys, dont le controversé essai *Gesamtkunstwerk Stalin*, publié pour la première fois en 1988, développe amplement sur cette question de la filiation entre avant-garde et totalitarisme. Reprenant l'idée communément acceptée selon laquelle, à l'origine de l'avant-garde, il y aurait une volonté d'abolir la frontière entre l'art et la vie, ou de « passer de la représentation du monde à sa transformation » (21), pour reprendre ses termes exacts, Groys y présente ce courant artistique et, au premier chef, le suprématisme malevitchien, comme une sorte de présage du stalinisme, qui, à sa différence, aurait toutefois *réussi* à mener à bien son projet ambitieux d'« organiser toute la vie de la société selon des formes artistiques uniques » (14). Il est toutefois important de préciser que ce lien présupposé entre l'avant-garde russe et le système qui l'a exterminée est loin d'aller de soi. Si on peut à la rigueur admettre que l'avant-garde et le totalitarisme soviétique partageaient certaines ambitions communes, si certains artistes, dans les années qui ont suivi la révolution, ont bien voulu collaborer avec le nouveau régime, séduits par l'utopie communiste, cela ne fait pas d'eux des hérauts du stalinisme pour autant. C'est sans mentionner, évidemment, le caractère éminemment réactionnaire de l'esthétique réaliste socialiste, qui n'a absolument rien d'une avant-garde artistique. La position consistant à amalgamer avant-garde et totalitarisme a néanmoins fait un certain nombre d'adeptes, même hors du domaine du Sots Art, comme en témoigne entre autres le titre d'un essai de l'américain d'origine bulgare Vladislav Todorov, *Red Square, Black Square*, où le *Carré noir* et la Place rouge (à laquelle l'auteur s'intéresse surtout en sa qualité de siège du mausolée de Lénine) se voient juxtaposés en tant que symboles de l'utopie soviétique.

Nombreuses sont en outre les œuvres de récupération plus ou moins récentes du *Carré* qui, sans faire

directement allusion au totalitarisme soviétique, entretiennent une perception négative du suprématisme en retenant du tableau cette seule dimension vaguement autoritaire propre à la plupart des gestes et des prises de parole des mouvements d'avant-garde du début du vingtième siècle. Parmi celles-ci, on peut penser au tableau de Sigmar Polke intitulé « *Höhere Wesen befehlen : rechte obere Ecke schwarz malen!* » (« **Les êtres supérieurs l'ont ordonné : Peignez le coin droit supérieur en noir!** », 1969), qui fut présenté notamment lors de l'exposition *Das schwarze Quadrat : Hommage an Malewitsch* à Hambourg, ou encore aux multiples copies de formats variés réalisées par Allan McCollum (*Plaster Surrogates*, 1982-84), qui illustrent bien l'affirmation de Nakov, citée plus haut, sur le caractère dogmatique acquis par le *Carré noir* à force de répétition. Mais le désenchantement à l'égard de l'avant-garde et de ses promesses libératrices qui ressort de telles œuvres ne se traduit pas seulement par une mise en parallèle du *Carré noir* et des symboles du totalitarisme : il se traduit aussi par une tendance à associer ce tableau avec des notions ou des symboles *a priori* peu compatibles avec les représentations communes de l'avant-garde. La mort (avec le tableau *Morte mi dano* de Gerhard Merz (1988), où cette phrase est inscrite au-dessus d'un carré noir, ou encore avec l'installation plus récente *Corpse of Art* de Irwin (2003-2004), qui met en scène une version « épurée » d'une célèbre photographie représentant Malevitch sur son lit de mort, entouré de ses tableaux) est un thème récurrent dans les œuvres de récupération de ces dernières années, tout comme celui du commerce : la mutation du *Carré noir* en code-barres, par exemple, a été exécutée plus d'une fois, et c'est sans doute la version d'Alexandre Sigutin, datée de 2003, qui possède le titre le plus évocateur : *Alternative au Carré noir*. Comment ne pas lire de telles œuvres comme un message sur l'échec définitif, dans le monde contemporain, de l'avant-garde et de son projet ambitieux de régénérer le monde et de changer la vie?

1992 — *Le Carré noir* politique : le collectif Irwin et la performance *Black Square on Red Square*

Parmi les œuvres de récupération du *Carré noir* qui méritent qu'on s'y attarde un peu plus longtemps qu'aux



autres figure la performance *Black Square on Red Square* (ici encore, le titre est évidemment intraduisible si on veut préserver le parallélisme) du collectif d'artistes slovènes Irwin. L'expérience, qui eut lieu à Moscou le 6 juin 1992 et fut immortalisée sur pellicule par Michael Benson pour son film *Predictions of Fire*, consistait à déployer, au centre de la Place rouge, une toile noire carrée de quelque 22 mètres de côté. Nul besoin d'en savoir davantage pour comprendre la nature double, à la fois artistique et politique, d'un tel projet. Que venait donc faire un collectif d'artistes slovènes au cœur symbolique de la Russie et de l'empire soviétique, et ce en plein démantèlement de cet empire, au moment même où, partout dans le monde, et surtout dans les anciens pays communistes d'Europe, on célébrait ce démantèlement en adoptant allègrement les modèles

de vie et d'organisation sociale venus de l'Ouest? Que venait-il faire, surtout, en y transportant le symbole par excellence de l'avant-garde russe, se l'appropriant ostensiblement?

Les réponses à ces questions sont multiples. Il faut d'abord savoir que la position du groupe Irwin dans le paysage artistique que lui-même qualifie d'est-européen (désignant par là tous les anciens pays communistes d'Europe), est une position ouvertement engagée et, sous plusieurs aspects, à contre-courant par rapport aux attitudes dominantes dans cette partie du monde depuis la chute des régimes communistes. Irwin et le collectif plus vaste dont il fait partie, Neue slowenische Kunst (NSK), ont en effet pour particularité de revendiquer ouvertement leur appartenance à cet espace est-européen, qu'ils considèrent comme un espace cohérent et, encore aujourd'hui, distinct par rapport au reste du monde. Depuis le début des années 2000, Irwin est derrière un vaste projet, *East Art Map*, qui vise à cartographier et à documenter la production artistique de cette région depuis l'après-guerre jusqu'à aujourd'hui. Le collectif est également à l'origine d'un « nouveau » courant artistique créé *a posteriori*, la « rétro-avant-garde », regroupant une variété de pratiques artistiques est-européennes fondées sur une approche critique de l'avant-garde historique. Dans une intention polémique, il est même allé jusqu'à faire de ce courant l'équivalent est-européen du modernisme occidental.

La prise de position qui sous-tend ce projet controversé qu'est le *East Art Map*¹¹ est un refus du discours dominant qui veut que les pratiques culturelles de l'Est aient désormais rejoint celles de l'Ouest après quelques décennies où elles auraient été écartées de la marche de l'histoire, refus qui se voit combiné à une volonté de revaloriser le parcours propre des artistes de cette partie du monde. En s'affirmant contre la tendance générale à l'homogénéisation culturelle, les membres de Irwin s'affirment aussi contre le refoulement d'une partie importante de l'histoire dont ils estiment, aussi douloureux qu'en soit le souvenir, qu'elle est constitutive de l'identité culturelle de la population est-européenne. Par ailleurs, ils soutiennent que cette histoire doit

être confrontée directement si on veut éviter de voir se répéter les erreurs du passé. Replacée dans un tel contexte, la performance *Black Square on Red Square*, que ses auteurs n'ont accompagnée d'aucun appareil textuel, ne s'explique peut-être pas davantage d'elle-même, mais il est plus facile de cerner les enjeux qu'elle soulève, notamment en ce qui a trait au rôle de l'avant-garde historique comme élément constitutif de l'identité culturelle non seulement russe, mais est-européenne. Le fait d'aller à Moscou déployer un carré noir sur la Place rouge a sans doute, de la part d'artistes slovènes, quelque chose d'un geste de réconciliation ou, à tout le moins, de *pacification*, considéré dans le contexte géopolitique du début des années quatre-vingt-dix. Mais en accomplissant leur action, non seulement les membres de Irwin s'associent à l'œuvre de Malevitch, ils se posent aussi en « gardiens » du Carré. On peut donc voir cette performance comme un pied-de-nez tardif à l'endroit de la domination culturelle soviétique, comme une manière de laisser entendre que, pendant que l'URSS tentait de contrôler la culture des autres pays de l'Est, c'est là-bas que l'on préservait cet échantillon négligé de la culture russe que, désormais, Irwin s'approprie comme sien en faisant mine de le ramener cérémonieusement chez lui.

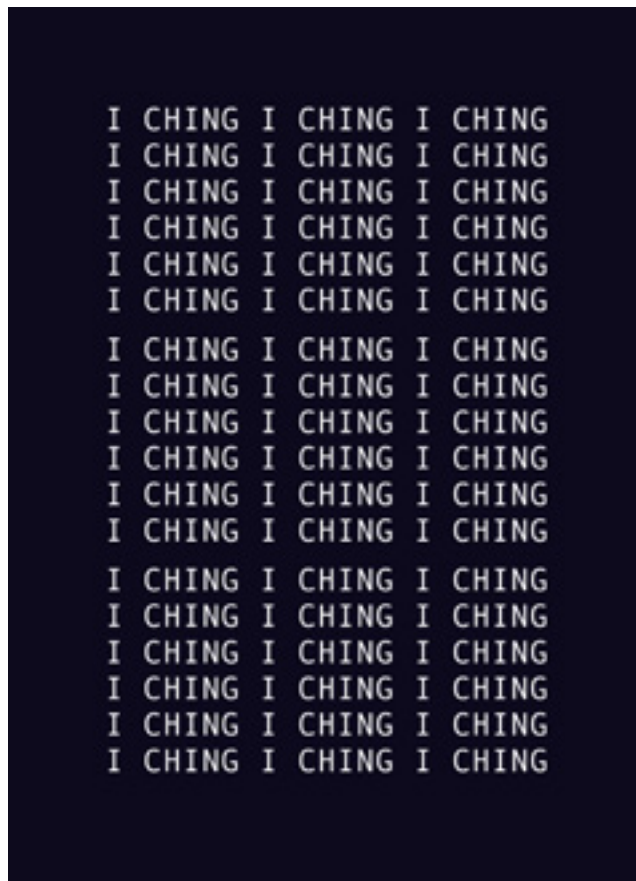
Selon Inke Arns, les membres de Irwin, en déployant leur carré noir sur la Place rouge, ont voulu confronter un puissant système idéologique avec un autre système tout aussi fort, mais dans le domaine de l'art (Arns, 9). Il y a manifestement derrière leur projet une volonté de faire ressortir ce qui est perçu comme un lien intrinsèque entre le Carré noir, la Russie et l'impérialisme soviétique et, par extension, d'attirer l'attention sur les liens qui unissent l'art et la politique. En ce sens, *Black Square on Red Square* s'inscrit donc dans la suite du Sots Art et de sa critique des failles, réelles ou imaginées, de l'avant-garde. Cependant, le déroulement des événements, en ce jour de juin 92, est venu donner une autre teinte à cette performance. En effet, comme le rapporte Michael Benson, alors que les participants s'attendaient à se faire interrompre par la police dès le début de leur action, ils ont pu réaliser celle-ci en toute quiétude, sous les yeux mêmes des forces de l'ordre.

Elena Kurliandzeva has tears in her eyes. She points to a Militia member. « Go talk to him », she says. « Finally, I can believe that things have really changed ». The uniformed officer is undistinguishable from the legionaries who once cordoned off the Western embassies of Moscow. « It's a black square, it's a painting », he explains. « I don't understand this work—but I don't see anything wrong with it ». (Arns, 196)

S'appuyant sur l'imaginaire du totalitarisme associé à la Place rouge, la performance *Black Square on Red Square* s'est ainsi retrouvée, contre toute attente, à célébrer à la fois la fin du totalitarisme dans une Russie en transition et la victoire de l'art sur l'idéologie.

2000 — Le Carré noir en Russie aujourd'hui : autour de quelques expositions

Au cours des quelques dernières années, plusieurs expositions consacrées à l'héritage du *Carré noir* dans les arts visuels ont eu lieu, en Russie et ailleurs, mettant en vedette des œuvres de différents pays¹². Parmi celles-ci, l'une, présentée à galerie moscovite Pop/Off/Art à l'été 2008, fut consacrée uniquement à son héritage dans l'art russe contemporain. Peu avant, en décembre 2006, le Art Basel de Miami Beach proposait pour sa part une exposition d'art russe intitulée « Modus R – Russian Formalism Today », qui, sans y être consacrée entièrement, accordait elle aussi une importance considérable aux nouvelles incarnations du *Carré noir* chez les artistes de la jeune génération. Ces expositions et la documentation qui nous en reste sont, il va sans dire, une précieuse source d'informations en ce qui a trait à la réception du *Carré noir* dans le monde de l'art russe. Elles ont également ceci de caractéristique qu'elles s'inscrivent—en toute conscience de la part de leurs organisateurs—dans un contexte problématique : celui de la difficile relation des Russes à leur avant-garde en général et au *Carré noir* en particulier. Elles traduisent toutefois une volonté explicite de revaloriser l'héritage mal-aimé de l'avant-garde, soutenue par une conviction que cet héritage est appelé à prendre une place importante dans le futur de l'art russe, voire même à jouer le rôle d'une « nouvelle » tradition dans cette



culture en quête de nouveaux symboles depuis la fin de l'époque soviétique. Sergeï Popov, le directeur de la galerie Pop/Off/Art, affirmait ainsi dans une entrevue au sujet de son « 100% Blacksquare » que, selon lui, la vitalité de l'art, de l'architecture et du design russes pour les années à venir ne pourra passer par d'autres voies que celle de la reconnaissance de l'héritage des avant-gardes historiques (« Galeristy Moskvyy zaniialis reklamoi "Chernogo kvadrata" Malevicha »). La commissaire de « Modus R », Olesya Turkina, tenait en 2006 un discours semblable sur la nécessité, pour les Russes, de se réapproprier l'héritage de leur avant-garde. Mais, dans son article introductif au catalogue de l'exposition, elle soulevait aussi la question du *nouveau* rapport à l'avant-garde qui, selon elle, est en train de s'instaurer dans l'art actuel, par rapport à ce que l'on pouvait observer à l'époque du Sots Art. Dans ce qui

semble être une réponse à Boris Groys, Turkina affirme que maintenant enfin, en Russie, « alors qu'apparaît une nouvelle génération d'artistes ayant grandi sans connaître l'expérience de la vie dans un état moderniste, le "politique" et le "formaliste" peuvent être séparés » . Il est vrai que, de plus en plus, les artistes qui revisitent l'héritage de l'avant-garde dans leurs œuvres semblent s'intéresser surtout à la *production* des artistes qui y sont associés, à certaines œuvres précises, bien plus qu'à l'avant-garde elle-même comme moment de l'histoire de l'art doté d'une lourde charge émotive, comme ce fut le cas pour les artistes des générations précédentes. Faut-il alors parler de tournant « esthétisant » dans l'approche des artistes russes contemporains à l'égard de l'avant-garde historique? L'œuvre qui occupait l'espace central de l'exposition « 100% Blacksquare », une installation d'Oleg Tatarintsev intitulée *Champ (Pole)*, semble en tout cas aller dans ce sens. L'installation en question consistait en vingt-cinq larges bols de céramique couverts de laque noire brillante ou mate et disposés sur le plancher de manière à former un grand carré. Les propos de l'artiste au sujet de son œuvre, dans leur laconisme même, sont éloquentes : « De la laque brillante et de la laque mate : cela fait contraste. Il n'y a là aucun sens caché. Vous avez dit que mon carré, c'était en fait des cercles—je n'y avais même pas pensé » (« Metamorfozy "Chernogo kvadrata" ». Ma traduction).

L'exemple de l'œuvre *Champ* de Tatarintsev, sélectionnée parmi d'autres du même type, vient témoigner de ce que la volonté de faire de l'avant-garde un nouveau pilier de la culture russe ne pourra se réaliser qu'au prix d'une certaine *limitation* du discours à son sujet, d'une certaine *aseptisation* qui, manifestement, a déjà commencé à se produire. Cela n'est peut-être pas uniquement mauvais. Après toutes ces années où, sur son propre territoire, l'art de l'avant-garde russe a été subordonné à la politique, il pourrait être temps de passer à autre chose. Pour revenir aux théories de Hal Foster ainsi qu'aux propos d'Olesya Turkina cités plus haut, peut-être que l'époque contemporaine en Russie inaugure enfin celle, « post-traumatique », où l'œuvre de l'avant-garde pourra être appréhendée dans toute sa force, libérée des interférences de la politique et de l'émotivité.

Le Carré noir et l'héritage de l'avant-garde

L'imaginaire de l'avant-garde qui se dégage des multiples œuvres de récupération du *Carré noir* est fait d'images fortes et parfois difficilement conciliables. Néanmoins, celles qui semblent s'imposer le plus tendent vers la formulation d'un constat d'échec de l'avant-garde comme entreprise artistique. Les idées de totalitarisme, de mort et de commerce auxquelles le *Carré* se voit régulièrement associé dans les œuvres de récupération incarnent sans ambiguïté l'idée de la fin de l'avant-garde, tout comme le fait, sur un autre plan toutefois, son « esthétisation » dans nombre d'œuvres contemporaines. La situation n'est pas sans être paradoxale, pourtant. C'est que malgré ce discours sur la mort de l'avant-garde dans lequel s'inscrivent les œuvres de récupération du *Carré*, la persistance même de ce tableau dans l'art contemporain ne manque pas d'attester de sa force d'attraction et de sa constante pertinence. Cela est particulièrement marquant dans le domaine de l'art russe. Pour montrer qu'il était encore possible de créer après le *Carré*, les artistes, au lieu de le reléguer aux oubliettes, se le sont approprié; ils l'ont maquillé, camouflé, profané, ridiculisé, transformé en symbole totalitaire, si bien que, pour reprendre les mots d'une historienne de l'art dans un article récent, l'art des quelques dernières décennies, en Russie, n'est peut-être pas tant un art *après* Malevitch qu'un art *sur* Malevitch (Karasik, 329). Aussi, si l'œuvre, tout comme l'image de l'avant-garde historique qu'elle incarne, a été indéniablement et durablement transformée par toutes ces manipulations, on peut néanmoins se demander où se situe le rapport de force.

Dans un article intitulé « Apropos Appropriation », Jan Verwoert reprend cette question posée par Derrida dans *Spectres de Marx* : « Posséder un spectre, n'est-ce pas être possédé par lui, possédé tout court? Le capturer, n'est-ce pas être par lui captivé? » pour, à son tour, demander : « If through appropriation one seeks to (re-)possess an object, what then if that object had a history and thus a life of its own? Would the desire for possession then not inevitably be confronted by a force within that object which resists that very desire? » (Verwoert, n.p.). À notre tour, à propos du *Carré noir*, on peut se

poser la question suivante, qui pourrait également être reformulée pour inclure l'avant-garde dans son entier : Est-ce l'art contemporain qui a investi le *Carré noir*, ou le *Carré noir* qui a investi l'art contemporain?¹⁴

Notes

1. Au sujet des multiples transformations subies par le *Carré noir* au cours de l'histoire, je renvoie à la liste dressée par Irina Karasik dans son texte introductif pour le catalogue de l'exposition *The Adventures of the Black Square* (Goriacheva, 29-30).
2. Dans *Theory of the Avant-Garde*.
3. À ce sujet, voir notamment l'article de Benjamin Buchloh : « The Primary Colors for the Second Time : A Paradigm Repetition of the Neo-Avant-Garde ».
4. Selon les organisateurs, cette exposition rétrospective devait présenter au public américain « *the greatest masterpieces of Russian art from the 13th century to the present* » (« Exhibitions – Russia! »).
5. Voir : Allenova, « Ne khochu, chtoby o Rossii slozhilos vpechatlenie, kak o chernoï dyre ».
6. Rappelons à ce sujet l'intérêt qu'avait Malevitch, à l'époque où il jetait les bases du suprématisme, pour les théories de la quatrième dimension de Piotr Ouspenski.
7. *Kazimir Malewicz, le peintre absolu*. 4 vols.
8. À ce sujet, voir Nakov (*Le peintre absolu* 56) : « Selon les récits des élèves tardifs du peintre, la réalisation de cette peinture [...] se fit dans la souffrance d'un grandiose effort créateur. Comparable aux stéréotypes cosmogoniques des grandes expériences mystiques, ce "premier pas de la création pure dans l'art" semble avoir conduit l'artiste à un état de prostration, témoignage de l'illumination mystique à laquelle renvoyait le message de l'œuvre. La légende veut qu'épuisé par le gigantesque effort intérieur que cette création lui demandait, Malewicz ait arrêté de se nourrir et de boire (sic!) pendant plusieurs jours ».
9. Nakov écrit plus précisément, au sujet de la copie de 1924 : « Représentante quasi administrative d'un suprématisme devenu doctrinaire, cette image pour manuels scolaires franchissait ainsi le pas de la frigorification académique ». Il déplore par ailleurs le fait que ce soit « à cette façade de substitution idéologique qu'il revint jusqu'à la fin des années quatre-vingt de représenter en public l'idée malewiczéenne » (2007:75). En effet, c'est une reproduction de ce tableau, et non pas de l'original de 1915, que l'on retrouve dans les monographies qui ont révélé l'œuvre au grand public, comme *The Great Experiment* de Camilla Gray.
10. Sur l'héritage du *Carré* dans le minimalisme américain, voir entre autres Lawrence, « Back to Square One ».
11. Sur le caractère controversé de *East Art Map*, voir par exemple le texte d'opinion de la critique d'art Nena Dimitrijevic, « Cachés derrière un rideau de fer », publié dans la revue ArtPress. L'auteure y accuse notamment Irwin de pratiquer le « révisionnisme historique », en trafiquant les faits pour les rendre plus conformes à leur propre version de l'histoire.
12. En plus de celles dont il sera question dans cette section, on peut mentionner *Les aventures du Carré Noir*, présentée en 2007 au Musée Russe de Saint-Petersbourg, ainsi que *Das schwarze Quadrat : Hommage an Malewitsch*, présentée la même année à la Hamburger Kunsthalle.
13. Ma traduction. Au tout début du même texte, Turkina écrit également : « *Modus R is the trace left by modernism in contemporary Russian art. [...] The traditions of the Russian avant-garde, liberated from the ideological burden and aesthetic clichés, re-experienced today* ».
14. L'image du spectre, empruntée à Derrida, a été employée par au moins deux auteurs, Wolfgang Asholt et Gérard Conio, pour parler de la persistance de l'avant-garde dans la culture contemporaine. Pour Asholt, si l'avant-garde existe encore aujourd'hui, ce n'est plus

que sous la forme « d'un spectre, d'un fantôme qui se sert de costumes et des décors d'une autre époque, donc du mythe, pour pouvoir encore subsister » (Asholt, 20). Conio écrit quant à lui : « "Spectre de Marx", écrivait Derrida il y a quelques années pour constater que ce spectre pesait plus sur notre vie d'aujourd'hui que sa statue n'avait pesé sur les sociétés qui s'étaient réclamées de sa doctrine. On pourrait dire également : spectres de Maïakovski, de Khlebnikov, de Tatline, de Malévitch, de Kroutchonykh et de tous ceux qui avaient écouté l'injonction de Nietzsche : "Socrate, fais de la musique!" » (Conio, 35).

Ouvrages cités

Arns, Inke (éd.). *Irwin Retroprincip*. Frankfurt am Main : Revolver, 2003. Print

Asholt, Wolfgang. « L'avant-garde, le dernier mythe de l'histoire littéraire ? ». *Les Mythes des avant-gardes*. Éd. Véronique Léonard-Roques et Jean-Christophe Valtat. Clermont-Ferrand : Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2003. 19-32. Print.

Bessonova, Marina. « Mify russkogo avangarda v polemike pokolenii (ot Malevicha do Kabakova) » *Voprosy iskusstvoznaniia* 1 (1993) : 69-79. Print.

Buchloh, Benjamin. « The Primary Colors for the Second Time : A Paradigm Repetition of the Neo-Avant-Garde » *October* 37 (Summer 1986) : 41-52. Print.

Conio, Gérard. *Du goût public : Nouveaux essais sur l'art*. Lausanne : L'Âge d'homme, 2007. Print.

Dimitrijevic, Nena. « Cachés derrière un rideau de fer ». *ArtPress* 367 (mai 2010) : 56-64.

« Exhibitions – Russia! ». *[Electronic Resource]*. *pastexhibitions.guggenheim.org*. Web. 20 Sept. 2010. <<http://pastexhibitions.guggenheim.org/russia/overview.html>>

Foster, Hal. *The Return of the Real : The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*. Cambridge, Mass. : MIT

Press, 1996. Print.

Foster, Hal. « Qu'en est-il du néo dans la néo-avant-garde? » *Protée* 23.3 (1995) : 71-79. Print.

« Galeristy Moskvyy zaniialis reklamoi "Chernogo kvadrata" Malevicha ». *[Electronic Resource]*. *newsru.com*. Web. 17 Nov. 2010. <<http://www.newsru.com/arch/cinema/23jul2008/malevich.html>>

Goriacheva, Tatiana *et. al.* *The Adventures of the Black Square*. Saint-Petersbourg : Palace Editions, 2007. Print.

Groys, Boris. *Staline, œuvre d'art totale*. Trad. É. Lalliard. Nîmes : Jacqueline Chambon, 1990. Print.

Karasik, Irina. « Extending Malevich in Russian Contemporary Art ». *Rethinking Malevich : Proceedings of a Conference in Celebration of the 125th Anniversary of Kazimir Malevich's Birth*. Éd. Charlotte Douglas et Christina Lodder. London : Pindar Press, 2007. 328-351. Print.

Malevitch, Kazimir. *Écrits*. Éd. A. B. Nakov. Trad. A. Robel-Chicurel. Paris : Champ Libre, 1975. Print.

« Metamorfozy "Chernogo kvadrata" v rabotakh sovremennykh khudozhnikov » *[Electronic Resource]*. *tvkultura.ru*. Web. 17 novembre 2010. <<http://www.tvkultura.ru/news.html?id=245700&cid=46>>

Nakov, Andréi. *Kazimir Malewicz, le peintre absolu*. Paris : Thalia, 2007. Print.

Nakov, Andréi. *Kazimir Malewicz, catalogue raisonné*. Paris : A. Biro, 2002. Print.

Steinberg, Eduard. « Letter to Kazimir Malevich ». *Heaven and Earth : Reflections in Paints*. Éd. The State Tretyakov Gallery *et. al.* Saint-Petersbourg : Palace Editions, 2004. 31. Print.

Todorov, Vladislav. *Red Square, Black Square : Organon for Revolutionary Imagination*. Albany : SUNY Press, 1995. Print.

Turkina, Olesya. « Modus R : Russian Formalism Today ». *Modus R = Russian Formalism Today : 20 Russian Artists*. Éd. Evgenija Kikodze *et. al.* Moskva : WAM, 2006. 18-27. « Modus R – Russia Invades Miami Art Basel ». [*Electronic Resource*]. *scribemedia.org*, Web. 18 Nov. 2010. <<http://www.scribemedia.org/2007/04/28/modus-r/>>

Verwoert, Jan. « Apropos Appropriation ». *Art and Research* 1.2 (summer 2007) : n. p. [*Electronic Resource*]. *artandresearch.org.uk*. Web. 26 Aug. 2011. <<http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v1n2/verwoert.html>>

Bio

Geneviève Cloutier obtained her PhD in Comparative Literature and Slavic Studies with a dissertation on the ‘dread of history’ in the Russian avant-garde. Currently, she is a post-doctoral fellow at the Figura Research Center of the Université du Québec à Montreal focusing on the re-emergence of the avant-garde in contemporary culture.

Bio

Geneviève Cloutier est titulaire d’un doctorat en études slaves et littérature comparée et auteure d’une thèse sur la « terreur de l’histoire » dans l’avant-garde russe, Elle est présentement stagiaire post-doctorale au centre de recherche Figura de l’UQAM, où elle s’intéresse aux résurgences de l’avant-garde dans la culture contemporaine.



IN POSSESSION OF A STOLEN WEAPON

FROM JOHN GAY'S MACHEATH TO RUBÉN BLADES' PEDRO NAVAJA

ANTONIO VISELLI,
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Abstract

This article analyses the cult salsa song “Pedro Navaja” by Panamanian artist Rubén Blades and the relevance of narrating such a genre peculiar to dancing, an analysis in accordance with adaptation theory outlined by Linda Hutcheon, and a Brechtian semiotic methodology which combines *Gestus* with theories of the sign. “Pedro Navaja” is arguably a re-writing of “Mack the Knife” – or *Die Moritat von Mackie Messer* – one which contains, as a sort of *mise-en-abyme*, elements not only of Kurt Weill’s song, but of both John Gay’s *The Beggar’s Opera* and Bertolt Brecht’s *The Threepenny Opera*. This study focuses on the fertile adaptation history of the highwayman Macheath since Gay’s work, on close-readings of “Pedro Navaja” – a narrativized cerebral salsa song – and on the ethics of adapting a character, story or genre. Finally, when the character Pedro Navaja is adapted from Blades’ song by a cineaste and playwright, Blades, furious with what others have done with ‘his’ character, decides to resuscitate his eponymous hero killed off at the end of the original song in order to regain the authority of his creation. From theoretical questions including how to read an adaptation or what constitutes an adaptation, this article focuses on the diachronic recurrences of a specific character-type, on the significance of juxtaposing particular historical junctures and on the violence of adaptation and authorship.

Résumé

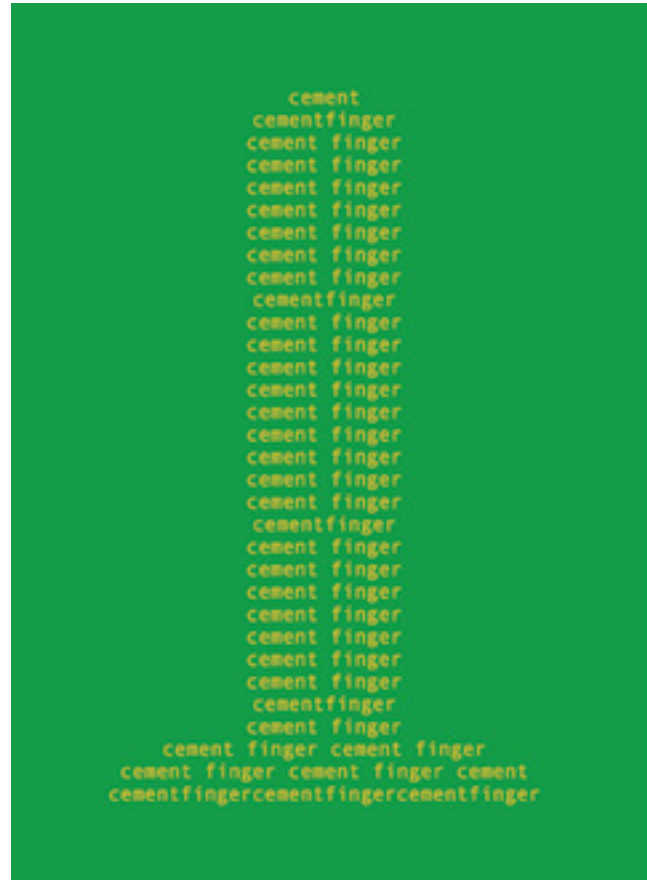
Cet article examine la chanson salsa culte « Pedro Navaja » de l’artiste panaméen Rubén Blades en regard de l’importance de la narration à l’intérieur d’un genre particulier à la danse, et en utilisant la théorie de l’adaptation de Linda Hutcheon et la méthodologie sémiotique brechtienne qui combine le *Gestus* avec les théories du signe. « Pedro Navaja » est une réécriture de la chanson « *Mack the Knife* » (« *Die Moritat von Mackie Messer* »); elle utilise les éléments de la chanson de Kurt Weill pour créer une sorte de mise en abyme. Elle contient aussi des éléments des chansons « *The Beggar’s Opera* » par John Gay et « *The Threepenny Opera* » par Bertolt Brecht. L’article évalue les nombreuses adaptations du bandit de grand chemin, Macheath, suivant son utilisation chez Gay, et examine l’éthique de l’adaptation d’un personnage, d’une histoire ou d’un genre, en même temps qu’il effectue une lecture détaillé de « Pedro Navaja » comme une chanson salsa intellectuelle et narrative. Au bout du compte, Blades décide de ressusciter le protagoniste éponyme qu’il avait tué à la fin de la chanson originale lorsqu’il trouve exaspérant ce que les autres font de Pedro Navaja dans leurs adaptations. Il le fait pour reprendre les droits de propriété sur sa création. Cet article se concentre sur la réapparition diachronique d’un personnage type, sur la signification de la juxtaposition de conjonctures historiques spécifiques, et sur la violence quant à l’adaptation et à la propriété en posant des questions théoriques, y compris celle de ce qui constitue une adaptation, et la question des façons dont celle-ci doit être lue.

Lions, wolves, and vultures don't live together in herds, droves or flocks. Of all animals of prey, man is the only sociable one. Every one of us preys upon his neighbour, and yet we herd together.

John Gay, *The Beggar's Opera*

If human beings are sociable—their antagonistic relationship leading them both to prey and rely upon one another—then the same may be said about the community shaped by authors and texts. Images and ideas travel through the interdependent and interconnected web of semiotic signification, transcending time, space and culture, uniting their diachronic and synchronic manifestations. When dealing with re-writings or adaptations of particular oeuvres, beyond intertextuality or reference, a dialogue forms between the author and context of the hypertext and hypotext¹. This is precisely the case with John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728) and its most prized adaptation by Bertolt Brecht, *The Threepenny Opera* (1928). The latter, a medley and mix of (at times discordant) musical genres, such as the ballad, proved novel in setting a stepping stone for the fruition of Epic theatre. A particular song bookends the play, a song whose fortune and adaptability has transformed it into a classic, often effacing many of its original connotations: “*Die Moritat von Mackie Messer*,” otherwise known in the English-speaking world as “Mack the Knife” or “The Ballad of Mack the Knife,” via the embellished translation by Mark Blitzstein.² Music and performance, which breach the gaps of textual and lyrical genre, deal with intertextuality on multiple levels, from the acoustic images that stem from the combination of words and quotations of other texts, to the poetics of verse, melody and harmony, to the mimetic and polysemic nature of words and sounds.

By shifting Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera* from its position of hypertext to hypotext and in analysing the adaptation of “Mack the Knife” from ballad to salsa, I will seek to reveal the intricate layers of re-writing and analyse how Rubén Blades' “Pedro Navaja” (translated literally as “Peter the Knife,” “Switchblade” or “Pen-knife”) became such a cult song in Hispanic America, by



attempting to forge a notion of community that binds Spanish-speaking countries through a universal narrative. Focusing primarily on the song “Pedro Navaja,” I will consider the shift from ballad to salsa and the relevance of narrating such a genre peculiar to dancing, as well as the binding tissue of the text from a Brechtian semiotic point of view, combining *Gestus* with theories of the sign. After having articulated a definition of ‘adaptation’ and following a history of the fruitful contexts of *The Beggar's Opera* and its re-creations, I will focus on “Pedro Navaja” as text, in hopes of elevating it to one of the many adaptations of Brecht and Gay's works, one that criticism has hitherto left in the dark. Finally, tension surrounding the notion of authorship complicates Blades' authoritative stance, where the author asserts his own authority while adapting from others.

Beyond Gérard Genette and Linda Hutcheon, it is the writing of Harold Bloom that will help illuminate the contradictory relationship between Blades' and both his predecessors and contemporaries.

To Write, or to Re-write, That is the Question

Numerous theorists of semiotics and intertextuality argue that the interconnectedness of texts transcends spatiotemporal boundaries. Such is the case for Gérard Genette who coins the term "transtextuality," a defining concept in revealing a text's poetics, as well as its relationship with other texts. The nomenclature Genette employs relating to transtextuality, particularly his use of "hypertext" and "hypotext" defined above, will serve to differentiate between the shifting textual authority discussed in this essay, taking the place of more charged and problematic terms, such as "original" text or "primary" and "secondary" text. Contrary to his post-structuralist counterparts, the artistic authority for Genette lies mostly within the author, an author capable of creating in conjunction and in dialogue with other works of art, unlike the continuous semiosis of seemingly authorless labyrinthine linguistic permutations, such as those represented in Borges' mythical library. Such a metaphor implies that little or nothing new or authentic is left to say, and that an interconnected world of textuality simply spawns from an architext—the Book *par excellence*—or from a mathematical formula applied to language.

On the opposing spectrum of the effaced role of the author, but in line with the preoccupation with a lack of newness, lies the apprehension at the basis of Harold Bloom's thesis in his seminal work *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*: the weight on an artist's shoulders, whether a poet, novelist or playwright, a weight of the past imbued with an inspiration at times ethereal and supposedly divine, at times mundane, extricated from the society in which these artists flourish and upon which they feed. Finding one's voice or style is often hindered by an overbearing past, by the "Covering Cherub" as Bloom describes it, and what constitutes a great or canonical author or work of art is not only dependent upon the beauty and originality of a verse or

image, but on the influence, whether aesthetic, political or ethical, that work of art produces within a contemporary context and for posterity (38).

These theoretical notions offer a dualistic framework when one asks the relevance—or even the possibility—of stealing, borrowing or adapting a particular image, be it metaphoric or allegorical. I propose that adaptation theory, as discussed by Linda Hutcheon, offers a link between Genette's transtextuality, the notion of interconnected texts in general, and the anxiety described by Bloom. In fact, contrary to Bloom's argument, adapting an oeuvre may be a way to work through such an anxiety, in which the focus is less a question of content than an exposition of form, a discovery of one's singular style. However, this method does come at a price: shifting genres and manipulating form quickly becomes synonymous with violence, not only leading to abounding discussions regarding authorship and intellectual property, but to the destruction of formal and generic boundaries as well, both topics of interest in this paper.

In order to begin answering such questions on the relevance and possibility of stealing images, it is necessary to define the context of adaptation, by asking: what is re-writing and therefore, implicitly, what is re-reading, since thinking in terms of adaptation theory embraces all of these essentials and acutely acknowledges a new teleology for them, by further complicating hermeneutics as a whole.

What is adaptation?

Theories of adaptation scrutinize the notion of the reproducibility of texts and the transformation of stories to say something new, always building on the work of predecessors and an artistic past. Linda Hutcheon in *A Theory of Adaptation* evokes the seemingly simplistic truisms, "art is derived from other art; stories are born of other stories," and further emphasizing their rhythmic and recurring essence, "storytelling is always the art of repeating stories" (2).³ Beyond the aesthetics of recurring and evolving stories, adaptations also have a socio-historical, as well as cultural *telos*, something acquired and passed down from generations where orality

for all re-writings, therefore leaving quite a large gap for misinterpretation or “misreading” in Bloom’s sense of the term, should one believe—contrary to the Derridean tenet—that *hors texte* does indeed exist. The *signification* in intertextuality, as Michael Riffaterre and Genette suggest, can only exist once one combines the hypertext and the hypotext, given that—although the adaptation may indeed stand alone—adaptation theory offers a locus of judgement in accordance with its new context, but in line with its paradigmatic counterpart, its axis of selection in Jakobsonian terms. A reader or interpreter unfamiliar with the hypotext may not fully grasp the dialectical representation at hand, its depth and the importance of often minute modifications on behalf of the author of the hypertext. Therefore, reading the hypotext is further complicated by the act of reading its re-writing, while also implicitly reading the adapter’s reading or interpretation of the hypotext, an authentically “palimpsestuous” hermeneutics (Hutcheon 6). I do not wish to imply that an adapted text’s meaning exists solely in conjunction with its hypotext, nor do I suggest that an adaptation’s intertextual references be completely expounded or necessarily divulged to fully comprehend a text; however, for the specific example of “Pedro Navaja,” I am offering a reading of the most overt hypotexts and intertexts, those of Gay and Brecht.

Texts and Contexts

In an attempt to avoid overly theorizing a subject which has already received much attention, it is in light of the guiding remarks on adaptation theory above, with a combination of Brechtian semiotics, that I will explore “Pedro Navaja,” one of the many adaptations of a text that withholds a metaphorically polysemic value: it is a text imbued with a universality that has seen an excess of transformations and re-writings.⁴

The adaptability of *The Beggar’s Opera*

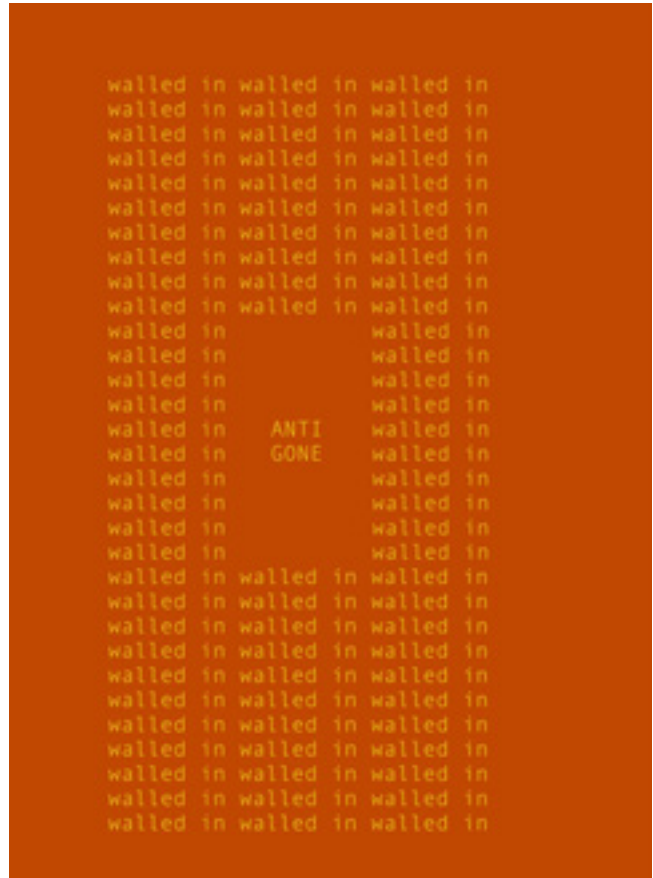
An obvious and yet crucial question arises when dealing with a text that has seen such prodigal textual progenies: what constitutes the fertile adaptability of John Gay’s *The Beggar’s Opera*? What seems most obvious is its generic hybridity, a form that encompasses a multitude of songs, choruses and theatres, detaching itself

from the mono-generic form of Italian, French and German opera of which it is a critique. Interestingly, according to Uwe Böker, its form proved detrimental to the play’s initial staging: “the Drury Lane Theatre was reluctant to put on this new kind of stage entertainment which included songs, popular arias and marches from the *opera seria* and other types of music” (9). The particular socio-economic context is also telling; it is the first time “conspicuous consumption” comes into being, exemplary of a nascent consumer society in formation and thus of further differentiations regarding the division of labour and class (*Ibid.*, 9). This new society and the latent reproducibility of art as a means of capital become inextricably related. Therefore, upon overcoming the hurdles of the difficult first staging, the innovative form and genre of *The Beggar’s Opera*, already polyvalent and hybrid alone, began to lend itself to a multiplicity of interpretations and re-orchestrations due to its schizophrenic nature. Böker continues, explaining the fascination that finally overtook the London scene: “Many a Grub Street dramatist was therefore tempted to imitate a commercially successful play like *The Beggar’s Opera*,” making it the model of a virtual plethora of “ballad opera” adaptations, such as *The Cobbler’s Opera*, *The Lover’s Opera* and *The Statesman’s Opera*, *Harlequin’s Opera*, to name a few (10-11). The vast majority of these adaptations share a unique and linear plot line: the children rebel against parents over marriage, accentuating the dichotomies of the authority of parents and the adventurous nature of youth, along with the stereotypical antithesis of “country innocence and London corruption” (12).

The depiction of London as “corrupt, putrid and anarchic to the point of insanity” is a socio-political recurrence that could effortlessly define many cities and nations throughout history, and it is therefore not surprising that Brecht would use such a fruitful and universal context to criticize the atrocities of capitalism, since, for Brecht and Gay, the most important element in art was to paint a picture of contemporary society capable of creating an awareness of the problems within the societal strands that thread a nation together, similar to the interwoven qualities of a text (Dabydeen 31). Brecht’s

primary interest in Epic theatre was to force an acute awareness on the spectator's behalf of the fictionality of representation, stripping the performance of its realism or armature, and foregrounding its transparency, excluding any possibility of the Aristotelian catharsis Brecht refused. In fact, Walter Benjamin writes that Brecht's "effort to make the audience interested in the theatre as experts—not at all for cultural reasons—is an expression of his political purpose" (1973, 16). This acknowledgement of *ideas* being played out instead of a dressed-up replica of reality provokes a parallel between the actions and ideas represented on stage, the manner in which they figure artistically and politically, and the real-life experiences of the audience members: a temporal coexistence that unite artist and viewer. Not dissimilar in nature to the DJ or the band's inciting power to stimulate communal action on a dance floor, one of Brecht's goals was to transform the paralysed, passive or "relaxed" audience, to use Benjamin and Brecht's terms, into an active and aware mass of individuals caught in a socio-political situation demanding attention: the feverish nineteen-twenties inhabited by the so-called "hopeless generation" (Böker 20).

Many international and transcultural "updatings" of *The Beggar's Opera*, to use Böker's temporally transcendental expression, follow similar patterns of equating socio-political unrest to a distant past's environment, the most famous being Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera*. Following Brecht, one may add Vaclav Havel's *Zebracka opera* (1975), Wole Soyinka's *Opera Wonyosi* (1977), Chico Buarque de Hollandas *Opera do Malandro* (1978), Puroshottam Laxman Deshpande's *Teen Paishyacha Tamasba*, (1978), Dario Fo's *L'opera dello sghignazzo* (1981), Alan Ayckbourn's *A Chorus of Disapproval* (1984), Nick Dear and Stephen Warbeck's *The Villain's Opera* (2000), Dale Wasserman's *The Beggar's Holiday* (2004) and Robert Lepage's *The Busker's Opera* (2004). The enormous adaptability of *The Beggar's Opera* is evident in such a long list of re-writings and its conduciveness to globalization and internationality is equally manifest. Not only diachronically related, these texts share something specific in their production: these authors "went back to Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* in order to point out



political, social and cultural parallels to the present in an oblique way" (Böker 19). This "oblique" manner of both encompassing and surpassing time evokes notions of Brechtian theatrical practices, not to mention one of its defining elements: the theatre is diametrical. Opposing times, political ideologies and regimes, the private and the public sphere in an ambivalent cohesion--almost oxymoronically—allows for a standstill that demands recognition, one that (re)visits the lost and silenced micro-narratives, the refuse of history.

One example of the function of awareness within such a diametrical staging is Brecht's transformation of *The Threepenny Opera's* ending. By breaking the "fourth wall" and telling the audience that instead of hanging Macheath—already on the platform to be hanged—that

they would spare his life, they analogously equate him to Queen Victoria. Peter Ferran in his article “The *Three-penny* Songs: Cabaret and the Lyrical *Gestus*” explains: “Indeed, his impending execution competes for [the spectators’] enjoyment with another spectacular event of equal fascination—the pageant of Queen Victoria’s coronation. The criminal’s fictional elevation (speaking of hanging) is matched against the Queen’s historical ascent to the throne – and both events are presented *as popular theatrical entertainment*” (Ferran 8). This is a specific example of Brecht’s dialectical theatre which forces the audience to see both historical events congruently and as operating according to a similar paradigm, a *Gestus* that performs a historicizing impulse.

Knives and Blades

Functioning according to a similar paradigmatic orchestration, Rubén Blades writes the song “Pedro Navaja”—the “beautiful and terrible story of Pedro Navaja” that Gabriel García Márquez states he wished he had written⁵--the telling of two simultaneous stories that meet each other half way: the first, that of a neighbourhood thief Pedro Barrio known as Pedro Navaja, a specular representation of Macheath and a likening to the picaresque *Compadrito* figure in the Tango, whose attributes⁶ are his long pockets in which he conceals his knife, his gold tooth that lights his path in the dark night and his hat, slightly slanted as not to show his face. An anonymous woman of the streets is lamenting the fact that she has not made any *pesos* that evening and is wondering what she is going to eat. Pedro Navaja, born to prey on the weak, approaches her in an attempt to rob her, pulls out his knife and stabs her, while she pulls out a “Smith and Wesson” and shoots him dead. A drunkard walking by picks up the two pesos, the knife, the gun and leaves.

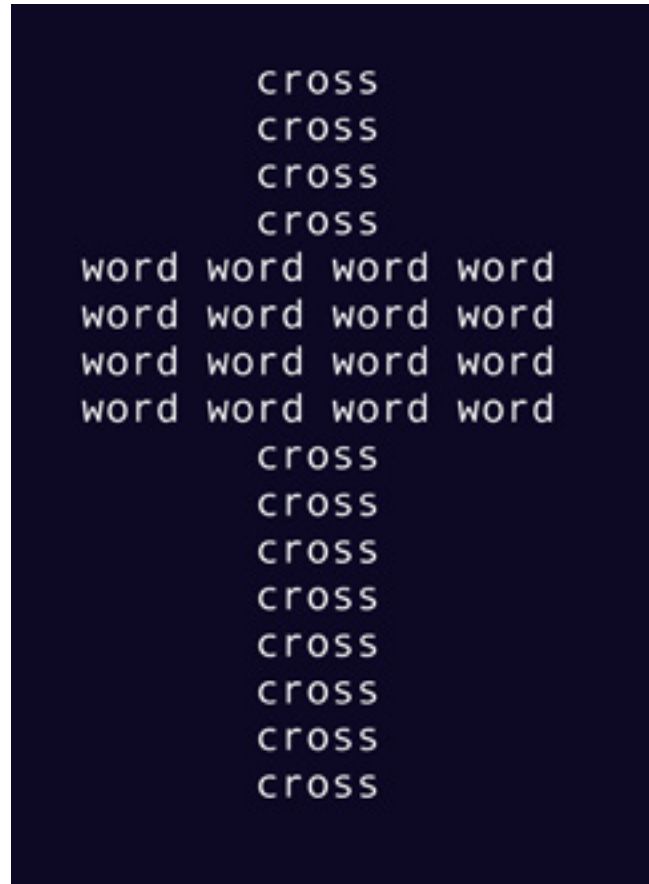
The author, Rubén Blades Bellido de Luna, whose providential Anglophone last name⁷ proves genuine, is a Panamanian singer songwriter, actor, lawyer and politician. It is of no surprise that such a politically invested individual who narrates the hardships of the poor in Latin America, as well as critiquing the “plastic” nature of the rich “who sweat Chanel No. 3,” be interested in

Brecht’s representation of Gay’s play (Blades & Colon in “*Plástico*”). Aesthetically much in line with Brecht and Weill’s orchestrations and concerns with generic hybridity, Blades is a forerunner in bringing experimental tempos to traditional Latin-American music, fusing Cuban beats with Nuyorican forms,⁸ as well as promoting what he calls, in reference to Salsa, “a thinking person’s dance music,” in other words politically and ideologically invested,⁹ since salsa was hitherto reduced to a sort of pastoral romance, describing the beauty of a country’s landscape or one’s infatuation with a certain individual. In combining art and awareness beyond passive and lethargic entertainment, Blades believes that even salsa music may become a genre conducive to physical *engagement* through dancing and listening, participating in the same “transparent” context alluded to by Brecht and thus uniting author or performer, and spectator. Whereas Brecht’s goal was to incite awareness of the thematic and ideological discordance as to provoke action, for Blades, the action ideally and metonymically shifts from a physical movement of masses dancing communally to individual consciousness and intellectual stimulation, creating awareness for that which is behind the beats and dance steps. Blades’ goal, therefore, is to popularize “narrative salsa,” in which a whole story can be told in a song, since, according to the artist, “you can respect your conscience and the *clave* rhythm in the same song.”¹⁰

Beyond Brecht, Blades’ indebtedness to the existentialists, namely Camus, nurtures the narrative role of the single action, absurd as it may be, that defines a given character in a particular context. Similarly, his interest in “*tremendista*” novels spawns from the importance of having characters in his songs that are victims of society.¹¹ Since fate decides all in such generic representations, even if the characters are grotesquely described monsters amidst the seedy underbelly of the city, or on the treacherous streets, one almost takes pity on them despite their thievery. For Blades, having grown up in a middle-class family, yet surrounded by the slums, the laws of the street mesh with those of the stage, life on the streets being a central theme in *The Beggar’s Opera* and *The Threepenny Opera*. It is interesting to note that “The Ballad of Mack the Knife” is originally entitled

“*Die Moritat von Mackie Messer*,” with *Moritat* etymologically meaning deadly deed, a medieval murder ballad performed in the streets by strolling minstrels.

Towards a Semiotics of Salsa: Pedro Navaja and *Gestus*
 “Pedro Navaja” does not follow the linear story line of children rebelling against their parents due to a forced or forbidden marriage. Nonetheless, Blades combines childhood and the streets both thematically and linguistically from the very beginning of the song. He breaks the fourth wall that divides performers and public with the first words that serve as an incipit, words that precisely only belong to the oral tradition and therefore never transcribed in the lyrics: “*Avelino, ven acà!*” Avelino, an unknown character, is representative—particularly through the use of the diminutive—of the surrounding youngsters, either those present around the stage during the song’s performance or the youth of Latin America called together in harmony. In “Pedro Navaja,” the audience and the dancers are called over to hear something new, a story never before told in this genre, since, until the 1970s, salsa had little ideological value. This story is a tale with a serious moral message combined with popular dancing, the Brechtian dialectic evocative from the get-go. Although it is unknown whether or not Blades explicitly studied Brechtian thought, the similar use of a dialectical stance, as well as the thematic content which permeates through *The Threepenny Opera* into “Pedro Navaja” does indeed suggest Blades scrupulously examined Brecht’s play. Ferran, in regards to Brecht’s work, describes this dialectic as follows: “The point for Brecht and Weill was to use music for social criticism, to seek *its* expressive possibilities, and indeed to do so by (among other things) preserving its very “narcotic charms” to some degree but also by joining it to a context which contradicted them, which should have enforced a consciousness of their enrapturing effect: the contradiction between action and music was thematized and demonstrated, and the exhibition of epic forms was to contribute above all to this” (6). Ironically, Brecht’s public would fail to acknowledge this rupture: the dialectical contradiction capable of soliciting introspection, and sadly, the success of the opera relies on the failure of this technique (6). For Blades, however, the hurdle between serious lyrics and popular dancing was



not insurmountable, and Blades succeeds where Brecht fails mostly due to the physical *engagement*, the performative responsibility vested in the listener-turned-dancer or dancer-turned-listener. The locus of performance for both Brecht and Blades also offers intriguing parallels. Lisa Appignanesi, in her studies on the cabaret (a context and genre dear to Brecht) demonstrates to what extent it shares in intimacy and performance with the context of a popular salsa stage:

What remains more or less consistent in cabaret, and allows it to be defined as a distinct form, are its structural elements: a small stage and smallish audience and an ambience of talk and smoke, where the relationships between performer and spectator is one at once of intimacy and hostil-

ity, the nodal points of participation and provocation. The cabaret performer plays directly to his audience, breaking down the illusory fourth wall of traditional theater. There is never any pretence made of an identity existing between actor and role. Rather, [...] the performer remains a performer, no matter what he is enacting (Ferran 6).

The explicitly allegorical enactment of ideas instead of reality is similar to forms of Epic theatre, which both Brecht and Blades espouse. In reference to salsa specifically, more often than not in a popular setting, the salsa stage is also small, performers and singers directly address the audience, in a hospitable context always verging on the hostile, a context which sets a tone of *hospitality* to use one of Derrida's neologisms. Such a term implies the potential destruction of the subject in the face of otherness—whether the other be outside or within the self—and the eventual possibility of accepting a new ideological position which may clash with one's preconceived standpoint.

The setting of "Pedro Navaja" is a sidewalk on a corner street, a literal crossways and metaphor of interweaving and meeting, as well as circulation, with all of its accompanying connotations of wealth and sex. It is also a *topos* of crime settings, lending both universality and particularity to the context, since it also links it intertextually with Mack "On the sidewalk, Sunday morning." The protagonist, still unnamed, walks "*con el tumbao que tienen los guapos al caminar.*" *Tumbao* is slang for swagger, style and class, and yet it connotes someone also capable of moving swiftly and with agility. This initial description of his attributes, when read alongside Brecht's definition of *Gestus*, unveils the minute construction of Pedro Navaja's character: "Brecht's Latinate coinage refers to the domain of human behavior exhibiting social relationships through individual attitude, stance, or posture. However abstract, the meaning of *Gestus* contains these essentials: social behavior, attitudinal perspective; demonstrative enactment. The core of the sense of *Gestus* is the notion of *point of view*, understood both as a component of human social interaction and as a feature of theatrical representations of such interaction" (Ferran 7). Although not yet interact-

ing with any characters, Pedro's description is primordial to the definition of his character and what he stands for, his gestures imbued with social importance. A quick glance at the first and second stanzas—entirely descriptions of the anti-hero—suffice to understand his thieving strategies and the use of his props:

[...]
*las manos siempre en los bolsillos de su gabán
 pa' que no sepan en cuál de ellas lleva el puñal.*

*Usa un sombrero de ala ancha de medio lao'
 y zapatillas por si hay problemas salir volao',
 lentes oscuros pa' que no sepan que está mirando
 y un diente de oro que cuando rie se ve brillando.*

[...]
 his hands always deep inside the pockets of his coat
 so that nobody knows which one holds the dagger

he uses a wide brim hat, tilted to one side
 sporting sneakers, to fly when in danger
 dark shades so nobody knows what he's looking at
 and a golden tooth that shines when he laughs

The golden tooth also lights his way when fleeing; his sneakers are "*zapatillas*," further accentuating, from a linguistic standpoint, the diminutive's power throughout the song; the seemingly small and unnoticed are those who are, in fact, eating away at society from the ground up.

Meanwhile, three blocks away, the portrait of a prostitute is painted: a woman

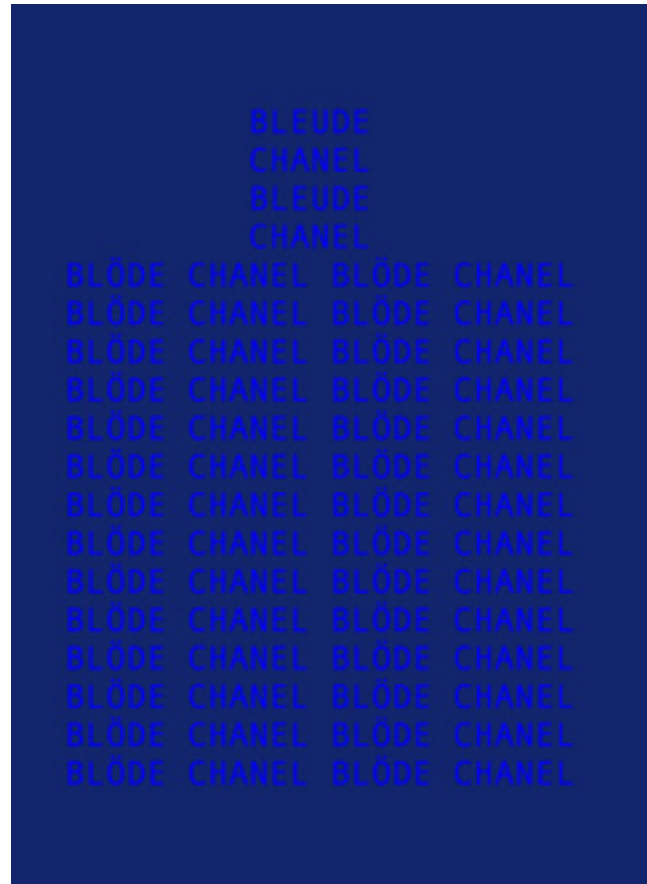
*va recorriendo la acera entera por quinta vez,
 y en un zaguán entra y se da un trago para olvidar
 que el día está flojo y no hay clientes pa' trabajar.*

strides the whole curb for the fifth time
 and inside a store she goes to have a drink and
 forget

that the day moves slow, and she has no customers to attend

Pertaining to the lexical field of movement, the listener can extrapolate a matrix of speed and slickness beginning with the *tumbao* of Pedro Navaja. The following verses also adhere to this isotopic web and mirror the prostitute’s quotidian idleness: “*Un carro pasa muy despacito por la avenida / No tiene marcas pero to’os saben qu’es policia.*”¹² Similar to the thief catcher Peachum in *The Beggar’s Opera* who has everyone else do his dirty work for him—a parodic symbol of societal peace—the police in “Pedro Navaja” appear in a ghost-car that everyone knows exists. One can only assume that, reciprocally, the police also know who the gangsters are—much like Peachum in Gay’s work—despite their inability to stop them. In accordance with Hutcheon’s adaptation theory, reading these verses in line with Brecht’s play, and the police alongside Peachum, would suggest that the police have something to gain from Pedro’s thievery, an impossible observation without reference to the hypotext. Furthermore, it recalls the original context that led Gay to write his play: the infamous Jonathan Wild as a duplicitous gangster and policeman in London. Gaining the public’s trust and seemingly protecting them, he and his gang in turn robbed the people, later returning some or all of their goods (and receiving a reward for it), while framing and imprisoning rival gang members for the looting. Such government sanctioned thievery, when transposed anachronistically into “Pedro Navaja,” offers a particular commentary on authority, policing, as well as on public and private property.

Pedro Navaja sees the car and, with his hands in his pockets, crosses the street “running, silently,” while the woman is on the other side of the street, moving a gun from her coat to her purse, “*Un .38 Smith & Wesson del especial / Que carga encima pa’ que la libre de todo mal.*”¹³ It may seem odd to hear a mixing of registers, from slang to poetic verse and now to the discourse of prayers, more specifically the Lord’s Prayer, which ends “and deliver us from evil.” Blades’ poetics, however, transpire throughout the text and all verses are undoubtedly minutely constructed. This verse transports the listener to the beginning of the song, where one hears the



acoustic image “Ave” in the name Avelino, *Ave* also pertaining to Biblical and prayer discourse, as in “Ave Maria,” perhaps the most common Latin American name for a (Christian) woman. The orchestrations of a secular prayer with a story concerning thievery emanates, a strand of the semiotic web to which I will return.

The narrative continues, reaching its violent climax: Pedro Navaja crosses the street and stabs the woman, his “golden tooth shining [across] the whole avenue,” while she pulls out a weapon of her own, and all of a sudden spectators hear that “a gunshot bursted out like a cannon...”

*Y Pedro Navaja cayó en la acera mientras veía, a esa mujer,
Que revolver en mano y de muerte herida a el le decía:
“Yo que pensaba ‘hoy no es mi día estoy sala’,
Pero Pedro Navaja tu estás peor, no estás en na’*

and Pedro Navaja, fell on the curb as he saw the woman with the gun in her hand, and mortally wounded telling him: “I thought: today was not my day, I’m on a bad streak. But Pedro Navaja, you’re worse: you’re worthless”

The physical *Gestus* of the characters, that is “how the character’s stance toward someone or something impels and defines his behaviour toward that person or thing,” is particularly telling (Ferran 7). Here, despite the stance of these two characters—Pedro Navaja lying on top of the stabbed prostitute—there is no place for rape, no place for the authoritative paterfamilias, dictator or police to rob or pimp the public and the poor. The rebelling individual and the muted community, however, stand in opposition to each other. Despite the noise, no one leaves their homes to see what has happened or ask any questions; instead, a sort of mob-like *omertà* or law of silence reigns. Only a drunkard, who stumbles over the two bodies, takes “the gun, the dagger, the money” and off he goes. While leaving, however, he starts to sing a tune: “Life brings you surprises, surprises are brought by life, O God!” The rhetorical chiasmus embodies a syntactic mirror and the image of circulation or of literal revolution becomes manifest: life reflecting surprises, surprises life. It sets up a larger paradigmatic reading of the mirroring of misery.

Pedro Navaja as paradigm, is a rogue, dictator, emblem of political power now powerless, and beneath him lies a woman, the embodiment of feminine submissiveness, a prostitute, “seller and sold in one,” who, sick of not making enough money to eat, rebels against the authority (Benjamin 10). Blades takes on a feminist point of view, figuratively placing sexual assault and one woman’s revolt against violence, rape and the phallic knife,

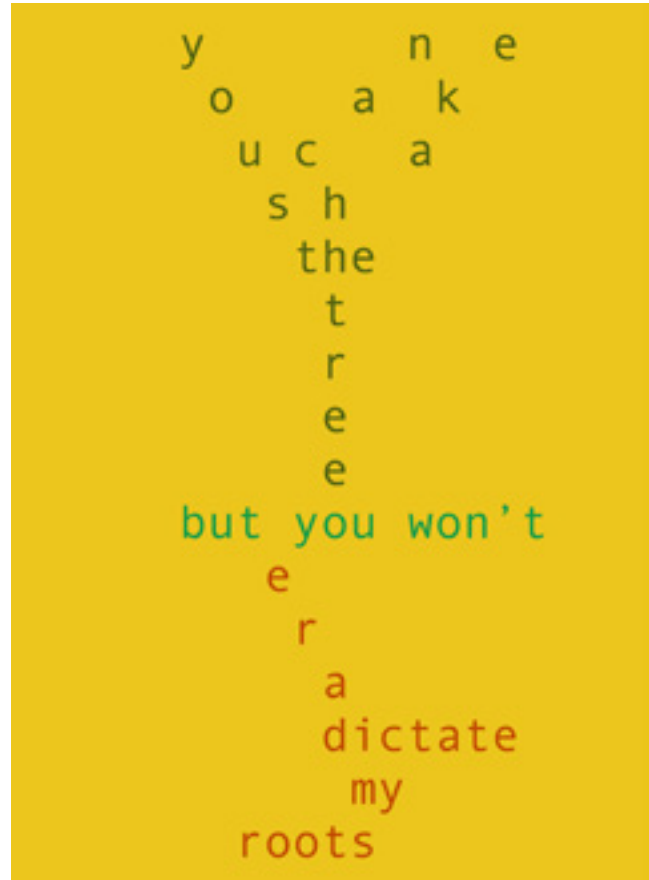
as a stand in for the violence and oppression against which communities need to stand up, opposing the cruelty of individuals and political regimes. As to further demonstrate the hardships of his nation, such a point of view nurtures Blades’ transformation of the archetypal plot sequence from Gay’s play. Whereas the plot structure of rebelling against the father to marry a highwayman laid the basis for *The Beggar’s Opera* and *The Threepenny Opera*, here the paradigm is more symbolic, and the paternal authority is mostly political: the economic exchange of marriage is now abject and debased to prostitution. Although only a song, “Pedro Navaja” contains as a sort of *mise-en-abîme* or text within a text, the textual macrocosm within the microcosm; it folds within itself the numerous adaptations of *The Beggar’s Opera* into one song, a song that reflects the struggles of many Latin American countries—much like the “*focolorization*”¹⁴ to which alludes Chico Buarque de Hollanda in his adaptation—a song that unites a people, forcing them to hear the stories while physically engaging with them through dance, even if the dancing and the story are in contradiction to one another.

The secular prayer

Following the story-line and the chorus repeated by the drunkard—*la vida te da sorpresas, sorpresas te da la vida, ay Dios*—Rubén Blades breaks off into spontaneous and proverbial *pregones* or *soneos*, forms that hark back to improvised street concerts, whose origins go back to Flamenco music.¹⁵ The streets represent the locus of performance, but they are also deeply enmeshed in the message of the song. Pedro Navaja’s true name is Pedro Barrio, the patronymic meaning neighborhood or in this case, the slums. Songs that speak of the interior of the city, according to Blades, are fantastic, almost mythical, and he states that every one of his protagonists once walked the streets of his *barrio* in Panama City. Once, when asked in an interview, “When you imagine these stories, these characters do you see them on the street, realistically, or on a stage?” he responded, “I see them as if a street were a stage.”¹⁶ In his response, Blades seems to align himself with Brecht regarding the aesthetics and locus of performance, as shown in Brecht’s theorizing in the *Threepenny Trial* and his play *The Streets*. As-

trid Oesmann in *Staging History*, explains: “In response to the social and economic structures of the bourgeois culture in which he finds himself, Brecht locates theatre as social action occurring not within the cultural superstructure, but in society’s base—meaning the street, the place where public life is at its most direct and physical” (111). For Blades, the streets represent precisely the unifying potential of Hispanic countries in understanding such universal narratives, but they are also what link the highwayman Macheath to the genres of the cabaret, the *Moritat*—which harks back to traveling minstrels—and flamenco *soneos*. Here, the term *soneo* or *pregon* has come to represent improvised verses, based on the form of the proverb.

The *pregones* are interspersed between the chorus, the first one being a direct reference to Mackie Messer: “*Maleante pescador, el anzuelo que tiraste, en vez de una sardina, un tiburón enganchaste.*”¹⁷ The shark recalls the verses made famous by Frank Sinatra and Ella Fitzgerald, among others: “Oh, the shark has pretty teeth, dear/ And he shows ‘em pearly whites” and, as suggested above, Pedro’s glowing teeth in turn take on symbolic value, their metaphoric worth as ‘golden’ and their relevance to the plot as one of Pedro’s quotable gestures, in their ability to light up the street. Böker notes that “[c]ritics used to remark that Bertolt Brecht’s Mackie Messer bears little resemblance to Gay’s Macheath, the Weill-Brechtian counterpart being presented as a tough gangster and a “businessman,” the smile of the shark being based on George Grosz’s 1921 drawing of Berlin brothels called *Haifische* (“sharks”)” (20). I would argue that Pedro Navaja is indeed part of the same lineage and the hypertext traces closer to Brecht’s text than to Gay’s for Blades. Similarly, the Panamanian artist was also deeply influenced by Kafka’s stories, as he explicitly states in the following *pregon* in “Pedro Navaja”: “*Como en una novela de Kafka, el borracho se dobló por el callejón.*”¹⁸ Running takes on a symbolic attribute in the streets, picking up from the early mentioning of Pedro’s *zapatillas* previously discussed. Elsewhere in the song, the audience is warned of those who do not run: “*En barrio de guapos cuida’o en la acera, cuida’o camara’ / El que no corre vuela,*” describing the thieves



in super-human and even animalistic terms.¹⁹ Aparna Dharwadker argues that there exists a “dehumanizing effect of the pursuit of money and power” on behalf of the Macheath-like characters, which I believe—at least in “Pedro Navaja”—is similar in a way to Kafka’s *Metamorphosis*, an explicit reference made by Blades to represent the dehumanizing and alienating nature of society vis-à-vis the less fortunate (13). Here, only the marginalized characters in the city, the grotesquely dehumanized, degraded and animalesque individuals, such as the drunkards, seem able to survive in such a mendacious environment.

The adaptability of “Pedro Navaja”

The conniving microcosm of Blades’ streets interest-

ingly mirrors the thieving world of authorship and artistic creativity. If Macheath in *The Beggar's Opera* has a semiotic potential of reproducibility, then the destiny of Pedro Navaja as figure and image will prove quite similar. The once highwayman Macheath become street thief Pedro—without recounting the numerous evolutions between these two states of being—will further evolve to develop into the protagonist of a movie, *El hijo de Pedro Navaja* (*The Son of Pedro Navaja*) by Alfonso Priego Jr. and a musical entitled *La verdadera historia de Pedro Navaja* (*The True Story of Pedro Navaja*) by a Puerto Rican company, but credited to Pablo Cabrera. Rubén Blades, furious with Cabrera for what he did to 'his' character, not to mention the film adaptations, decides to resuscitate him and writes the song "Sorpresas" ("Surprises"). This is a literal sequel or aftering of "Pedro Navaja," which opens with the drunk—spokesman leading the chorus and message of the previous song—who had picked up the loot leftover after the reciprocal killing and who, in turn, is held up at gunpoint and robbed. This further complicates the notion of "showing the mirroring device of drawing parallels between "Common Robbers" and the "Robbers of the Publick,"" a fundamental analogy for understanding *The Beggar's Opera*, since both Gay and Blades turn thievery into a vertiginous never-ending cycle and blur the boundaries between individuals robbing each other, and the "Publick" robbing the people (Böker 19). When asked where he found a gun and a knife, he tells the thief (a personification of Cabrera), the story of Pedro Navaja and the prostitute. The robber, out of curiosity, goes to the scene of the murder and kicks the dead bodies to make sure they are truly dead, and to everyone's surprise, Pedro Navaja (who, given his name, always has an extra blade on him) stands up and kills the new thief, leaves his ID in the deceased's back pocket and leaves. We also learn over the radio in the background that the dead prostitute in question is really a man dressed as a woman. Theoretical and ethical questions abound in regards to adaptation, combining gender performativity, authorship and authority. Whether Blades' re-appropriation of 'his' character seems unscrupulous or not, and whether egoistically prolonging his creation for artistic or commercial interest, the position of the artist on the market-

place and the artist's *auctoritas*²⁰ in general are put into question, to the point where one may ask: is it possible to perform authorship and if so, what are its benefits?

Brecht, following *The Threepenny Opera's* success, agreed to write the screenplay for a movie bearing the same title, a relationship with Nero Film AG that would quickly disintegrate. Unhappy that the producers had deviated so much from his script, itself a deviation from his theatrical script, he decided to sue the producers. The reciprocal accusations of one or the other having strayed away too far from his original intentions is precisely what frames *The Threepenny Trial*, later acknowledged by the defeated Brecht as performance art, in which the lawyers, judge and all present, were actors in "his" play, a play that explicitly demonstrated the abuse of artistic rights, trampled time and again by large businesses and capitalism. Whether or not Brecht should legitimately feel that his text was misappropriated remains an ambivalent topic within Brechtian criticism. I suggest that the nuance lies within a question of genre and media. Adaptation, to truly merit its nomenclature, needs to update and re-contextualize a given story or aesthetic representation, while dialoguing both with the present and the past on which it inevitably calls. Brecht's primary re-workings of the theatrical script nurtured a more overtly political text that his producer, Seymour Nebenzahl deemed unfit, not wanting to tamper with a proven moneymaking spectacle. Finally, the specific shift from theatre to the screen is a violent one in the case of both Brecht's and Blades' works. The trans-mediatic move places the performance in a much more exploitable commercial medium, in which the once susceptible form of the theatre performance is reduced to an infinitely reproducible single show, effacing the communal feel to viewing the play in a theatre, a play with room for error, street-like improvisation and interaction with its audience. In film, no room is left for such artistic license, elements at the very heart of Epic theatre. The producer chooses the single point of view of the camera for the viewer, and the spectator no longer actively participates in the creation of the play, or in the realization of its goals.

Rubén Blades, as his name suggests, is working through and against such violence, in an attempt to reclaim the power invested in the art of performing, be it a song or a whole play, beyond film or previously recorded musicals. Precisely this ever-so-changing quality of what takes place on stage becomes Blades' strategic critique. It seems that in resuscitating characters, the author would be performing a literal form of prosopopoeia, also keeping in tradition with Epic theatre in which ideas are performed, abstractions therefore taking on the embodiment of a miasma of signs. An intriguing shift takes place from a semiotic and allegorical point of view. Whereas Pedro Navaja embodied thievery and the destructive nature of authority and even dictatorship imposed upon a paralyzed nation, due to Blades' disgust for what Cabrera has done with *his* creation, the act of resuscitating Pedro transforms him from a negative image to a positively manipulated figure. He now embodies intellectual property and, ironically, the positive authority of the author-performer, who—similar to Pedro Navaja himself—had long been proclaimed dead, at least since Roland Barthes.

Conclusion

If human beings are animals of prey as Gay suggests, then the social injustices of hierarchical abuse, of corruption and thirst for power, create an interconnected dialogue among many countries and regions that have suffered under dictatorships and political regimes. By adopting similar performance concepts to those of Brecht, and in combining a narrativized cerebral salsa with popular music and dance steps, Blades goes beyond a critical karaoke or ventriloquist regurgitation of what has already been said and overstated. In fact, he builds yet another layer to the societal inequalities foraged by Gay and Brecht, by depicting women as both the victims and means of salvation, adopting a feminist point of view that goes beyond simply labelling the woman as victim. She is an emblem of the country, a martyr suffering to feed herself and perhaps her children in a nation where the only pecuniary circulation is on the corner of a street. Blades' goal is not only to bring salsa back to its roots, but also to push it beyond superficial language devoid of any stimulating power and meaning, whether

political, ideological or spiritual. What remains unanswered, however, is where the line may be drawn between the prized hypotext and the hypertext, its transformed, stolen and re-contextualized counterpart. That Blades would have been furious with other artists for adapting a character that was never fully his to begin with merits further analysis. Nonetheless, in an attempt to further understand the breadth of adaptable power in Gay's work—one can only imagine how he might feel about the adaptability of his play—it would be fruitful to shift the readings and analyses from a diachronic reading, as I have done, to a synchronic one, including Alfonso Priego Jr.'s and Cabrera's orchestrations, since "multiple versions exist laterally, not vertically," allowing for a dialogue to establish between those artists who chose *The Beggar's Opera* and *The Threepenny Opera* either as a parodic means to critique a specific historical context, or to pay homage to a pioneering text (Hutcheon xiii).

Notes

1. According to Gérard Genette and his theories on transtextuality, or the "textual transcendence of text," the hypotext is the basis upon which the hypertext exists: in this case, "Pedro Navaja" is the hypertext and *The Beggar's Opera*, *The Threepenny Opera* and more specifically the song "Mack the Knife," are its hypotexts (9).

2. The study at hand will examine Blades' song in relation to the English version of "Mack the Knife." Due to length, the question of translation – specifically, reading Brecht in German or in English – will not be addressed in this essay.

3. This quotation is Linda Hutcheon's echoing of Walter Benjamin.

4. It seems appropriate to analyse a text from the same point of view that nurtured its existence. This is to say that Rubén Blades was aware of Brechtian theory and it would have therefore explicitly nurtured his own creations.

5. Frank Figueroa: <http://www.maestravida.com/characters.html>

6. The term “attribute” is relative to Peircean semiotics. For Peirce, “icons,” a specific form of the sign, are defined according to their attributes. In hagiography, for example, religious icons are recognized thanks to certain objects and attributes peculiar to them, an initial form of educating the illiterate in the realm of the religious. Peircean “attributes,” although more props than actions, are not completely unlike Brecht’s “quotable gestures.” In fact, such an analogy merits a closer look at Brechtian *Gestus* alongside Peircean semiotics.

7. The paternal last name, that is.

8. A hybrid form of New York and Puerto Rican influences.

9. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/music/artists/f050673a-dfb3-4200-b057-bf78213de36c>

10. Frank Figueroa: <http://www.maestravida.com/characters.html>

The clave rhythm is a five stroke rhythm, omnipresent in Afro-Cuban music and represents the guiding beat in all salsa songs.

11. *Tremendista* novels participate in a 1940s movement where the plot violently describes the hyperbolically dismembered, psychologically distraught and abused characters, all societal remnants of a post-war nation.

12. “A car moves slowly through the avenue / it has no marks but everyone knows it’s the police.”

13. “A .38 special “Smith & Wesson”/ that she keeps always, to rid her from all evil.”

14. De Hollanda bases his neologism on a hybridized Portuguese and English word, combining the Portuguese “folklore” with an English suffix.

15. The etymology of *pregon* is “prayer.”

16. Frank Figueroa: <http://www.maestravida.com/characters.html>

17. Translation: “Delinquent fisherman, by throwing a hook in the water, instead of a sardine, you caught a shark.” My translation.

18. “As in a Kafka novel, the drunkard turned the corner and ran” (My translation).

19. “Ghetto of thugs, be careful on the curb, take care my buddy, he who does not run, flies...”

20. The use of *auctoritas* in Latin is twofold. It refers to a particular prestige and influence an individual had in Roman society. Also, etymologically, it recalls that “author” comes from “to augment” (as theorized by linguist Émile Benveniste), thus adding yet another layer to the notion of adaptability, authorship and ownership of a particular text or creation. The term pushes the ambiguities of adaptation further, given that, to increase or add on, is not qualitative, but quantitative.

Works Cited

Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*. Trans. Harry Zohn. Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1973. Print

Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project*. Trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge: HUP, 2002. Print

Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*. New York: Oxford University Press USA, 1997 [1973]. Print

Böker, Uwe, Ines Detmers and Anna-Christina Giannopoulos. *John Gay’s The Beggar’s Opera 1728-2004: Adaptations and Re-Writings*. New York: Rodopi, 2006. Print

Brecht, Bertolt. *The Threepenny Opera*. Trans. Desmond Vesey. New York: Grove Press, 1964. Print

Dabydeen, David. “Eighteenth-Century English Literature on Commerce and Slavery”. In: *The Black Presence in English Literature*. David Dabydeen (ed.). Manchester: MUP. (1985): 26-49. Print

Dharwadker, Aparna. "John Gay, Bertolt Brecht, and Postcolonial Antinationalisms." *Modern Drama*, 38 (1995): 4-21. Print

Ferran, Peter W. "The *Threepenny* Songs: Cabaret and Lyrical *Gestus*." *Theater*. Vol. 30.2. Fall (2000): 50-21. Print

Figuerola, Frank M. "Rubén Blades and His Cast of Characters." <http://www.maestravida.com/characters.html>, January 14, 2011. Electronic

Fischer-Lichte, Erika. *The Semiotics of Theater*. Trans. Jeremy Gaines and Doris L. Jones. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1992. Print

Gay, John. *The Beggar's Opera*. New York: Dover Publications, 1999. Print

Genette, Gérard. *Palimpsestes: la littérature au second degré*. Paris: seuil, 1982. Print

Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Adaptation*. New York: Routledge, 2006. Print

Kidson, Frank. *The Beggar's Opera. Its Predecessors and Successors*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922. Print

Oesmann, Astrid. *Staging History: Brecht's Social Concepts of Ideology*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2005. Print

Riffaterre, Michael. « La signifiante du poème ». *Sémiotique de la poésie*. Trad. Jean-Jacques Thomas. Paris: Éditions du Seuil: (1983). 11-36. Print

"Rubén Blades," BBC Music biographies: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/music/artists/f050673a-dfb3-4200-b057-bf78213de36c>, January 14, 2011. Electronic

Bio

Antonio Viselli is a doctoral candidate at the Centre for Comparative Literature at the University of Toronto. His primary area of interest focuses on musical aesthetics in literature, namely the "fugue" in French Symbolism and European Modernism. Antonio completed a Masters in Europe entitled "Master Mundus: Crossways in European Humanities," with degrees from the University of Perpignan (France), Bergamo (Italy) and St. Andrews (Scotland).

Bio

Antonio Viselli est candidat au doctorat au Centre de littérature comparée de l'Université de Toronto. Il s'intéresse principalement à l'esthétique musicale dans la littérature, en particulier à la fugue dans le cadre du symbolisme français et du modernisme européen. Son mémoire intitulé « *Master Mundus: Crossways in European Humanities* » est le résultat d'un diplôme conjoint de l'Université de Perpignan (France), celle de Bergamo (Italie) et de l'université de St. Andrews (Ecosse).







STEALING_{OR} STEELING_{THE} IMAGE? THE FAILED BRANDING OF THE GUERRILLERO HEROICO IMAGE OF CHE GUEVARA

MARIA-CAROLINA CAMBRE, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Abstract

This article traces the ongoing tension between those who would characterize Alberto Korda's famous image of Che Guevara, *The Guerrillero Heroico*, as a brand, trademark or logo, and those who insist it is a political/cultural icon and non-commercial and that these categories are mutually exclusive. The questions of whether the image has been emptied of political content, and the debate around the copyrighting of an image considered by many to be in the public domain and a cultural icon are explored. The long-lasting struggle over the meanings and collective memories associated with this image indicate the possibility that both processes of commodification and radicalization of the image of Che Guevara can coexist. Using the literature on consumer research to engage definitions of branding as a commercially geared venture, this article teases out the problematics of different uses of the photograph and its derivatives, and highlights ambiguities around the notions of creation and authorship. After examining this image's role within Cuba, Cuban use outside of Cuba, and its commercial and non-commercial uses by non-Cubans, I conclude that attempts at branding products with this particular image fail, and therefore its copyrighting is irrelevant.

Résumé

Cet article suit la trace historique d'une tension persistante autour de la photo célèbre de Che Guevara intitulée « *Guerrillero Heroico* » et prise par Alberto Korda. Cette tension prend place entre ceux qui la caractérisent comme une marque déposée ou un logo et ceux qui insistent sur sa valeur de symbole politique et culturel non-commercial. Ces catégories s'excluent mutuellement. Sont examinés la lutte pour les droits de propriété intellectuelle de cette image que beaucoup considèrent comme un symbole culturel du domaine public, ainsi que la possibilité que cette image ait perdu sa valeur politique. La persistance de ce débat sur les significations et les formes de mémoires collectives qu'on y associe indiquent la possibilité que le processus de marchandisation peut coexister avec celui de radicalisation en ce qui la concerne. Cet article fait ressortir le problème de la variété des emplois d'une image et de ses dérivés, en même temps qu'il souligne les ambiguïtés autour des concepts de création et de paternité en utilisant des études sur la consommation. Ayant évalué le rôle de cette image à l'intérieur des frontières de Cuba, son emploi par les cubains à l'extérieur du pays, ainsi que ses emplois commercial et non-commercial par les autres, je conclus que la commercialisation de cette image est vouée à l'échec et qu'il est inutile de rechercher ces droits de propriété intellectuelle.

So join the struggle while you may

The revolution is just a t-shirt away
Waiting For The Great Leap Forwards
Billy Bragg

El derecho de autor realmente no tiene razón de ser.
Yo no tengo derechos. Al contrario, tengo deberes!
Jean-Luc Godard
(quoted by Lañamme and Kaganski)



Background

Through an examination of the controversies surrounding the use of the *Guerrillero Heroico*, the famous Che Guevara photograph taken in March 1960 by Alberto Díaz Gutiérrez (familiarily known as Korda), in a Cuban context within and outside of Cuba, and finally the non-Cuban context, I examine some of the appropriations of and discourses traversing this image in order to illuminate its being located, or dislocated as the case may be, as a brand, commercial product, artwork and/or cultural artefact. Since its first publication the picture has inspired artists² around the world to modify and render it in a myriad of media and styles.³ However, when Smirnoff's UK advertising agency wanted to use the image to sell vodka in 1999, Korda, who had made no issue with previous iterations, sued them. "The ads depicted Che's face adorned with a pattern of hammers and chilli-pepper sickles, not to foster communist consciousness in a creative redeployment of commodity fetishism, but simply to promote a new spice line of Smirnoff vodka" (Hernandez-Reguant 257). The company settled out of court and gave Korda a significant sum that he promptly donated to a hospital in Cuba. Regardless of the fame and accompanying profit potential from this photograph, Korda refused to endorse its commercialization or gain financially. Korda claimed using Che's image for selling vodka was a "slur on his [Guevara's] name" emphasizing that Che "never drank himself, was not a drunk, and [that] drink should not be associated with his immortal memory" (Sridhar).

After the international lawsuit Korda's rights as the author were recognized publicly and spokespeople for many media conglomerates in Europe and the United States saw it as an unprecedented move on the part of the Cuban government towards capitalism. The debate that had been bubbling under the surface for decades finally spilled onto mainstream headlines:

The *Times* of London wryly recast this development as if it were the Argentine revolutionary's own long and hard fought victory... 'After 40 Years, Che Beats Forces of Capitalism' (Bird 2000). CNN.com likewise dramatized the event, but with a slightly

less ironic, and more-to-the-point, headline: 'Social Justice, Sí. Vodka Advertisements, No.' (Hernandez-Reguant 256)

While the *Times* of London and CNN position the use of copyright in this case as distinctly non-commercial, *Wall Street Journal* correspondent Michael Casey takes the opposite stance. Casey, who wrote the only book-length English language (at the time) examination of Korda's *Guerrillero Heroico* comments, "Che had not beaten capitalism; he had joined it" (313) and dismisses the photograph, "copyright number VA-1-276-975," as no more than "a nine-character alphanumeric code" (337). In a more bizarre twist, Larson and Lizardo cite Alvaro Vargas Llosa calling the image of Guevara the "quintessential brand of *capitalism*" (426 my emphasis). Yet literature on this particular photograph and its subsequent renderings does not reveal evidence attesting to the purchasing of Guevara-sporting products merely in order to champion capitalism.

A historical perspective reveals that portraits of Guevara have tended to surface at key political moments. The *New York Times* of May 02, 1961 runs the headline "Castro Rules Out Elections in Cuba" (A2) on the first page with a large feature image. Apparently for May Day celebrations in 1961, before Guevara's death, "portraits of Karl Marx, Raul Castro, the Minister of Armed Forces, and Maj. Ernesto Guevara...[were] being carried by athletes in parade in Havana" (*New York Times* 1961, also noted in Larson and Lizardo 2007). This was not the *Guerrillero Heroico* but an official portrait of the sort often trotted out for political marches, and marking Guevara's face as part of the official visual equipment of the new government, without singling out his image in any special way.

With respect to the *Guerrillero Heroico*, the Cuban context is unique. After the news of Guevara's death, on Monday the 16th of October 1967,⁴ the *Granma* newspaper, official organ of the Communist Party in Cuba, printed a special edition dedicated to Che Guevara. The cover, a full-page image of Korda's *Guerrillero Heroico*, was so well received that it was

reprinted the next day. On the night of the 18th, in the Plaza de la Revolución the same picture was hung as the background for the public stage from which Fidel Castro would say Guevara's eulogy.⁵ I learned of the impact of Castro's public eulogy through a series of in-depth online interviews (2009-2011) with Reinaldo Morales Campos, a Cuban historian who has studied political poster, propaganda and advertising history for over 30 years and has published in Spanish, English, French and German.⁶ Campos related how the eulogy extolling Guevara's intelligence, courage, and human sensibility as model revolutionary figure had the effect of fusing with Korda's picture in the minds of those who witnessed the event and "led to the image being taken up as an effigy of the Guerrillero Heroico to highlight his image worldwide" (personal communication).

After Feltrinelli's publication of Guevara's *Bolivian Diaries* in early 1968 with the *Guerrillero Heroico* on the cover and about a million posters promoting the book, there was a global explosion of reproductions, often in the form of protest posters. Larson and Lizardo observe that, "the *New York Times* repeatedly connected Che to Marxist social movements in Europe and the Americas" (428) around this time. In the 1960s, a bedroom "without a poster of Che Guevara was hardly furnished at all" (Storey 88). Jorge R Bermudez suggests a global transcendence of the *Guerrillero Heroico* signaling its use in the memorable days of the Parisian barricades in May 1968, in the slaughter of Mexican students in Tlatelolco, in clashes in Milan, during the Prague Spring uprising, and in youth protests in the USA against the Vietnam War.

Larson and Lizardo mark a significant peak of visibility in the USA at the time Guevara's remains were revealed in Bolivia in 1997. Tracing the discourses around Guevara in Spain and the United States from 1955-2006, they describe a tonal shift in the *New York Times*' headlines. For example the title, "From Rebel to Pop Icon" in the Arts Pages moves towards emphasizing the photograph's commercial quality by honing in on its accompaniment by a wave of products sporting the image (428). In this article, Doreen Carvajal interviews

Jim Fleischer of Fischer Skis who were reproducing Che's image on their promotional materials even while dissociating themselves from the man himself: "We felt that the Che image - just the icon and not the man's doings - represented what we wanted: revolution, extreme change" (*New York Times* C11). Somewhat confusingly, Carvajal also cites José Borges, a spokesman for the Cuban Mission to the United Nations: "We have always been against any commercial use of his image... one thing is to promote his image and his example, and another thing is to use it as a way to get more money" (*New York Times* C11).

Oddly Larson and Lizardo (2007) follow with what they position as the *New York Times* final words on the matter: "In light of this mountain of damning evidence, the *New York Times* concluded, In Europe and the United States, Che's image owes its commercial appeal to the absence of political content" (1997b, Tina Rosenberg). Making this statement look as if it is a conclusion is misleading because first, it is taken from a different article than the one they were using, and second, it is not a conclusion. Rather, it is one of the opening paragraphs in Tina Rosenberg's article "The World Resurrects Che," written months later on July 20, (E14) and followed by a letter to the editor, written in response on that very day, from a reader named David Silver entitled "Would Che have Turned Capitalist? Never!" (*New York Times* A20). Ironically, faces with this so-called "mountain of damning evidence" Silver (1997) protests: "Tina Rosenberg jumps to an unwarranted conclusion" (A20) grounding his claim with a citation from one of Guevara's letters to the editor of *Marcha*, a Uruguayan weekly newspaper. Silver (1997) underlines Guevara's stress on the danger of bourgeois ideology and its seductive appeal to oppressed and exploited people: "in capitalist society man is controlled by a pitiless law usually beyond his comprehension. The alienated human specimen is tied to society as a whole by an individual umbilical cord: the law of value" (A20). Epitomized by this snapshot of exchanges published in the *New York Times*, the status of the meaning, memory and value of Che Guevara's image appears to be hotly contested.

The Politics of Branding

More often than not, copyright law's purpose is to protect the author's right to obtain commercial benefit from work,⁷ but we know this was not Korda's goal. By having potential users of the image ask permission before availing themselves of it, copyright laws also safeguard an author's general right to control how a work is utilized. Can it be assumed that copyrighting means the image is automatically pressed into commercial service? Recent developments in legalities do not allow its meaning, value, and usage to be summed up so simply. For example, there are multitudinous artistic and vernacular renderings of the *Guerrillero Heroico* that Korda or his estate (managed by his daughter Diana Díaz) do *not* prosecute or pursue. Evidently, "what it [the image] has come to mean has been the subject of much speculation" (Poyner 34). Perhaps copyright laws are being applied in an unconventional way, a way that exceeds the frames and models of analysis usually applied through the Berne Convention and the multitude of nation-specific laws. Perhaps, we can examine the problematics of how different people take up the image, as well as how the image itself invokes and provokes action, to better understand the dynamics of appropriation.

The notions of brand, trademark and logo are often bandied about interchangeably with respect to the *Guerrillero Heroico* by those who would see its copyrighting as an appropriation of the image as a 'mark' of something. For the purposes of this article, I refer to logo as a graphic, and logotype as the lettering/ words: together logo and logotype form a trademark following the legal discourse. Brand then, refers to the entire package of graphics, name, messaging and communications, visual identity, marketing strategies, and individual experiences with the business, product or service. Robert E. Moore provides some definitional guidelines for understanding exactly what a brand, or what the essential ingredients for considering something a brand might be. According to Moore, "brands are often defined as a form of protection: they protect the consumer from counterfeit goods, and they protect the producer from unfair competition." Additionally, he observes that in an era where branding processes seem

to encompass far more than products and services, and that all sorts of experiences, events, leaders, nations and even wars are being branded: "the absence from the academic literature of any semiotically sophisticated and ethnographically rich understanding of brands is downright shocking" (332). His article thoroughly addresses this lack, and provides a thoughtful sounding board to which I will periodically return to address some of the confusion around the *Guerrillero Heroico*.

According to one strategist, "if brand names did not exist there would be no trustworthy marketplace" (Moore 338). One of the key elements of a brand has to do with its trustworthiness or credibility. To elaborate, Moore turns to David Aaker, one of the most heavily cited authors in the brand strategy literature, who tells us that a brand is:

A distinguished name and/or symbol ... intended to identify the goods or services ... and to differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors. A brand thus signals to the customer the source of the product, and protects both the customer and the producer from competitors who would attempt to provide products that appear to be identical (qtd. in Moore 338).

Refining the definition of 'brand,' Moore calls it "a name and a logo, joined to a set of regimented associations, with source-identifying indexicals" and concludes: "a brand is a promise" (339). Accordingly, for the Coca-Cola company, we can understand the Polar Bear, Santa Claus, the wavy font type, the specific tone of red, team sponsorships, prizes and contests, songs like "I'd like to teach the world to sing" and slogans such as; "The real thing," "Always," "Open happiness," and "Enjoy" and even the traditional shape of the bottle to all be part of the brand designed to connect individuals to one company. The collection of elements is calculated by branding experts, with the product and consistent tradition of the one company in mind, aiming to make clear links in consumers' minds.

What then would be the characteristics by which one might recognize Korda's Che image as a brand? More often than not the long hair, beard, star, beret, and eyes looking above and beyond the viewer, bomber jacket or a combination of all or some of these are featured by those who render the image to trigger recognition. One might say it is regularly linked to the notions of dissent, rebellion, revolution, youth, as well as non-conformity, anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism. But these notions lead us to no one place or group or even agreement on the meaning of an idea. Since many people, especially in Canada and the United States do not know who Guevara is or where he is from, or where or when the original photograph was taken, we have situations where an image is unmoored often from its human and historical source. Context is key. Yet, a crucial characteristic of a brand has precisely been identified as a credible and trustworthy connection to one source. This source is not necessarily the brand's designer rather it is most often the corporation whose product it has been designed to promote, and with which it is inextricably linked. One might imagine the multitudinous variations and interpretations as endless iterations of the original photograph, like a meme, which could take the position of a source. But another complication exists; a photograph is an index with a contiguous relationship to the source, the man himself.

Following this line of thinking then, the set of all these images would constitute the brand for the original source or photograph and so it might look like a ship whose anchor has lodged itself at the base of its own hull, in a self-referential semiotic circuit. But this is not the case because the image does not exist in a hermetically sealed closed sign system. Rather, it is part of some "...collective equipment that everyone is in a position to use, not in order to be subjected to their authority but as tools to probe the contemporary world" (Bourriaud 9). Each of the image's iterations also simultaneously bears the marks of the particular artist/designer and thus references the specific time, place, event or person that has intersected with the image in that rendering. This would seem to make the *Guerrillero Heroico* the actual antithesis of a brand if we accept Michael Casey's account of the

logic of brand protection where: "Large companies are sticklers for the integrity of their brands. They worry about the size, colour, dimensions, and appropriate uses of their corporate logo... No McDonald's franchisee would ever be allowed to put up a blue Golden Arches sign" (334). Since "the most important characteristic of a brand is its credibility" (Erdem & Swait 192), the protection of brands is serious business.⁸

Another aspect of branding to consider is the manner in which a group or corporation enacts their branding strategy. Invariably, they orchestrate the time and place of the "launch" in a hierarchical mass-produced fashion. Moore explains:

In the process of producing brands, branding professionals attempt to capture, and turn to their advantage, a set of fairly recondite—even, ineffable—facts about how brands circulate in society, even as they try to create the conditions that allow brands to circulate. So circulation is fundamentally part of the production process, even if not quantifiably so. The use of ethnographic methods represents an effort to uncover and understand likely patterns of circulation and consumption, in advance of production, every bit as much as efforts to develop the 'brand personality' are attempts further to define them. (352)

Because a company's products combine both tangible and intangible features, "value no longer inheres in the commodity itself as a tangible thing; rather, value inheres in something else, something less tangible: the aura, the simulacrum, the reproduction (as opposed to the original), the brand" (Moore 331). The immaterial aspects are unstable: they are open to interpretation and can shift with time and circumstance. Therefore, corporations go to great pains to protect the integrity of their brand names with complicated policy architectures because brands are inherently vulnerable. For example, when golf professional Tiger Woods was caught in an adultery scandal in 2009, Gatorade and other private enterprises stopped endorsing him and distanced themselves⁹ because as one branding expert noted, the

Woods brand “was founded upon prestige, mystique... and an aura of elusive untouchability,” but now “we all suddenly know more about his bottom-feeding behavior than we ever cared to” (Elliott 2010). We learn, in fact, that he was actually excessively touchable. Woods had been an image of prowess based on precision, integrity, and clarity of focus that metaphorically reflected a clear conscience. Woods had compromised that image with contradictory behaviour. In this scenario, those who attribute the amount of an enterprise’s private market value in part to its name reevaluated the choice to endorse an athlete that might negatively impact the name, or more crucially, its market value.

The need to protect and control the perception of a brand’s “name” shows not only the existence of inherent vulnerability to undesirable interpretations, but also that branding strategy is actually about deciding on a limited set of predetermined meanings deemed acceptable for a brand. In other words a branded product is:

... partly a thing, and partly language. The brand name functions as a ‘rigid designator’ in their terminology of Kripke (1972): it communicates information about the source, producer, and/or type of thing, and can provide quite rich sociocultural and ideological ‘captioning’ for the object (including by ‘keying’ it to definable activities) through the radical use of ‘condensation symbolism’ (Sapir, 1949 [1929]).” (Moore 334)

Simply put, terms like: rigid designator, ideological caption, or condensation symbolism describe the process of linking an object to a fiction designed to create a desire to consume them both, as J. B. Twitchell acknowledges in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, “a brand is simply a story attached to a manufactured object” (484). With its ultimate goal of selling products and augmenting commercial value, branding is a kind of planning, control, and action requires a centralized and concerted effort that is nonexistent in the case of the *Guerrillero Heroico*. But at the very core of this process is the manipulation of cultural sensibilities. Branding isn’t just the unloading of stories on manufactured

products but also the systematic suturing of cultural texts into commercial products. Patronizing certain products becomes a vicarious way of being part of the desirable realm of socially sanctioned values.

Che’s image emerged somewhat organically, spontaneously and largely low-tech as in the case of street art and murals, outside of Cuba and more intentionally, through the state apparatus, within Cuba. The effervescing of the image here and there through different media and created by different hands almost simultaneously challenges the establishment of a clear line tracing its provenance, and perhaps that is part of its appeal. Still, this image has a very different history within Cuba than it does outside of Cuba; consequently, I examine them separately.

Within Cuba

One of the most relentlessly strident critiques of the *Guerrillero Heroico*’s uses in Cuba is contained in Michael Casey’s *Che’s Afterlife: The Legacy of an Image*. Marshalling a carnival of opinions, anecdotes and interviews for support, Casey’s overriding thrust is that the *Guerrillero Heroico* is the “quintessential capitalist brand” (30). However, in a scholarly and detailed book review, historian Maurice Isserman observes Casey’s “book would have benefited greatly from a sturdier historical frame” and that he “seems overly enamored with the language of advertising and consumption” (Isserman). Casey’s book provides detailed anecdotal accounts and personal interviews in Cuba, Argentina, Venezuela, Bolivia and Miami¹⁰ as well as a great deal of information on Korda himself that are worth addressing despite the historical inaccuracies that perforate his efforts to position Che Guevara as solely a socially constructed icon.

From the beginning, Casey positions the Cuban revolution as “a top-selling cultural product, an international brand, and....its ultimate expression: the Che-T shirt” (88). In a puzzling shift however he also writes: “Che was already available in 1968 in a wide variety of political brands” (129). Together these statements seem nonsensical: that the Cuban revolution is a brand represented by a

Che T-shirt but that Che is simultaneously a variety of different political brands. If we make note of the brand literature alone, this would be at odds with the very *raison d'être* of branding. The representing of “different political brands” clouds our understanding of what Che represents, thus compromising clarity and credibility. Erdem and Swait’s study establishes that, “the clarity (i.e., lack of ambiguity) of the product information contained in a brand is an antecedent to brand credibility” (192). It would seem the image is behaving in a way that is difficult to commercialize according to a brand strategy, and therefore difficult to categorize simplistically as a brand.

Casey’s ahistoricism begs the question of history’s relevance, and consequently politics’ relevance for the so-called brand of the *Guerrillero Heroico* making it problematic for him to claim historical and political grounds for the image’s prominence in the Cuban public’s imaginary. His claim that the “Korda image launched into public consciousness in Cuba, where it was in effect employed as a logo or brand for Castro’s PR campaign” (93), and assumption that the “general public, which had not seen a single photograph of Che since his mysterious disappearance in April 1965, was now shown an image” (186) are swiftly debunked by Isserman:

Mainstream American media, as well as the radical press, had kept Che’s name and face in the public eye for years: from his days as Castro’s sidekick, to his disappearance from view in Cuba in 1965, to his life as an international man of mystery until October 9, 1967.

So how did this myth of the *Guerrillero Heroico* as brand for Castro and Cuba arise? What happened in Cuba in the decades prior to the copyright lawsuit? First, the year 1968 was officially declared the year of the *Guerrillero Heroico* in Cuba to memorialize Guevara. Artists and designers in Cuba generated numerous works representing Che and the revolution to commemorate the first anniversary of Guevara’s assassination. At the same time, artists were developing techniques and styles

for poster art and evolving the unique genre of Cuban poster art. In those years Cuban designers were moving away from influences of advertising and realism and towards creative interpretation as an artistic vanguard influenced by pop art, art deco and other Japanese and North American art movements.

The international political context included large movements mobilizing against wars, dictatorships in Latin America and Africa, colonialism and the accompanying assassinations of important leftist leaders around the world. All of these movements against imperialist power and people fighting for social progress flowed into each other. This context created a creative environment where Korda’s image became a malleable tool to be contextualized artistically in order to comment on history or current events, and produce salient political observations.

The *Guerrillero Heroico* quickly became a glyph in the exploration of collective memory by Cuban artists. Larson & Lizardo describe collective memories as “traces of the past remembered and reenacted in the present, periodically reinvigorated in commemorations, celebrations, poetry, images, and other symbolic displays” (431). In their study, they analyze how memories of Che Guevara are produced after interviewing 3000 Spaniards across social, economic and generational lines between 1991 and 1993. Larson & Lizardo conclude that, “Instead of his memory falling victim to trivialization by commodification... remembering Che Guevara has become a highly structured collective act of distinction” (431).

The artistic and political use of the image run counter to a branding effort by their very nature as non-commoditized and favorable stance toward appropriation for further artistic comment. Billboards, signs and all kinds of advertising had gradually disappeared from the Cuban public sphere under Castro’s government from 1961 onwards. The focus in post-revolution Cuba shifted from celebrating the qualities of products and their consumption, to political state-run messaging explicitly designated as informative and educational. As part of

the political signage, Che's image appears representing the Communist party, announcements regarding social works, and on the occasions of the anniversary of his death or other commemorative events. His face thus became a representation of the revolution accruing meanings on a specific register congruent with Guevara's own stance and prior governmental position. Additionally Cuban institutions (like the health system) with relations abroad used it to express messages of solidarity with what they perceived as similar revolutionary causes (Campos, personal communication). That is, an institutional use of the image for certain kinds of communication is politically but not commercially motivated. In Castro's Cuba, the image behaved in a metonymic, rather than metaphoric manner. Its relationship to the prototype was factually similar (icon) and contiguous (index), rather than imputed (symbol).¹¹

Campos (personal communication) recalls that 1985 onward saw a resurgence of limited advertising activities in Cuba. In an effort to manage foreign firms and entities accustomed to publicity campaigns and advertising norms authorized to operate in Cuba, and Cuba established protective paternal policies to regulate the iconography of women and children, and policies prohibiting the use of national symbols, revolutionary martyrs and heroes. Campos provides this background to show that the Cuban government's use of the graphic image of Che was devoid of commercial interests. Political signage used by organizations are not sold, as Campos notes, but distributed through internal structures to fulfill social functions. However much one might push this as a branding effort, the image use in this case does not fulfill the requirements (personal communication).

According to Campos, after 1992, following the USSR's dissolution, which caused an economic crisis that annihilated 85% of Cuba's trade, the Cuban graphic industry was paralyzed due to lack of funds, and the sale of political posters to tourists and foreigners was initiated (personal communication). The sales included Korda's image of Guevara primarily as a cost recovery effort to keep people employed. Interestingly, that

commercialization and sale was not extended to the Cuban public. In 1994, many people that thought the Cuban revolution had come to its end took advantage of the crisis, to publish and profit from reproductions of signs and posters with emblematic images of Che and of the revolution without crediting artists or the authorizing institutions. These historical events can be seen as forerunners to the copyright lawsuit that Korda eventually launched.

To make matters worse for the island, the US government saw the crisis as an opportunity to finish off the Cuban economy and bring down President Castro. On an initiative by Robert Torricelli, member of the US House of Representatives, The *Torricelli Act* was enacted in 1992. This act intensified the harshness of the economic blockade on Cuba by preventing food and medicine from being shipped to Cuba.¹² An intense global solidarity movement from communities supporting Cuba emerged in response. As Cuba moved to establish ways to protect items it defined as crucial to Cuban national heritage, it installed copyright regulations for books and documents authorized to leave the country. Under these conditions, Guevara's widow Aleida Más created the *Che Guevara Studies Centre*, to house photos and documents salient to Guevara's historical legacy. For Campos, the Centre sees the prevention of the "improper use" or "for commercial ends" of the photos and posters as part of its task (personal communication). Since the *Guerrillero Heroico* is considered by Cubans to be part of their national heritage, they exercise some control over its use. The Guevara children are involved in the *Centre* and on occasion publicly criticize what they consider unscrupulous uses of the image of their father. As recently as 2008, *The Guardian* correspondent Rory Carroll wrote a piece called, "Guevara children denounce Che branding" (Saturday June 27) where Aleida Guevara "denounced the commercialization [sic] of her father's image ... 'Something that bothers me now is the appropriation of the figure of Che that has been used to make enemies from different classes. It's embarrassing.'" She added, "We don't want money, we demand respect." But Carroll is also compelled to comment on the image itself writing, "If you want to

shift more products or give your corporate image a bit of edge, the Argentine revolutionary's face and name are there to be used, like commercial gold dust" and on Cuba, "Cuba's government has used the image to promote its revolution and to rake in tourist dollars through state-run stores which sell Che paraphernalia" (*Guevara Children Denounce Che Branding* online). The appeal of any image based on Korda's *Guerrillero Heroico* is indisputable; and so far, it seems inexhaustible. But Carroll's assumption regarding the state-run stores is inaccurate unless considered within the context of a specific reaction to a historical event. Additionally, the way copyrighting is mobilized and the way different actors are involved and influencing the image's use, are not a convincing indication that the Cuban state is moving toward a wholesale commercialization of the *Guerrillero Heroico*.

Campos describes Korda's daughter, Diana Díaz, the inheritor of her father Korda's work, as having the right to protect that photograph using copyright laws (personal communication). However, even her rights are within a specific framework. Cuban copyright policy holds that when an institution pays a salary for someone to occupy a post that permits their production of a work, he or she is recognized as the creator or author but the work is property of the institution. And when a work becomes iconic or emblematic, it grows to be part of the national heritage. Campos insists Che's image retains its original symbolism in Cuba, and does not function within the nation as a commercial logo on a souvenir (personal communication). Though Hernandez-Reguant's (2008) relegates the image of Che Guevara to an "object of state worship since his death in 1967" (254) for many on the island, the claim seems debatable.

From Cuba with Love: Cubans "Exporting" Guevara's Image

Cuban institutions use the *Guerrillero Heroico* in relations abroad to express messages of solidarity in that they are acting *in the image of Che*. For example doctors sent to aid Haitians after the 2010 earthquake wore Che Guevara T-shirts. This kind of official Cuban usage is exploited by Michael Casey to situate interest

not along ideological grounds but "economic factors" (153). If we suppose someone just discovering that Cuba sends doctors and educators to developing nations might mistakenly call it a branding attempt, what kind of branding would they see it as? The presence of Cuban doctors in Bolivia in 2006 is described by Casey as a "re-brand[ing]" effort to portray Cuba "as a source of medicine and education services worldwide" (189). Yet the Cuban practice of sending doctors to hardship zones has been in place for decades (the first medical brigade of 58 doctors was sent to Algeria in 1963) and certainly does not receive sufficient press to warrant it a re-branding attempt. In fact, when Hurricane Katrina ripped through the southern United States in 2005, the Cuban government responded to the governor of Louisiana's call for aid offering

...within 48 hours 1,600 doctors, trained to deal with such catastrophes, would arrive with all the necessary equipment plus 36 tonnes of medical supplies. This offer, and another made directly to President George Bush, went unanswered. In the catastrophe at least 1,800 people, most of them poor, died for lack of aid and treatment. (Ospina)

In 2007, "Cuban doctors volunteering in Bolivia performed free cataract surgery for Mario Teran, the Bolivian army sergeant who killed the legendary guerrilla leader Ernesto "Che" Guevara in captivity" (AAP *Brisbane Times*). While Casey observed Cuban doctors wearing Che t-shirts in Bolivia, he failed to ask them why they did so. After all, Che Guevara was also a doctor. With all the focus on the image as commercial, it may benefit us to observe the *anti-capitalist* effect of Cuba's 25,000 volunteer doctors that by March 2006 were working in 68 nations. "This is more than even the World Health Organisation can deploy, while Médecins Sans Frontières sent only 2,040 doctors and nurses abroad in 2003, and 2,290 in 2004" (Ospina *Le Monde*). The message of free medical care is not lost on those who might otherwise not see a doctor in their entire lives. And visually, those people witness Cuban doctors acting in and through the image of Che (on their shirts), layering meanings onto it that are salient

to their daily lives. It is for good reason that: “The medical associations are afraid that if the Cuban medics bring down prices or even offer some services free, medical treatment will cease to be a profitable, elitist service” (Ospina). If this is a branding effort, then it works to undermine capitalism itself, of which perhaps Guevara would approve. The practice has been sustained long term quietly saving many lives.¹³ I have belaboured many details to show clearly how “branding” language fails to accurately depict the social and cultural impact of this image.

It is misleading to conflate Cuban use of the image in Bolivia with Bolivian appropriations but the way the discourse is mobilized is nevertheless useful to examine. For example, Bolivian salesmen like Fernando Porras use the Guevara image on all kinds of paraphernalia to target his market of 16-20 year olds (Casey 211). In Bolivia, President Evo Morales’ government uses this Guevara image politically to link with notions of Cuban independence but also to remind its citizens of Guevara’s death in Bolivia and the reasons behind it. For Casey, Porras’ “shameless commercial exploitation” is tantamount to the Bolivian government’s image use: “Porras might have been exploiting Che to sell rum and cola, but Morales and his supporters were using him to sell ideas” (213). He concludes, “what we find is the same symbol representing contradicting brands” (213). This statement no longer positions the image as a brand, reducing it instead to an ingredient, like the logo or symbol. But





the same symbol *cannot* represent contradicting brands and still be viable. Therefore, Casey's readers are presented with a false analogy, that is, two cases pressed into service in a simplified and misleading parallel, yet not sufficiently parallel for readers to accept a claim of connection between them. The confusion that can result from such entwining and contradictory narratives might indicate that part of what is required in our image saturated societies is a more nuanced language to describe what is happening on the visual level, in other words we need more sophisticated visual semiotic literacies to decipher these discourses.

For understanding image use, Larson and Lizardo provide three frames. They state that the malleability of a memory (or an image) can be reduced in 3 ways (Olik and Robbins in L & L) First actors using the memory of Che as instrumental symbol, second a canonical or institutional use of the image, and finally the routines marking consumer goods that keep the image visible on products such as T-shirts and posters (438). All three reductions have come into play for the *Guerrillero Heroico's* use inside and outside Cuba so far, but do not indicate a convincing shift in signifying practices of authorship because the photograph and its derivatives as



movement (Eyerman and Jamison 1991:90; Jasper 1997; Zolov 1999). Furthermore, given the continued presence of posters and T-shirts bearing his image at contemporary global justice rallies (Lechner and Boli 2005: 153), it appears that Che Guevara continues to stand for the same complex set of values and causes usually associated with the ‘new social movements’ (NSMs) that emerged in the 1960s. (Larson & Lizardo 433-434)

Yet, in 1999, just before the copyright suit against Smirnoff, the flamboyant fashion designer Jean Paul Gaultier ran an ad with an artistic rendering of the *Guerrillero Heroico* sporting his brand of sunglasses. Accordingly British writer/curator Rick Poyner (2006) could glibly write: “Since the 1990s, the Korda Che has been adopted as a style icon. Madonna strikes a Che pose in a beret for the cover of her American Life album (created by trendy Paris design team M/M)...*No one seriously imagines they are attempting to bring about the downfall of capitalism.* (V & A Magazine: 39 my emphasis.)

Style icon or not, the news about trying to bring down the capitalist nation/state does not seem to have reached the FARC¹⁴ in Colombia however problematic their political program has become, nor the less violent but also armed Zapatistas¹⁵ in Mexico. Again, Larson and Lizardo’s research tells us, “Che Guevara, in stark contrast to most other major twentieth-century revolutionary figures of the left (e.g., Mao, Lenin, Trotsky) continues to be a vibrant symbol and galvanizing figure for contemporary antisystemic movements, from the Zapatista rebels in Mexico and Basque separatists in Spain to Palestinian nationalists in the Middle East” (426). They emphasize, “The Zapatistas in Mexico have flaunted images of Che on their clothes, banners, flags, and posters since 1994” (429).

Still the simultaneous phenomenon of the Korda inspired image of Che Guevara on all kinds of kitschy products like refrigerator magnets and coffee mugs, create an ironic juxtaposition to the figure of someone who fought to the death against, among other things “the hegemony

of American-style consumer capitalism” (Larson & Lizardo 426). If the image were to be considered a brand, it would be demonstrating instability, if not utter unreliability.

The professional literature on brand strategy examines different brand behaviours that might lead to some hypotheses regarding the behaviour and uses of this image. Moore examines three “insider phenomena of branding: genericide, ingredient branding, and so-called ‘viral marketing’” (336) to probe the troubled relationship between a word (brand name) and an object (product). Viral marketing is less salient because it focuses on branding services and communications through email attachments where a sender inadvertently endorses the brand advertised in their messages. Genericide and ingredient branding however, may have some conceptual traction with the case of Guevara’s image.

When a brand name becomes synonymous with a product regardless of who produces it, it becomes generic; so that the trademark is unable to carry the message producers want to communicate. Moore tells us, “*Brand* enters upon phenomenal reality as a mode of connection, of communication, between two parties” (335) when this fails it is called “genericide” because the loss of the identifying power of the name essentially kills the brand. Kleenex, for example, was once a brand, but since the word became so ubiquitous that it was used for any tissue, the trademark became insignificant.

Those clamouring for the *Guerrillero Heroico* to be considered a brand push for the image to be understood as the brand for intangible or virtual thing like the notion of rebellion. Leaving aside contradictions with the professional literature, let’s think through the genericide scenario. The image has been used widely as some designer-cool type look and at the same time adapted to so many different kinds of anti-something struggles that Robert Massari “Italian publisher, wine merchant, and head of his country’s Che Guevara Foundation” can say, “There are probably forty million in the world who have that image. And if you ask them what it means to

them, they’d all have a different answer” (Casey 336). Not only would we have a genericide in the register of historical and political events with the delinking of the image from its context (and source meaning), and genericide commercially where it cannot bring to mind any one product, but we would also have genericide in terms of its inability to consistently link to one idea.

Erdem and Swait take up Kottler’s definition of brand as a “name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them which is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or a group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors” (Erdem and Swait 191). More importantly, they emphasize the crucial roles played by brands as a factor in consumer choice (191). No *Guerrillero Heroico* brand of any particular product for a consumer to even be able to consider, or choose between, exists. Since the product is virtually irrelevant, can we consider this a classic case of genericide in the way branding strategists would classify it? Not really. It is on another register and does not make one product generic. If we consider that people do not buy products, but brands, *anything* with Che’s face on it will sell regardless of its inability to communicate the goals of a seller, so it sells but *not* as a brand.

In ingredient branding, the product rather than the name is vulnerable, “one branded product is absorbed or incorporated into another (think NutraSweet, as a branded ingredient of Diet Pepsi, or ‘Intel Inside’)” (Moore 337). Because consumers can tune in to the ingredient and consume the “host product” almost as an effect rather than a cause of their choice, the branded ingredient can lift off and adhere to other hosts thereby making the product vulnerable. Within the ingredient branding phenomenon, there is a possibility of “image transfer” (Moore 349). In other words, when paired with a leading manufacturer, “the ingredient brand takes advantage of their premium image... [and] signals that the ingredient is of a high quality” (Moore 349). Additionally, the branded ingredient can absorb the status of the host brand by association, and can subsequently pass it on to other possible host brands. Ingredient branding makes a product vulnerable

because the ingredient can just as easily attach to a competing product thus making the host product marginal and weakening its inherent perceived value in the marketplace. If the branded ingredient is transferred elsewhere, the original product could easily disappear.

Uniquely in the case of the *Guerrillero Heroico*, the ingredient is a virtual and fluid one in that it is whatever the image may represent to a given individual. The commercial rhetorical gesture of putting Che Guevara's face on a pot of lip-gloss thus shares meaning with (and gains cultural capital and power from) a broad social movement, however illegitimately. The product is more or less irrelevant, in the way we have seen for objects attached to branded ingredients and is clearly a case of unsuccessful branding. Furthermore, in this case the ingredient can behave in unpredictable ways. Kopytoff reminds us that commoditization is "best looked at as a process of becoming rather than an all-or-none state of being" (73). He adds, "extensive commoditization is not a feature of commoditization per se, but of the exchange technology...associated with it..."(73), so that the way this image of Che is mobilized has a great deal to do with its immediate context.

Durkheim held that societies needed to set aside a certain portion of their environment marking it as "sacred." Things marked by societies as sacred, such as monuments, often become so through a process of singularization where they are situated as outside the commodity sphere. A diamond, for example, becomes a crown jewel when it takes part in a regent's regalia. They can also be singularized through restriction of numbers. It is important to recall that the state of being a non-commodity, however, is not equal to being sacred. Kopytoff explains how something can be priceless by being above level or below (e.g. Manioc is not tradable). Commodities can be de-activated by becoming personalized, or terminal in that they expire and cannot continue to be exchanged, as in the case of food or services. Additionally, public opinion is against commoditizing what has publicly been marked as singular and thus sacred. African art, for example becomes "collectible" to mask the feeling from before

where it was immoral to sell it for money (Kopytoff 70-79). People also yearn for singularization as evidenced by cultures of collecting. The paradox is: "as one makes things more singular and worthy of being collected, thus more valuable and if valuable they acquire a price and become a commodity and their singularity is to that extent undermined" (Kopytoff 81).

The singularity of something is confirmed by its periodic appearance in commodity sphere: a painting by Picasso for instance "shows its 'priceless-ness' by the feeling it's worth more than the money...people feel need to 'defend' themselves against 'charge' of 'merchandising art'" (Kopytoff 83). The status of a thing is ambiguous except at actual point of sale. Through a Marxist lens, one would understand the commodity value as determined by social relations, and socially endowed with a fetishlike power unrelated to its practical worth.

If Moore is correct in saying, "Successful branding, then, is successful communication, successful in the sense that it 'secures uptake' from its interlocutors in the market" (335), then the *Guerrillero Heroico* cannot be considered successful as a brand. Some individuals may have just as many reasons *not* to buy a product with this image on it as others do who do buy the product; culture, class and ethnic identity of course come into play. Perhaps the contested terrain of this image and its progeny can be illuminated by tracing its activities as *art* and by looking at how artists appropriate and manipulate the image?

Art of Appropriation—Appropriation of Art

Copyright laws are part and parcel of institutional use of the *Guerrillero Heroico* by states and organizations for ideological purposes, and commercial use by corporations as radical chic bereft of historical memory. In a different way, these laws also bear on uses by groups like self-identified left-wing soccer supporters (such as the South Winners of Olympique de Marseille and their passionate north-south rivalry with Paris), "landless workers in Brazil (1997), striking university students in Mexico City (1999), peace activists in Italy (2002)" (Larson & Lizardo 429). Often such groups take the image as a marker of group solidarity and are usually

seen using a mass produced version of the *Guerrillero Heroico*.

The befuddled claims that this image owes its fame, wide reproduction, and distribution to its not being copyrighted are due partly to their overlooking its status as fodder for artists. These kinds of claims also ignore the historical fact that before 1976 in the United States, the term of copyright was only twenty-eight years after which the license would have to be renewed otherwise the work would become part of the public domain. Had the US Congress not changed copyright law, *Guerrillero Heroico*, along with a multitude of other works, would likely still belong in the public domain today.¹⁶

The unique situation of this photograph as the most reproduced image in the history of photography, and its copious derivatives, reveals how the creation of value in Western society is inextricable from the cultural context of a particular object. Additionally, collective memory research indicates “that the culture industry that sells his image and the antisystemic movements that revere him are emblematic of a contest over his memory” (Larson & Lizardo 447). It is important to recall that even *Time* magazine recognizes Ernesto Guevara as one of the top 100 most influential people of the 20th century; this is not a photograph of just anyone. Tension exists in every economy between forces driving toward commoditization, countered by those of cultures and individuals who discriminate, classify, compare and sacralise: they are intertwined in multiple and subtle ways, and are constantly in flux. Che Guevara’s image has not been domesticated by capitalism or the tension around it would not exist. Can we learn from what happens with the *Guerrillero Heroico* in the hands of artists and individual hand-made vernacular appropriations and figurations, borrowings or extractions, and inspirations bestowed by this image?

Artists have always appropriated or quoted ideas, techniques, approaches, colours, shapes, or a combination of these. Whether borrowing from a master to whom they were apprenticed or from a combination of inspiring images or even from a natural, environmental, or object

surrounding, the appropriation of material for artistic purposes has been widely acknowledged as standard practice. However, with the blurring of the boundaries between material and virtual objects, and shifting notions of ownership, more and more artists are being accused of stealing images and ideas. Correspondingly, the practice of policing the image-scape is also growing. Nevertheless, thanks in part to digital media, proliferation of derivative arts continues unabated. Part of this spread could be due to the unprecedented growth of “postproduction art¹⁷” in French art historian Nicolas Bourriaud’s (2005) terminology. In Romana Cohen’s interview with for *PLAZM magazine*, Cushing states, “creative appropriation is the lingua franca of activists, and there is no shame in artful reinterpretation of powerful imagery” (Cohen).

In a fascinating interview with legendary French filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard, Lañamme and Kaganski ask him whether he claims rights to his movie images. Godard responds in the negative and asserts that although many artists appropriate his images online, he does not feel robbed. He explains his position through a series of comparisons: “... Norman Mailer’s book on Henry Miller, is 80% Miller and 20% Mailer. In the sciences, no scientist pays copyright fees to use the formula developed by a colleague...in my film there is another kind of borrowing not citations simply extractions. Like an injection that takes a blood sample for analysis” (Lañamme and Kaganski).

Godard explains his appropriation of a scene from Agnès Varda’s *Les Plages d’Agnès* as artistic commentary rather than a *violation* of any kind. Reasoning that the metaphor in Varda’s film was ideal for his purposes, he re-contextualized those images: “Those images seemed perfect for what I wanted to do...It was exactly what I wanted to express. So I grabbed the images because they already existed” (Lañamme and Kaganski).

For Godard then, as is the case for many artists, the Varda scene was simply viewed as pre-existing material that he was free to use artistically. His philosophy is revealing: “I do not believe in the concept of *work*. There

are works, there are some new, but the work as a whole, the great work, is something that does not interest me. I prefer to talk of a road” (Lañamme and Kaganski). The processual, unfinished nature of Godard’s view of his art leads him to view his experiences of the *works* of others as part of a living mental, spiritual or emotional nourishment through his incorporating, consuming, digesting and changing others’ creations in order to come up with a layered, nuanced and allusive piece that participates in additional conversations, a polyphonic approach. Perhaps this kind of “stealing” is behind Pablo Picasso’s long misunderstood platitude, “*Good artists copy, great artists steal.*” In other words, it is not simply about adopting ideas from others, or even of appropriating aesthetic flourishes and stylings practiced by master artists. Rather, the zone of activity is one where the *Guerrillero Heroico* in this case, inhabits different renderings and works as part of the artists’ visual vocabulary and commentary through creative artifice on a political or social idea. The “stealing” of this image, allows it to both participate in salient conversations, and add its own intonation.

However, there is a code of behavior amongst artists, particularly those working in political ways. Part of the



concern artists such as Mark Vallen voice, is that with the soaring use, reuse and expropriation of images, the “relentless mining and distortion of history will turn out to be detrimental for art, leaving it hollowed-out and meaningless in the process” (Cohen). As we have noted, this is similar to debates around the *Guerrillero Heroico*. Vallen and other artist/activists such as Lincoln Cushing, Josh MacPhee, and Favianna Rodriguez have publicly discussed the nature of plagiarism vis-à-vis subvertisement and parody. Cushing expresses the complex unwritten understanding between artists as being highly conditioned: “...IF it’s noncommercial, and IF one isn’t claiming personal credit, and IF it’s helping a progressive cause, it’s pretty much OK to grab other art



and use it” (online). The model is less dominant than it was during the 1960s but has found new formulations in agreements such as those configured through CopyLeft and Creative Commons. Cushing sees the guidelines as a beginning, but feels they need to go farther to protect the history or enable the tracing of the trajectory of an artwork (Cohen).

The issue for Cushing and others is in terms of a moral economy where an artist who intentionally copies artworks must not pretend to have been their originator, or attempt to deceive viewers. Not only do Cushing and Vallen advocate for a transparent process, but they also support the appropriation of existing art to maintain the spirit in which it was created. For example, if an image was created for political and nonprofit purposes, then its derivatives must remain free of copyright restrictions. Artists who would profit from an exploitation of images such as the *Guerrillero Heroico* are seen as sellouts that ally with those very forces that the image was seen to protest against. MacPhee notes: "... Posters and graphics made in the heat of political struggles are often made by anonymous individuals or groups that want to keep the images in the public domain for use in further struggle" and decries those who would "personally capitalize on the generosity of others and privatize and enclose the visual commons" (Vallen). In the debate on attribution and recognition, this kind of "stealing" is seen as a *copywrong*, to adopt Siva Vaidyanathan's neologism, contributing to historical amnesia and cultural imperialism. The metamorphosis of corporatizing a work shifts it from being considered art to the realm of brands. The difference does not merely reside in the articulation but in the nexus of social and cultural circumstances. Acknowledging that the language of branding "is a product of modern U.S. capitalism" Casey claims, "it is really just a commercially practical way to describe how symbols and images are used in many forms of communication" (340). And yet, as many of the examples I have cited show, not all communication is commercial, neither is all adoption or use of symbolic representation.

Among the many artists inspired by the image of Che Guevara based on the *Guerrillero Heroico* are the political cartoonists Carlos Latuff and Allan McDonald. They can be characterized as "semionauts" (Bourriaud 18) in that they invent paths through visual culture by using pre-existing forms and imagining links and relations between a network of signs. Skillfully and eloquently they navigate a vast sea of images cartographically following ephemeral and temporary

lines in order to reveal alternative meanings, while at the same time fusing moments of production and consumption. Thus, "the culture of use implies a profound transformation of the status of the work of art: going beyond its traditional role as a receptacle of the artist's vision, it now functions as an active agent, a musical score, an unfolding scenario, a framework that possesses autonomy and materiality to varying degrees" (Bourriaud 20).

Latuff is particularly known for his provocative and controversial work on the Palestinian-Israeli challenging mainstream versions of the conflict. The kaffiyeh, an Arab-Palestinian scarf and Che are brought together as two global symbols of resistance against oppression and coloniality, bringing into alliance the struggles in Latin America with those in the Middle East. This particular image was also reincarnated as a t-shirt and worn in protest marches in England and elsewhere.

Latuff comments, "my intention is to associate a universal, established and popular icon of resistance with the Palestinian struggle for independence. Using well-known symbols and giving them a new dimension and meaning is part of my job as a political cartoonist and image-maker" (personal communication). Likewise, McDonald, who has dedicated a great deal of his life to anticapitalist struggle and social and political criticism, find inspiration in the image. In his articulation, the Korda image becomes the "sacred" heart of Jesus, and explicitly allies their spirits but places Che as the inspiration, or source at the centre of Christ in an odd thought-provoking alliance.

I see these images as being beyond the art of appropriation, inhabiting instead "...a culture of the use of forms, a culture of constant activity of signs based on a collective ideal of sharing" (Bourriaud 17). For artists involved in programming forms rather than producing them, Che's face has become a tool to manipulate and interrogate in order to produce different results. Interestingly this image manifesting from the original photograph is also acting in its own right by acting upon the artist affectively being "independently capable of stirring the forces of human imagination and of tapping into

deep-seated longings for a better world” (Casey 342). The continuing motivation of these and other artists to use this image, confirms its persistent resonance in the visual public sphere; it continues to speak, and both artists and their audiences are listening.

Conclusion

Hernandez-Reguant’s finish where he states, “However, at the end of the affair, it was still unclear whether the now copyrighted Che - and his legacy to Cuban late socialism - had really beaten the forces of capitalism or rather surreptitiously joined them” (256) is really just the beginning. True, many would like to dismiss this image as having been incorporated into the market logic of the culture industry, and consequently losing its power as a political symbol. Most would agree that the *Guerrillero Heroico* lives a “...strange and by now unstoppable afterlife since his murder in Bolivia in 1967, at the age of 39” (Poyner 34). Despite having strong characteristics of a material commodity in its ability to be a repository for added value, it also resists the force of iconographic commercialization and continues to be a viable political banner. In part, this may be because of its material iterations. “Webb Keane (2003) ...observes that part of the power of material objects in society consists of their openness to ‘external’ events and their resulting potential for mediating the introduction of ‘contingency’ into even the most hegemonic of social orders” (Moore 334).

The exceptional case of Che Guevara, embodies the contest visibly being waged between the culture industry and anti-systemic movements that some scholars contend “is shaped and manipulated by elites in order to establish dominant, hegemonic meanings and interpretations of the past, while others argue that groups can reconstruct and recover memories in order to imbue them with new counterhegemonic interpretations (Bromberg and Fine 2002; Fine qtd in Larson & Lizardo 427). Either way, the presumption that Guevara’s image is little more than a fashionable accessory sapped of all political meaning, or that processes of commoditization have undermined its power to signify and activate political or ideological action is countered by Larson

and Lizardo’s (2007) conclusion that “it is by no means clear that Che Guevara has been de-politicized in the face of unbridled commercialism...” (429).

The reality is far more complex: artists have shown through their adoption and appropriation of this image that commodifying forces and processes of radicalization can coexist: “In fact, the collective consumption of material culture objects might be associated with a renewed radicalization of political struggles and a strengthening of collective identities and ideological commitments” (Larson & Lizardo 449). As a result of their extensive work Larson and Lizardo advise us to consider that the material consumption of Che Guevara’s image can actually coexist with commitments to political resistance despite the ominous intonations of mass media scholars, “commoditization does not result in the irrevocable termination of the power of political images and symbols” (450).

Branding attempts to insert stories between ourselves and objects in a way that foster desire of the object in order to participate in a specific story. In this way, branding is geared to interrupt our own processes of singularization (Kopytoff), so that a more homogenous story can become a source of profit. These shallow “brand sagas” (Twitchell 489) are discussed in *Brand Nation* through a review of commercial strategies adopted by museums, universities, and other institutions as if to prove everything is a brand.

Twitchell (2004) notes, “Transient materialism. Secular epiphany. Yes, brand owners talk about the soul of their brands, brand aura, and of their brands as icons, to be sure. By this they mean that their brands have a symbolic, almost a religious significance, which goes way beyond their worth as products” (488-489). These discourses of “brand soul” and “brand icon” (488) and the “process of spiritualizing commercial brands” (488) are supported by Douglas Atkin, in *The Culting of Brands* as a way for brand owners to copy churches and cults in turning their brands into some kind of source of community (Casey 306) in order to promote goodwill and broaden the meaning of branding to make it all-

encompassing of any symbolic representation under which people can group together. To some extent this strategy succeeds. “How else to explain something so irrational as Evian water, a Dior purse, or a Martha Stewart rolling pin?” (Twitchell 488). Nevertheless, this tactic does not succeed in all cases, particularly in such politically charged and contested cases such as that of the *Guerrillero Heroico*.

While the “intrinsic logic of brand protection” follows the notion that the brand’s intangibility makes “brand owners worry about the fragility of their vital piece of property,” since its value can vanish overnight if it acquires a bad reputation. Casey believes the Korda estate lawyers are doing something similar since they are demarcating acceptable and non-acceptable usage of the image (335). In spite of this, it is just as likely that the usage of the *Guerrillero Heroico* as governed by the Cuban Government, Guevara’s family, and Korda’s daughter Diana Díaz represents an awareness of and compatibility with the meaning of Guevara’s own death and life. By the same token, John Berger found emotional correspondence between Guevara and his death as a result of his attempt to change the world because “anything less would have meant that he found the ‘intolerable’ tolerable” (Berger 207). For John Berger (1975), Guevara “represented a decision, a conclusion” (207).

In a letter to his parents when he left Cuba, Guevara wrote: “Now a will-power that I have polished with an artist’s attention will support my feeble legs and tired-out lungs. I will make it.” [Guevara 113, (translation by Berger)] (208). Certain of his own death in the fight against imperialism, Guevara called for those who would embrace the same ideals to welcome death as long as “our battle-cry, may have reached some receptive ear and another hand may be extended to wield our weapons...” (1a ‘Vietnam Must Not Stand Alone’ New Left Review, no. 43 [London, 1967]) (Berger 204). Responding to his call, millions interpellated by the *Guerrillero Heroico* around the World take up the image as a way of noting the intolerable state of the world, the need to change it, and the commitment (to varying degrees) to participate

in that change. To those who re-render this image on the streets, (in the vernacular handmade sense such as that of a graffiti artist on the street in Guatemala), attempts to brand products with this image of Che fail absolutely and its copyrighting is irrelevant. Thus, the image continues to function as a virtual prosthetic of the man himself, and of his ideas. Both continue to be politically charged and salient.

Notes

1. Translated from the Spanish interview as, “copyright really has no reason to exist. I don’t have rights. On the contrary, I have obligations.”
2. The most notable variation being Irish artist Jim Fitzpatrick’s 1967 stylized poster featuring a two-tone face in black and white on a bright red background. Fitzpatrick distributed his poster widely in Europe. In 2008, he signed over the copyright of his image to the William Soler Pediatric Cardiology Hospital in Cuba.
3. Street graffiti of Che Guevara wearing a Che t-shirt in Bergen, Norway from *Wikipedia* (public domain) available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Che_Guevara_in_popular_culture. Unless otherwise noted, all photographs are my own.
4. Simultaneously in October 1968, Antonio Pérez “ÑIKO” designed a poster for the Comisión de Orientación Revolucionaria (COR), it was not printed in that historical juncture where the testimonial photograph was preferred as the way to reveal the energetic and vigorous image of Che. In 1968, the design was reformulated and the offset printed poster had a communicative effect and symbolic meaning that later became representative of Cuban graphic art (Campos, personal communication). Ese cartel se diseñó en octubre de 1967, cuando ya se confirmó su muerte y no se imprimió y el que se reprodujo fue el del texto de “Che la juventud entonara tu canto con gritos de guerra y de victoria” que lo editó el Comité Nacional de la Unión de la Jóvenes Comunistas (UJC), que poseía una foto, a medio cuerpo, con su boina y el uniforme

verde oliva también de Korda y que la había tomado en un acto por el quinto aniversario de la Revolución. Ese cartel de la UJC amaneció colocado en todas las calles y avenidas.

5. Full original text of Castro's speech in Spanish available here: <file:///Users/Carolina/Desktop/Cartel%20Cubano/Discurso%20del%20Comandante%20Fidel%20Castro%20Ruz%20el%2018%20de%20octubre%20de%201967%20-%20Wikisource.htm>

6. Campos' work centres on the Cuban political poster and poster art on which he has published extensively. He is also a member of the Cuban Association of the United Nations and the Cuban Historians Association among others.

7. Article 6b of the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic works states: "(1) Independently of the author's economic rights, and even after the transfer of the said rights, the author shall have the right to claim authorship of the work and to object to any distortion, mutilation or other modification of, or other derogatory action in relation to, the said work, which would be prejudicial to his honor or reputation" (1971, online).

8. One question to be raised here is whether it is even appropriate to attempt the branding of political art. Unlike most corporate brands, the photograph was intended for a different public and purpose (historical documentation). So is the debate about the branding of Che's image itself not problematic? In a sense, a commercial practice is being applied to a cultural artefact that has nothing to do with the province of commerce. The debate over intention verses reception is ongoing.

9. "Accenture Plc and AT&T dropped him as their pitch man after he became engulfed in allegations of multiple extramarital affairs following a minor car accident outside his Florida home on Nov. 27"

10. Inexplicably, Miami is included in the book's section on Latin America, "Part II: Mimicking a Martyr: *San*

Ernesto of Latin America" (table of contents). By having it placed last, after Argentina, Bolivia and Venezuela it serves the rhetorical purpose of undermining the prior chapters with its more disparaging tone and praise of ex-CIA assassins.

11. Following CS Peirce's three principal semiotic classifications for signs; icon, index, and symbol.

12. The Torricelli act designed to paralyze the Cuban economy and cause the fall of the president forbids American companies, and subsidiaries abroad, from engaging in any trade with Cuba. Foreign ships using American ports were forbidden from Cuban ports for a period of 180 days and foreign ships returning from Cuba were also detained. Cuban families living in the U. S. were barred from sending any cash remittances to Cuba. . Torricelli corruption - http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/congress/july-dec02/bkgdtorricelli_09-30.htmlhttp://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/24/nyregion/24torricelli.html?_r=1

13. In 2005 alone, the barefoot doctors program helped the most poverty-stricken of six Latin American countries and 20 in Africa. The staff delivered more than half a million babies, carried out 1,657,867 operations and gave almost 9 million vaccinations. In Haiti, Cuba has been providing 2,500 doctors and as much medicine as its economy permits since 1998.

14. Journalist Teresa Bo (2010) writes, "Colombia is still at war. You find trenches in every corner, tanks, Blackhawk helicopters and lots of soldiers. Fighting takes place here almost every day ... But we managed to find the left-wing FARC rebels, who are still fighting the Colombian government. ... They said that a fight with the military was coming.... Commander Duber: "Our main enemy is president Uribe and the armed forces. ... There are elections in Colombia. People can vote for whom they want. But we will continue fighting. The ideology of the FARC is to win or die, that's what Che Guevara said," Duber told us. In Cauca the fighting is still ongoing. Duber adds: "Presidente Uribe offers money [and] cars to those guerrillas who turn themselves

in. Those who sell themselves are not guerrillas. They should give that money to those who are still starving in this country. We don't need it."

Photo credit: "Guerrillero colombiano de las FARC, montañas del Caquetá, Colombia" (2001) by Venezuelan photographer **Pedro Ruíz** -- <http://www.zonezero.com/kordasche/ruiz/ruiz.html>.

15. Indymedia photograph under copyleft license.

16. In 1976, Congress decided that the term of copyright protection should be life of the author plus 50 years. See also illegal-art, an organization devoted to collecting artworks that challenge current conventions of intellectual property law, or that have been involved in litigation for infringing on someone's copyright. Launched by the magazine *Stay Free!* ... a publication that critically analyses mass culture commercialization, Their work proves that in the remix and "copy & paste" age, the right to criticism, parody and freedom of speech is easily repressed through the demands of culture mega-corporations using the current restrictive regime to their advantage.

17. Postproduction art is art that uses other *readymades* following the notion originated by surrealist artist Marcel Duchamp, and builds a piece on or with those already circulating. A handy example would be the DJ music scene where music is "sampled" or quoted in innovative ways. People recognize the citation and understand how the DJ is playing with it; they are part of the story.

Works Cited

Australian Associated Press (AAP). Brisbane Times, 30 Sept. 2007. Web. 24 Apr. 2010. <<http://news.brisbanetimes.com.au/world/cuban-doctors-help-che-guevaras-killer-20070930-11s1.html>>.

Berger, John. "Che Guevara: The Moral Factor." *The Urban Review* 8 3 (1975): 202-08. Print.

Bermúdez, Jorge R. *Antología Visual Ernesto Che*

Guevara En La Plástica Y La Gráfica Cubanas. La Habana: Letras Cubanas, 2006. Print.

Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic works. Article 6bis. 1971. Web. 15 July 2011. <<http://zvong.org/law/r/bern.html#Keywords~author>>

Bo, Teresa. "The FARC Side of the Story." Weblog post. *Al Jazeera English*. 20 June 2010. Web. 20 June 2010. <http://blogs.aljazeera.net/americas/2010/06/20/farc-side-story-0?sms_ss=email>.

Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Postproduction: Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World*. Trans. Herman, J. New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2005. Print.

Bragg, Billy. "Waiting for the great leap forwards" *Between the Wars EP* 1985. LP.

Carroll, Rory. "Guevara Children Denounce Che Branding." *The Guardian: International Section*. 7 June 2008. Web. 12 Oct. 2010.

Carvajal, D. "From Rebel to Pop Icon." *New York Times* 30 Apr. 1997: C11. Print.

Campos, Reinaldo Morales. Personal communications. December 2, 2010 to February 17, 2011.

Casey, Michael. *Che's Afterlife: The Legacy of an Image*. New York: Vintage Books, 2009. Print.

"Castro Rules Out Elections in Cuba." *New York Times* 2 May 1961: A1. Print.

Cohen, R. "Lincoln Cushing: On the Past, Present & Future of the Political Poster." *PLAZM magazine*. Eds. Raymond, Jon and Tiffany Lee Brown. Portland, Oregon: Joshua Berger, 2007. Vol. 2010. Print.

Davis, Lloyd. *Guise and Disguise: Rhetoric and Characterization in the English Renaissance*. Toronto: University of Toronto, 1993. Print.

Elliot, Stuart. "Is the Tiger Woods Brand Beyond Repair?" *New York Times*. 19 Feb. 2010. Web. 5 Mar. 2010.

<<http://mediadecoder.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/02/19/is-the-tiger-woods-brand-beyond-repair/>>.

Erdem, Tulin, and Joffre Swait. "Brand Credibility, Brand Consideration, and Choice." *Journal of Consumer Research* 31 (2004): 191-98. Print.

Hernandez-Reguant, Ariana. "Copyrighting Che: Art and Authorship under Cuban Late Socialism." *The Anthropology of Globalization: A Reader*. Eds. Ina, Jonathan Xavier and Renato Rosaldo. Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008. 254-76. Print.

Isserman, Maurice. "Afterimages." *The Nation* 10 June 2009. Web. 17 July 2010. <<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20090629/isserman>>.

"Korda Photograph." *UNC School of Information and Library Science*. Web. 14 Jan. 2009. <<http://www.ils.unc.edu/~michm/Che/korda.html>>.

Kopytoff, Igor. "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process." *The Social Life of Things Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Ed. Arjun Appadurai. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986. 64-91. Print.

Lañamme, J.M, and S. Kaganski. "Entrevista Con El Director De Cine Jean-Luc Godard." *El Cultural* [Spain] 3 Dec. 2010, Online Ed., Cine sec. Web. 6 Dec. 2010 <<http://vozentrerriana.blogspot.com/2010/12/jean-luc-godard.html>>.

Larson, Jeff A, and Omar Lizardo. "Generations, Identities, and the Collective Memory of Che Guevara." *Sociological Forum* 22 4 (2007): 425-51. Print.

Moore, Robert E. "From Genericide to Viral Marketing: On 'Brand'." *Language & Communication* 23 (2003): 331-57. Print.

Ospina, Hernando Calvo. "Cuba Exports Health." *Le Monde Diplomatique*. 11 Aug. 2006, English ed. Print.
Paz, José Aurelio. «Alberto Korda.» *Avizora*. 2001. Web.

23 Nov. 2009. <http://www.avizora.com/publicaciones/reportajes_y_entrevistas/textos/alberto_korda_0095.htm>.

Poyner, Rick. «Join the Revolution...Or Buy the T-Shirt.» *V & A Magazine* Summer 2006: 34-41. Print.

Rosenberg, Tina. "The World Resurrects Che; But the Latin Left Prefers Helmut Kohl." *New York Times*. 20 July 1997: E14. Print.

Silver, David. "Would Che Have Turned Capitalist? Never!" *New York Times* 23 July 1997, Letters to the Editor sec.: A20. Print.

Sridhar, V. "Seeing with the Heart." In *Frontline*, (19:25, December 7, 2002) <http://www.hinduonnet.com/fline/fl1925/stories/20021220000306600.htm> (accessed July 20, 2004).

Storey, John. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*. London: Prentice Hall, 2001. Print.

Twitchell, James B. "Reflections and Reviews: An English Teacher Looks at Branding." *Journal of Consumer Research* 31 2 (2004): 484-89. Print.

Vallen, Mark. "Obey Plagiarist Shepard Fairey." *HeyOKmagazine*. Vol. 2010. Print.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*;. Oxford: Blackwell, 1968. Print.

"Woods Still Top Athlete Name Brand." Online posting. *ESPN.com News Services*. 5 Feb. 2010. Web. 6 Oct. 2010. <<http://sports.espn.go.com/golf/news/story?id=4887062>>.

Bio

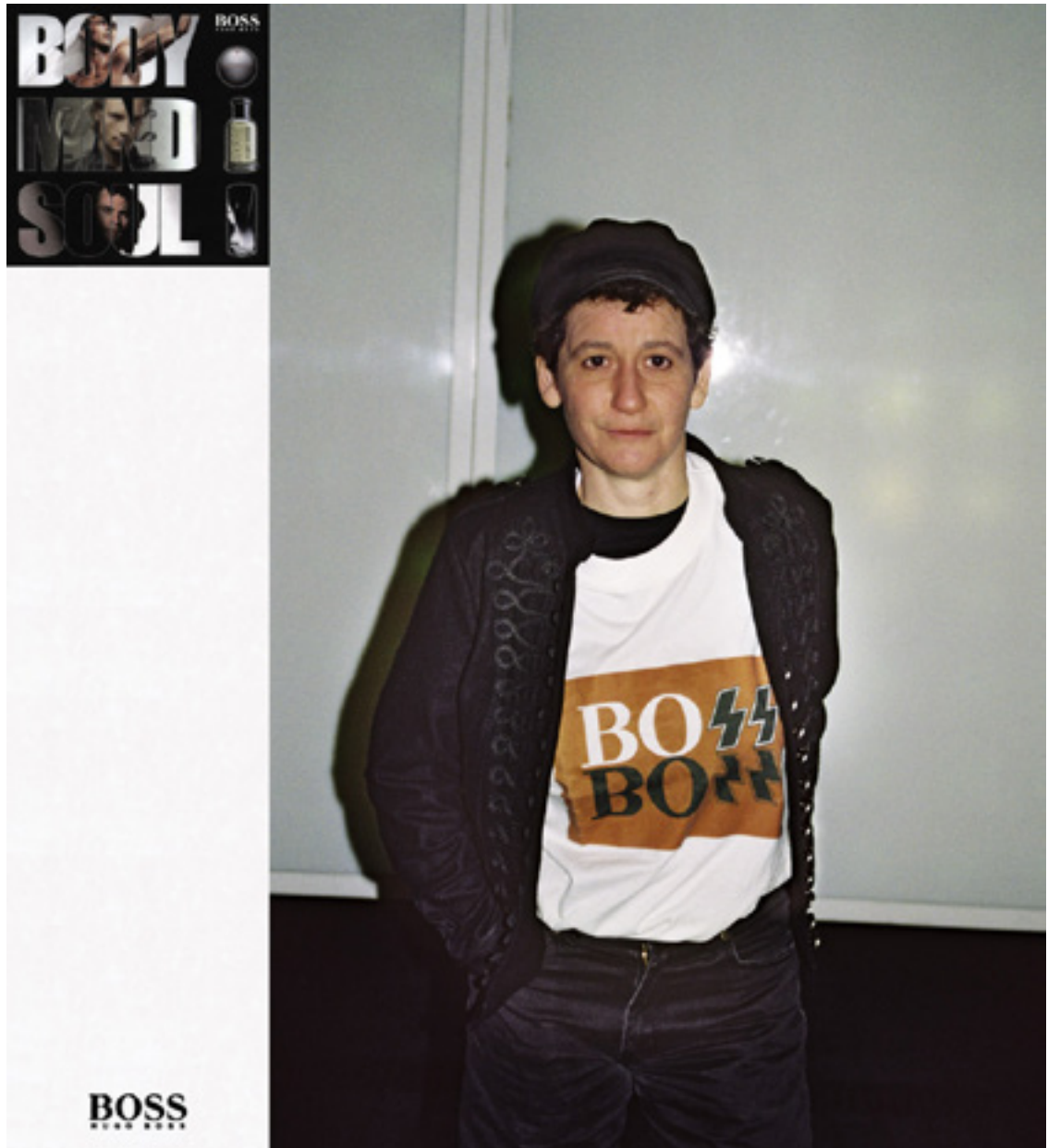
Dr. Carolina Cambre received her doctorate from the Policy Studies in the Education department at the University of Alberta. Her dissertation research was titled *The Politics of the Face: Manifestations of Che Guevara's Image and its Renderings, Progeny, and Agency*. Currently she is teaching courses in Mass Media and Advertising for the University of Western Ontario's Sociology department. Virtually, she can be found here: <http://ualberta.academia.edu/mariacarolinacambre/About>

Bio

Dr. Carolina Cambre est titulaire d'un doctorat en éducation, avec spécialisation en politiques de l'enseignement de l'Université d'Alberta, avec une thèse intitulée « *The Politics of the Face: Manifestations of Che Guevara's Image and its Renderings, Progeny, and Agency* ». Actuellement, elle enseigne des cours de médias et de publicité au département de sociologie de l'Université de Western Ontario. On peut la trouver en ligne à cette adresse : <http://ualberta.academia.edu/mariacarolinacambre/About>

TANYA URY









TRAUMA NARRATIVES

MIXED MEDIA, AND THE MEDITATION ON THE INVISIBLE

CHRISTOF DECKER, LMU MUNICH

Abstract

This essay examines the relationship between the history of trauma narratives and the development of media representations. Starting in the late 19th century, modernist cultures were increasingly forced to represent and reflect upon the traumatic experience of destruction and war. In this process of reflection, the ‘invisibility’ or unrepresentability of traumatic incidents became a recurring theme. Taking up W.J.T. Mitchell’s suggestion that all media are “mixed media,” I argue that the technological, semiotic, and narrative hybridity of mixed media has a special relationship to this theme. More specifically, I want to show that the explicit or overt presentation of mixed media has historically been invoked as a trope of reflexivity and a way of expressing the difficulties of representing traumatic experience. I will begin my investigation with literary and visual examples from American modernism and conclude with more recent instances of mixed media hybrids combining analogue and digital media.

Résumé

Cet article examine le rapport entre l’histoire du récit de l’expérience traumatique et le développement des représentations médiatiques. À partir de la fin du 19ème siècle, les cultures de la modernité ont été forcées de représenter l’expérience traumatique de la destruction et de la guerre, puis d’y réfléchir. À travers cette réflexion, *l’invisibilité*, ou la non-représentabilité des incidents traumatiques est devenue un thème récurrent dont je suggère ici le rapport particulier à l’hybridité sémiotique et narrative suivant la suggestion de W.J.T. Mitchell que tous les médias sont multimédiatiques. Plus précisément, je veux démontrer que, traditionnellement, on a invoqué la présentation explicite ou ouvertement multimédiatique comme un trope de réflexivité et comme une façon d’exprimer les difficultés qu’on rencontre en essayant de représenter l’expérience traumatique. Je commence mon étude avec des exemples du modernisme américain pour en arriver à des exemples plus récents de l’hybridité multimédiatique en combinant les médias analogues et numériques.

Introduction

Ernest Hemingway's story "Soldier's Home" begins with the description of two photographs. The first shows the protagonist Harold Krebs before he goes to Europe in 1917 to fight in the First World War. The second shows him in Europe before returning as a traumatized war veteran to the United States. About this second photograph, the narrator writes: "There is a picture which shows him on the Rhine with two German girls and another corporal. Krebs and the corporal look too big for their uniforms. The German girls are not beautiful. The Rhine does not show in the picture" (111).

As the photograph indicates, the war has affected the young men who have begun to outgrow their uniforms. Yet, curiously, the Rhine which would provide a geographical reference point for the conflict between France and Germany is not visible. Something seems to be missing in the photograph, which prefigures what will emerge as one of the story's central implications: Conventional images and stories of war are deceptive and misleading. They do not capture how the individual soldier remembers his experience. Rather, Harold Krebs, Hemingway's traumatized and alienated veteran, feels as out of place after his return as is implied by the grotesque scene at the beginning of the story.

The narrator's line "The Rhine does not show in the picture" may thus serve as a first example of reflecting on the limits of visibility and representation that will be addressed in this essay. Taking stories about war as my point of reference, I want to develop an argument that links trauma theory and media theory. On the one hand, the theme of invisibility will be related to cultural memory and traumatic experience. In the work of Cathy Caruth, Thomas Elsaesser, and others, trauma is seen as an external event overwhelming the subject and returning in belated form through flashes of memory. In this essay, I propose that, in dealing with war, the 'meditation' on the invisible can be seen as an attempt to address the impact of traumatic experience which in itself cannot be represented.¹

On the other hand, I want to discuss how mixed media have contributed to the discourse on the invisible by showing that mixing media can be seen as a way of making the non-representability of trauma obvious to the readers or viewers. Mixed media often signal a lack of the visible and knowable, yet by creating hybrid forms of signification, they can also be understood as highly reflexive and creative responses to this feeling of lack. The act of 'mixing,' therefore, as a semiotic as well as technological process, may have two major implications: firstly, it evokes something that is not visible and cannot be represented; secondly, it creates multi-layered, hybrid objects that are aesthetically complex and rich in connotations.

In her work on trauma, E. Ann Kaplan has proposed four modes of being addressed by trauma narratives: the melodramatic mode of empathy, the vicarious traumatization of horror, the voyeuristic position of television news, and the position of being addressed as witnesses (cf. Kaplan, "Melodrama"). This last mode will be most pertinent to the following examples from different periods and media in American cultural history. In stories about war, the act of mixing is important because it directs our attention to the practice of witnessing: witnessing the event but also the forms and technologies of mediating it. In order to develop this argument, my analysis will move from Modernist examples in literature and visual culture to more recent forms of mixing analogue and digital images. In these examples, other media are incorporated into the dominant discourse of a specific medium by adapting or 'quoting' their characteristics, functions, and, as far as possible, their sign-systems. In this way, representation is linked to different technologies and semiotic systems while at the same time being related to forms of traumatic experience that have overwhelmed the subject in the past.

Following suggestions by Mark Seltzer and E. Ann Kaplan, the late nineteenth century may be seen as a crucial period for the emergence of both trauma narratives and new forms of mixed media. Seltzer stresses the pivotal importance of novels such as Stephen Crane's

The Red Badge of Courage published in 1895, while Kaplan points out that “industrialization provided the social conditions for the train and machine accidents and the large-scale wars which in turn prompted attention to the traumatic symptoms which these produced in men” (Kaplan, “Melodrama” 202). The literary, visual, and audiovisual examples that I have chosen thus imply, on the one hand, that trauma narratives, at least from the Civil War onwards, have played a special role in the cultural history of the United States to “work through” the experience of war and death. On the other hand, they should be understood as aspects of a larger, transnational development in industrialized nations that linked the (potentially) traumatic impact of the machine age with the Modernist impulse of aesthetic experimentation.

Conceptualizing Mixed Media

The concept of “mixed media” has been used in different theoretical contexts, and it is usually defined in a wide sense. In cultural studies approaches, it denotes the interconnectedness of cultural forms; environmental media theorists have linked it with the process of technological convergence, and in the new media discourse it is seen as an element of “remediation,” in which new media reconfigure and redefine old media (cf. McLuhan, Bolter and Grusin). For the purpose of this essay, however, I want to focus on a visual culture studies perspective. W.J. Thomas Mitchell, in particular, has questioned the usefulness of trying to define media according to the notion of “purity,” a notion that would be based on one sign-system or one register of sensory perceptions. He claims that most mediated forms and perceptions are hybrid: “All media are mixed media, with varying ratios of senses and sign-types” (91).

Mitchell goes on to argue that the emphasis on mixed media allows us to acknowledge the heterogeneity of the cultural material we are actually dealing with, such as the literary techniques of *ekphrasis* and description, the combination of word and image, the digital hypertext, and so on. He writes:

The postulate of mixed, hybrid media leads us to the specificity of codes, materials, technologies,

perceptual practices, sign-functions, and institutional conditions of production and consumption that go to make up a medium. It allows us to break up the reification of media around a single sensory organ (or a single sign-type, or material vehicle) and to pay attention to what is in front of us. (95)

In this wide sense then, the concept of mixed media stresses the connections and overlapping areas between signifying practices that have often been treated as separate phenomena. Yet, to make this deliberately fuzzy notion of ‘mixing’ more concrete, this essay will focus on a specific type of war-related mixed media examples. Like Hemingway’s story, in which the description of the photograph creates a mental visuality, a virtual image that the literary narrative proceeds to take up and modify, these examples make the act of mixing explicit and noticeable, in order to reflect on the forms and limits of representation and knowledge. They are presented as a deliberate rupture or clash of signs and sign-systems.

Care must be taken, however, to distinguish between two different aspects of this process. Firstly, *how* this clash is performed in the text or aesthetic object may vary strongly. It may result from a mixing of the aesthetic, rhetorical, or stylistic registers of language, or it may follow from combining image and word, or different media technologies. Secondly, in terms of its cultural function, the clash of sign systems, despite its differences at the aesthetic level, usually has a common denominator: it reflects on trauma and representation by focusing on the act of seeing and the experience of vision: i.e. it implies that visuality and technologies of looking are related to knowledge and the experience of trauma. For stories of war then, the act of mixing often signals that something is not visible and cannot be represented. At the same time, mixing furthers aesthetic complexity: By incorporating different kinds of screens, by using strategies like double-framing, or by presenting competing screen-based narratives in the overall image space, the ‘semiotic clash’ creates multi-layered objects that point to themselves as mediated artifacts and posit trauma as a primarily visual experience.²

Hemingway, Crane and the Dialectic of Wound Cultures

In my initial example from American literature, Hemingway's story "Soldier's Home," photography and literature are juxtaposed to reflect upon each other. The imaginary photograph does not show what it seems to promise, and a literary narrative is called upon to fill in the gaps.³ Yet, as the internal focalization of the story makes clear, the verbal discourse of language is ultimately also insufficient to grasp the enormity of the war experience. Soon after Krebs's return, he painfully notes the gap between truthfulness and having to lie. He wants to inform his hometown about his individual war experiences, yet he realizes that there exists no adequate forms of recounting and representing what happened: "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 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 he had told" (111). As this passage shows, neither atrocity stories, nor the less spectacular actualities, or the slightly exaggerated lies may serve as models for Krebs's testimony. In the end, therefore, both verbal *and* visual forms of representation fail to signify what he believes to be the most valuable and genuine aspect of his selfhood, the actual experience of fighting in a war.

The dominance of atrocity stories that Harold Krebs bemoans testifies to the ambiguous fascination of war as thrilling spectacle but also as the ultimate dissolution of individual and collective identities. Atrocity stories allude to the most traumatic events imaginable, the worst fantasies of cruelty and debasement, yet in Hemingway's story, they are safely projected onto the decadence and sickness of the European situation. The Modernist discourse on invisibility that Hemingway exemplifies thus explores two related issues: on the one hand, there is the failure of representing the experience of war in a truthful way, and, on the other hand, there is the attempt to block out of sight those stories that would endanger the "imagined community" (Anderson) of individuals making up the nation—in particular, its cultural definition of gender and sexual difference.

This dialectical movement between subjective experience and collective self-images, between private body and public sphere, characterizes what Mark Seltzer has called a "wound culture". In this view of modern cultures it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain the boundary between subject and world. Indeed, the wound becomes the crucial sign of the collapse of boundaries between the inner world of the subject and the outer world of the group or nation. Mass-mediated societies, according to Seltzer, are founded upon "the public fascination with torn and opened bodies and torn and opened persons, a collective gathering around shock, trauma, and the wound" (3). Trauma may be an event beyond representation, yet "wound cultures" compulsively return to the scenes of traumatic experience.

The key transitional, proto-modern text for this clash of subjectivity, national identity, and wounded bodies in American literature is Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* from 1895. In this story of Henry Fleming, a Union soldier fighting in the Civil War, the wound becomes an ambiguous sign. It not only signifies injury or death, but also social acceptance and national pride. In one scene of the book, Fleming is looking at his fellow soldiers and becomes envious of their bodily signs of combat. At this point in the story, he has not yet been injured and feels ashamed: "He was continually casting sidelong glances to see if the men were contemplating the letters of guilt he felt burned into his brow. At times he regarded the wounded soldiers in an envious way. He conceived persons with torn bodies to be peculiarly happy. He wished that he, too, had a wound, a red badge of courage" (110).

In Crane's exceptional psychonarration, the wound thus becomes a "switch point" (Seltzer) between the agitated mind of the subject and the collective identity of the group. For Henry Fleming, the trauma of torn bodies paradoxically represents the ultimate proof of acceptance into the inner circle of male and national identity. In this case then, the reflection on the invisible revolves around the contrast between thoughts and signs, interior fantasy and outward action, or the invisibility of shame and the peculiar honor of an injured body.

Although it may be less obvious than in Hemingway's story, Crane's novel also depends on the mixing of semiotic modes. Photography plays only a minor role, but painting becomes a crucial reference point for a style of writing that has often been called impressionistic.⁴ The confluence of literature and painting is made explicit on the first few pages of the novel when the narrator explains Fleming's fascination with the war: "He had read of marches, sieges, conflicts, and he had longed to see it all. His busy mind had drawn for him large pictures extravagant in color, lurid with breathless deeds" (46).

The shift from reading to seeing, from literature to 'large pictures extravagant in color,'—from well-structured historical narratives to chaotic yet highly imaginative and suggestive impressions—becomes the model for Crane's own mode of writing. In its colour schemes and episodic structure, it is painterly, yet the exploration of the invisible goes deeper. Just as with Hemingway's juxtaposition of literature and photography, Crane's use of language signals the need to find new expressive means in order to grasp the experience and enormity of modern warfare, the "machines of steel," as Fleming calls the enemy at one point. His story is not a retrospective account of the war; it is the story of trauma in the making as Fleming is drawn to the spectacle of destruction: "The battle was like the grinding of an immense and terrible machine to him. Its complexities and powers, its grim processes, fascinated him. He must go close and see it produce corpses" (105).⁵

The more opaque and terrifying this machinery of modern warfare becomes, the stronger the urge to find new combinations of sign-systems to register its impact on the subject. In many cases then, the explicit act of 'mixing' represents an attempt to narrate traumatic experience by creating a new mode of subjectivity, and the stories of Crane and Hemingway can be seen as complementary cases. They introduce the wounds of war as internal and external injuries that are directly related to the well-being of the collective national body.⁶ Yet, by their explicit allusion to different signifying practices, they depict this direct link to be full of ambiguities and

blank spots: Henry Fleming's busy mind is incapable of comprehending the big picture; he is overpowered by the intensity of sensory impressions. Harold Krebs, in contrast, is equally incapable of creating meaning out of his war experience, yet for different reasons: he has lost the power to express what has happened to him, or "the times", as the narrator writes, "that had been able to make him feel cool and clear inside himself" (Hemingway 111).

For the relationship between individual and group or nation, mixed media in American literary history may thus serve a double function: they signify an element of crisis and doubt as to the meaning and representability of traumatic experience. But they also create a more complex and creative aesthetic object capable of evoking this crisis of representation in a new and intensified form. In Crane's novel, outer reality is reconfigured as an extension of the subject's emotional landscape, while Hemingway's Modernist use of language deconstructs social reality as an intricate web of patterns and repetitions. In both cases, the subject as the locus of perception and emotions disintegrates. Something that happened in the past via the faculty of vision appears to be beyond visibility and the act of mixing evokes the ungraspable nature of its experience, the feeling of loss and lack.

Painting, Photography, and World-War II

This double-movement of representational scepticism and aesthetic complexity can be found in other historical periods and signifying practices, such as painting and film. Two examples shall demonstrate how they may diverge from but also continue the trajectory that has been sketched out so far. The first example, Ben Shahn's 1942 painting "This Is Nazi Brutality" is related to Hemingway's atrocity discourse and addresses the question of using traumatic events for the purposes of propaganda. The second example, Paul Haggis' film *In the Valley of Elah* (2007) continues, in technologically advanced form, the discourse of a wound culture. As indicated in the introduction, Shahn's painting may be seen as belonging to a unique American tradition of trauma narratives related to the experience of war,

yet his work, in particular, was also engaging with transnational Modernist movements in photography, collage artworks, and painting. In the European context, Dada artists, such as George Grosz and John Heartfield, developed elaborate forms of caricature and photomontage addressing the experience of the First World War, as well as the atmosphere of violence in the Weimar Republic and the early Nazi regime. In the United States too, hybrid combinations of image and text proliferated in New Deal related art programs—Shahn worked as a photographer for the Farm Security Administration along with Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans—but also in magazines such as *Life* or *Time* (cf. Stange).

For the relationship between trauma narratives and mixed media, the work of war correspondents stationed overseas during the Second World War was crucial. Among a diverse group including photographers like Margaret Bourke-White, Lee Miller is a particularly interesting case. She had been Man Ray's model in Paris in the 1930s, but became a professional portrait and fashion photographer in her own right. In the 1940s, she worked as a war correspondent for *Vogue* magazine reporting from liberated concentration camps and the final weeks of combat in Germany. She produced an intricate word-image-rhetoric in her photo-essays for *Vogue* that expressed the difficulties of war reportage in the face of mass death—a recurring issue for future reflections on the relationship between trauma narratives, media representation, and the historical experience of the Shoah (on Miller cf. Penrose).

At the home front, the painter and part-time photographer Ben Shahn worked for the Office of War Information in 1942, creating paintings that were intended to help the war effort. In the 1930s, Shahn had experimented with photography and painting, translating his New York-photographs into meticulously crafted word-image-combinations. For his OWI-paintings, Shahn moved beyond the intermediality of these earlier experiments. In “This Is Nazi Brutality” from 1942, he juxtaposed and combined three different layers of media communication: the radio telegram recalling the official

announcement from Berlin about the destruction of Lidice, the explicatory sentence “This is Nazi brutality” pointing out the dominant meaning of the war poster, and, finally, the painting of a hooded, handcuffed, and imprisoned figure (see fig. 1).

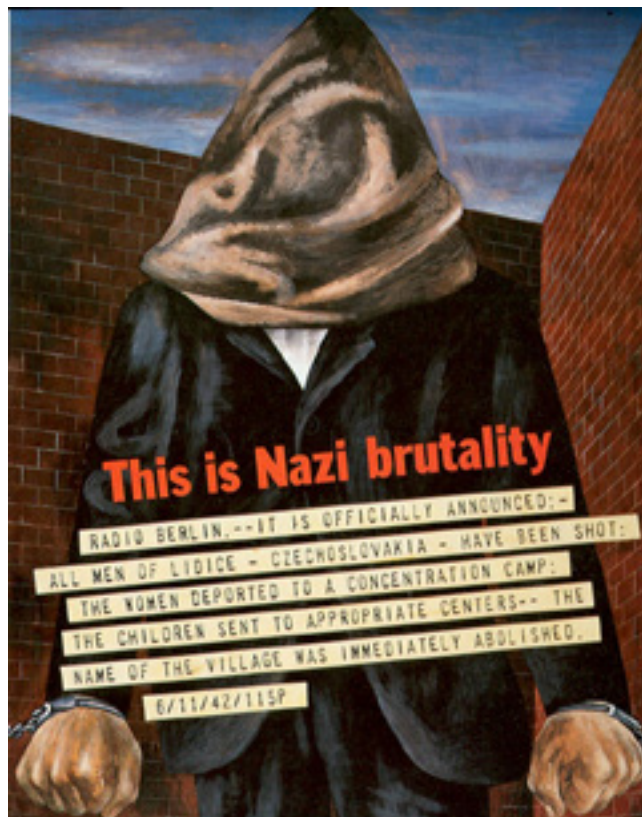


Fig. 1: Ben Shahn “This Is Nazi Brutality” 1942, Photo-offset in colors, 37^{7/8} x 28^{1/4} inches (Pohl 69)

By creating this hybrid combination of image and text, Shahn produced war propaganda, but he also reflected upon the act of creating it. Although the poster stems from the Office of War Information, the viewer senses a desire to subvert all kinds of official announcements and a desire to contrast them with more immediate and powerful images of suffering. The Nazi telegram is framed by its American designation as an exemplary case

of brutality. What becomes most striking in the painting is the enormous human figure, looming both over the telegram and its commentary. Clenched fists signify attempts at resistance, while the dark suit and white shirt add the connotation of the man's belonging to the class of intellectuals. This is one of the men mentioned in the telegram, about to be shot inside the prison walls. However, the crucial part of his body capable of creating the most powerful effect of empathy is not visible: his face. An enormous, elaborately painted hood dominates the upper third of the painting and covers his head. It leaves the man's strong hands as the only visible marker of bodily agitation.

Thus, in Ben Shahn's case, too, emulating and mixing different forms of media communication triggers a reflection on the invisible. By covering the man's face, Shahn resisted the temptation of presenting him as an easily identifiable victim. Rather, he stressed the invisible and unknowable quality of the traumatic experience alluded to in the telegram, and evaluated as an act of brutality in the telegram's framing. The most effective visual reference of the verbal signifier "brutality" is withheld as the suffering face remains hidden. Shahn's painting, at first glance a straightforward indictment of Nazi brutality, reveals itself to be not just a reflection on the invisible, but also on the difficulties of creating propaganda for a democratic culture committed to a strong notion of individualism. Shahn worked for less than a year for the Office of War Information. Frances Pohl suggests that he was pursuing a different notion of propaganda which was ultimately incompatible with the official line: "Most of Shahn's paintings were being rejected by OWI officials because they were too 'violent' or not 'appealing enough'" (68).

Mixing Digital and Analogue Media

From today's perspective, Shahn's painting bears an eerie resemblance to images from the Abu Ghraib prison where military personnel of the United States army abused prisoners during the war in Iraq (2003 to 2011) and photographed their actions. As E. Ann Kaplan has shown, the historical discourse on trauma narratives was not just shaped by questions of post-traumatic

stress disorders or the experience of the Shoah; in the American context, it was also a response to the Vietnam War (cf. Kaplan, *Trauma* 25-41). Similarly, with the illegal actions in Abu Ghraib prison, the war in Iraq came to be viewed as an instance of both, experiencing but also inflicting traumatic injury.⁷ In the 1970s films, such as *Coming Home* (Hal Ashby, 1978) or the *Deer Hunter* (Michael Cimino, 1978) portrayed the returning war veterans as symbolic for the struggle to cope with a sense of individual and national defeat. The cinematic representation of the war in Iraq continued that tradition, but shifted it into the digital age, creating intricate forms of mixed media. My final example, then, returns to the relation between trauma and national identity by highlighting the contrast between new digital media and the old analogue medium of film. *In the Valley of Elah* (2007) by Paul Haggis is the story of a father investigating the death of his son, a soldier who returns to the United States from Iraq and is killed by his fellow soldiers shortly after his return. While the father talks to the members of his son's military unit, he receives short digital clips that his son had taken in Iraq. Slowly, the two lines of investigation meet and the father eventually realizes that his son had turned into a sadistic torturer while stationed overseas. The grief over his death is superimposed with a feeling of shame and remorse vis-à-vis this painful discovery.

The film is exemplary for the incorporation of different media in the context of a cinematic narrative. Visually and aesthetically, this process takes place at different levels and in different ways. It includes the 'clash' of the cinematic images with the incorporated visual screens and photographs. Usually the cinematic frame serves as the background to the digital screens in the foreground, yet mixing and hybridity may also lead to more flexible relations between them.⁸ Furthermore, the incorporation of frames and screens fulfills narrative purposes. Historically, the cinematic screen has served as a kind of 'deep' space, defining, delimiting and often containing the functions of photographs or television and computer screens. However, the digital age has subverted this hierarchical tradition. In Paul Haggis's film, photographs serve their well-established function

as ‘frozen’ images, traces of memory and sentimental longing for the past (see fig. 2). Digital media, in comparison, play a more ambiguous role: they compete with the cinematic narrative and turn into a source of disturbingly personal, aesthetically inferior, yet morally illuminating counter-images (see fig. 3).

Fig. 2: Traditional, ‘nostalgic’ uses of photographs as memory traces



Fig. 3: The new hybridity of analogue and digital media



A brief excerpt may serve as an example of mixed media in this film, revealing the crucial moment in which the father realizes that his son maltreated prisoners in Iraq.

[CLIP *In the Valley of Elah*, appr. 2 minutes]

The scene exemplifies how new electronic and digital media are often incorporated into film narratives. They are presented as small screens on which a complementary or counter-narrative unfolds. Visually, the small screen is framed by the larger cinematic image while a tracking shot moves toward it until the two frames merge, and the viewers are temporarily transported into the “alien” medium (see fig. 4 and fig. 5).

Fig. 4: Framing computer screens in *In the Valley of Elah*

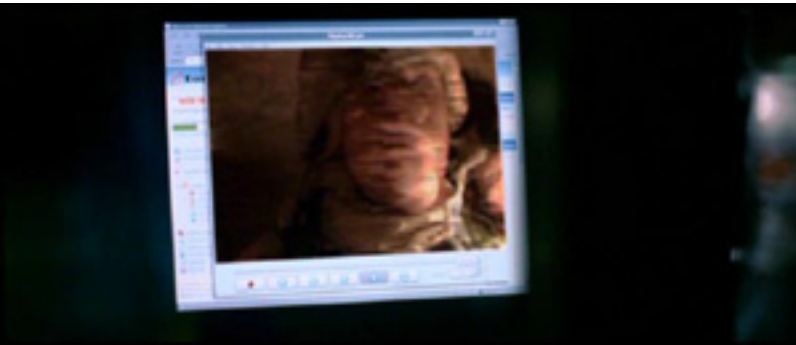
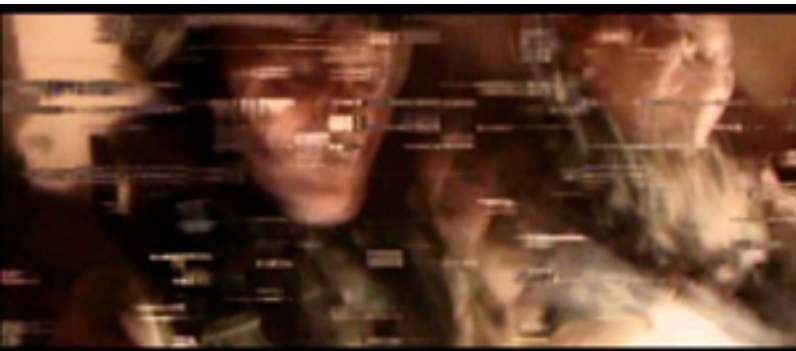


Fig. 5: Immersion in the digital image



Yet, the quality of the digital medium is low, making it difficult, if not impossible, to perceive and comprehend what is being shown. The introjected digital images and sounds promise to represent what happened—historical truth—but fail to produce a narrative that is as visually illuminating and coherent as the cinematic frame. They invoke traumatic experience, but due to their technological inferiority, displace it beyond the limits of visibility and knowledge.

Only stopping the images and investigating them closely reveals that they serve as prime examples of a “wound culture.” In this case, however, Stephen Crane’s notion of the wound as a “badge of courage” is completely reversed. As the father witnesses how his son brutalizes the wounds of Iraqi prisoners, he realizes that they signify a national disgrace. In the moral reading of the film, the

loss of the mourning parents is thus overshadowed by the wounded body of the prisoner as a visible sign of shame and guilt (see fig. 6 and fig. 7).

Fig. 6: The wound in *In the Valley of Elah*

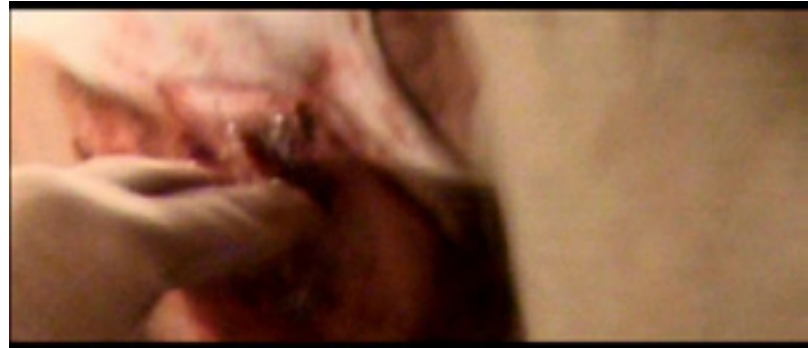


Fig. 7: Watching the son’s abuse



Just as in Hemingway’s story, the imperfection and ‘unprofessional’ use of the new medium is partially made responsible for the fragmented and ruptured character of the representation. And like the painterly imagination in Crane, the digital images take on the character of an autobiographical journal. They individualize the narrative, making it more subjective and personal.

In the end, this private realm of subjective experience is incorporated into the public realm of national identity represented by the father. Ultimately, this public sphere is the patriarchal and patriotic space of “dominant fictions” (Silverman 15-51) related to war. What the reflection on the invisible manages to introduce into this traditional

space is the disruptive quality of trauma and torture as historical fact and national shame. The imperfection of digital media points to the necessary imaginative supplement needed to grasp what happened: the trauma of the tortured prisoner as well as the traumatic loss of the parents. Eventually, and similar to the confluence of photography and literature in “Soldier’s Home,” *In the Valley of Elah* suggests that even though the cinematic narrative is more coherent and dense, more comprehensive and decipherable than the digital mode, it, too, does not arrive at a point of closure.

The confluence of digital media and film, therefore, brings out a final observation. Mixing media may signal the attempt to represent traumatic experience, but it may also function as a defense mechanism against its overwhelming emotional quality. The ‘alien’ medium, in this case the sounds and images taken by a cellphone, allows the cinema to evoke, but also to distance, the violent, traumatizing event and to position itself as a narrative institution that re-establishes a sense of order and meaning, however fragile it may be.

The Practice of Witnessing

To conclude, in this essay, I have discussed war-related examples of mixed media taken from American culture as ways of reflecting upon the relation between representation and trauma. I have argued that mixing sign-systems and media technologies can be seen as an ‘aesthetic reaction’ of artists and art to deal with the non-representability of trauma, in particular, the excessive impact of the machinery of modern warfare. Yet in the various examples, the act of mixing has served different purposes. It has explored the limits of representation; it has foregrounded the clash of different time schemes as the belated return of memories; it has created new ways of expressing subjective experience; and it has made the unknowable accessible for a debate on the self-definition of American society and culture.

In that debate, it seems that one central theme emerges as the crucial paradox. It is the desire to make the war-related narratives more subjective and personal, while at the same time showing how the individual disintegrates

in the act of being traumatized. No easy resolution is offered for this paradox in the examples discussed. And yet, they achieve a crucial effect: By framing and doubling the act of perception, they address the spectator as a witness of traumatic events *and* of the process of mediation. In other words, they offer a viewing and reading position that allows for empathy, but also for a critical reflection upon the act of witnessing as an ambiguous cultural and technological practice.

Notes

1. For an overview of the discourse on trauma and media history, cf. Kaplan, *Trauma Culture* 25-41.
2. With this emphasis on visuality care must be taken to recognize the differences between the mental images of language and the graphic images of visual media. However, the mixed media discourse implies that at some level both types of images ultimately participate in similar mental processes. As Mitchell writes, literature “involves ‘virtual’ or ‘imaginative’ experiences of space and vision that are no less real for being indirectly conveyed through language” (95). In a related sense, Winfried Fluck argues that images and literature activate the cultural imaginary in similar ways: “No less so than in the case of literature, although with different modalities, the aesthetic experience of the image, including pictures and motion pictures, is one in which non-identity and doubleness are constitutive” (34).
3. For an extended analysis of the photograph, cf. De Baerdemaeker, Kennedy and Curnutt.
4. For the discussion of Crane’s “impressionism,” cf. Kwiat, Rogers, and Bender; Whiting discusses the sources on which Crane drew for his expressive visual style.
5. The confluence of vision and trauma in this passage is exemplary for the novel as a whole and demonstrates its exceptional pre-modernist character. Crane’s innovative re-definition of realist fiction creates a subjective viewpoint and concept of reality that changes “as the

angle of vision shifts” (Rogers 293). In a later scene, Henry Fleming comes across a dead soldier and the elaborate description of colors serves to highlight the sense of subjectivity: “The corpse was dressed in a uniform that once had been blue, but was now faded to a melancholy shade of green. The eyes, staring at the youth, had changed to the dull hue to be seen on the side of a dead fish. The mouth was open. Its red had changed to an appalling yellow. Over the gray skin of the face ran little ants” (Crane 101). The intensity of this act of perception comes to haunt the young man and epitomizes the traumatizing process of vision: “He was pursued by a sight of the black ants swarming greedily upon the gray face and venturing horribly near to the eyes” (Crane 102).

6. The importance of the notion of “injury” has been emphasized by Elayne Scarry: “Visible or invisible, omitted, included, altered in its inclusion, described or redescribed, injury is war’s product and its cost, it is the goal toward which all activity is directed and the road to the goal, it is there in the smallest enfolded corner of war’s interior recesses and still there where acts are extended out into the largest units of encounter” (18).

7. For a creative collage of the discourse developing around the war in Iraq cf. Weinberger 144-224.

8. Mixing may thus lead to a new, hybrid object, but it can also re-establish a sense of hierarchy. As two media meet, one may function as a frame for the other, eventually emerging as the more powerful in establishing a dominant sense of narrative order and meaning. Historically, this has often been the case; media vie for the spot of superior producer of cultural meaning by introjecting their competitors, often stressing their inferior position and dangerous effects; for a more extended discussion cf. Decker.

Works Cited

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Revised Edition. London, New York: Verso, 1991. Print.
 Bender, Bert. “Hanging Stephen Crane in the

Impressionist Museum.” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 35.1 (Autumn, 1976): 47-55. Print.

Bolter, Jay David, and Richard Grusin. *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000. Print.

Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1996. Print.

Crane, Stephen. *The Red Badge of Courage: An Episode of the American Civil War*. New York: Penguin, 1983. Print.

De Baerdemaeker, Ruben. “Performative Patterns in Hemingways ‘Soldier’s Home’.” *The Hemingway Review* 27.1 (Fall 2007): 55-73. Print.

Decker, Christof. “Spiritual Machines: Millennialism and the Lure of Technology.” *Millennial Perspectives: Lifeworlds and Utopias*. Eds. Brigitte Georgi-Findlay and Hans-Ulrich Mohr. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2003. 117-130. Print.

Elsaesser, Thomas. “Postmodernism as mourning work.” *Screen* 42.2 (Summer 2001): 193-201. Print.

Fluck, Winfried. “Aesthetic Experience of the Image.” *Iconographies of Power: The Politics and Poetics of Visual Representation*. Eds. Ulla Haselstein, Berndt Ostendorf, and Peter Schneck. Heidelberg: Winter, 2003. 11-41. Print.

Hemingway, Ernest. “Soldier’s Home” (1925). *The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*. The Finca Vigía Edition. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987. 111-116. Print.

Kaplan, E. Ann. “Melodrama, cinema and trauma.” *Screen* 42.2 (Summer 2001): 201-205. Print.

Kaplan, E. Ann. *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature*. New Brunswick, N.J.,

and London: Rutgers UP, 2005. Print.

Kennedy, J. Gerald, and Kirk Curnutt. "Out of the Picture: Mrs. Krebs, Mother Stein, and 'Soldier's Home'." *The Hemingway Review* 12.1 (Fall 1992): 1-11. Print.

Kwiat, Joseph J. "Stephen Crane and Painting." *American Quarterly* 4.4 (Winter, 1952): 331-338. Print.

McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. 1964; London and New York: Routledge, 2009.

Mitchell, W.J.T. "Showing Seeing: A critique of visual culture." *The Visual Culture Reader*. Second Edition. Ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff. London, New York: Routledge, 2002. 86-101. Print.

Penrose, Anthony, ed. *Lee Miller's War: Photographer and Correspondent with the Allies in Europe, 1944-45*. Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1992. Print.

Pohl, Frances K. *Ben Shahn*. San Francisco: Pomegranate, 1993. Print.

Rogers, Rodney O. "Stephen Crane and Impressionism." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 24.3 (December, 1969): 292-304. Print.

Scarry, Elaine. "Injury and the Structure of War." *Representations* 10 (Spring, 1985): 1-51. Print.

Seltzer, Mark. "Wound Culture: Trauma in the Pathological Public Sphere." *October* 80 (Spring 1997): 3-26. Print.

Silverman, Kaja. *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*. New York and London: Routledge, 1992. Print.

Stange, Maren. *Symbols of Ideal Life. Social Documentary Photography in America, 1890-1950*. New York, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. Print.

Weinberger, Eliot. *What Happened Here: Bush*

Chronicles. London and New York: Verso, 2006. Print.

Whiting, Cécile. "Trompe l'oeil Painting and the Counterfeit Civil War." *The Art Bulletin* 79.2 (June, 1997): 251-268. Print.

Image Notes

Haggis, Paul. *In the Valley of Elah/Im Tal von Elah*. With Tommy Lee Jones, Charlize Theron, Susan Sarandon, and others. Concorde. Home Entertainment. 2007. DVD

Shahn, Ben. "This Is Nazi Brutality" 1942, Photo-offset in colors, 37^{7/8} x 28^{1/4} inches (printed in Pohl 69); also available at: *The National Archives*. Powers of Persuasion. Poster Art from World War II. "This is Nazi Brutality" by Ben Shahn, 1942. Printed by the Government, Printing Office for the Office of War Information, NARA Still Picture Branch, (NWDNS-44-PA-245). Web. http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/this_is_nazi_brutality/this_is_nazi_brutality.html

Bio

Christof Decker is associate professor of American and media studies at the University of Munich/Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München. He received a Ph.D. from the Free University Berlin in 1994 and was Honorary Fellow at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is teaching in the Department of English and American Studies and has published widely on documentary and Hollywood cinema, avant-garde film, and the history of mass media. Most recently he edited *Visuelle Kulturen der USA/Visual Cultures of the USA* (2010) to which he contributed a chapter on American film.

Bio

Christof Decker est professeur agrégé d'études américaines et médiatiques à l'Université de Munich (Ludwig - Maximilians - Universität München) où il enseigne dans le cadre du département d'études anglaises et américaines. Titulaire d'un doctorat de l'Université libre de Berlin (1994) et membre honorifique à l'Université du Wisconsin-Madison, il est auteur de nombreuses publications sur le cinéma documentaire, sur le cinéma hollywoodien, sur le film d'avant-garde, et sur l'histoire des médias de masse. Récemment, il a fait la contribution d'un chapitre sur le film américain dans le livre « *Visuelle Kulturen der USA/Visual Cultures of the USA* » (2010), qu'il a également édité.



BOSS
HUGO BOSS







PERCEPTIONS OF JEWISH FEMALE BODIES THROUGH GUSTAV KLIMT AND PETER ALTENBERG

SUSANNE KELLEY, KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY

Abstract

Gustav Klimt and Peter Altenberg are two figures within Viennese fin-de-siècle cultural production whose art may reveal a perception of local Jewish culture through their different foci on the non-European female body image. Both men have moments in their career, when their attention turns to non-European cultures, through which they inadvertently represent and interpret their own. A selection of these two artists' most well-known works demonstrate two frameworks in which Viennese Jewishness can be read through an alignment of the female body with Asian and African cultures.

Résumé

Gustav Klimt et Peter Altenberg sont deux personnalités viennoises de la culture fin-de-siècle dont l'art peut offrir des indices quant à la perception de la culture juive à travers leur représentation du corps de la femme non-européenne. Tous deux ont réussi involontairement à représenter et à interpréter leur propre culture en se concentrant sur des cultures non-européennes à certains moments de leur carrière. Cette sélection des plus célèbres œuvres de ces deux artistes fournit deux modèles d'interprétation de la judéité viennoise à travers la représentation de corps de femmes asiatiques et africaines.

The Viennese *fin de siècle* is famous for a psychological focus on the self. Scientists and psychologists began to offer new theories of human behavior and perceptions (Sigmund Freud, Otto Weininger, Otto Mach); literature and art examined the self in its local environment (Arthur Schnitzler, Peter Altenberg, Hermann Bahr) and strove for new modes of expressing the complexities of a modern society (Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Arnold Schoenberg, the Secessionist movement). Inspiration for nontraditional perception, communication and presentation of the modern individual and societal reality came as much from within (i.e. life in Vienna and its history and tradition) as from the outside. In 2010, the exhibit *Wilde Welten: Aneignung des Fremden in der Moderne* at Berlin's Georg-Kolbe-Museum connected the artistic break and, to some extent, cultural break with tradition in European Modernism to the widespread fascination with the image of the "foreign," "exotic," or even "wild" around 1900 (Wanken 7; Berger 85). Overtly, the representation of non-European cultures ranged from the scientific and ethnographic to the pseudo-scientific and commercial spectacle. While products constructed for popular consumption, including the commercial realm, tended to thrive on stereotypical images when displaying the other (Dreesbach; Wolter), in many artistic and literary works, we find interpretative representations, which reveal an artist's reading of European home culture.

In this essay, I turn to the perception of the female Jewish body at the Viennese *fin-de-siècle* and examine two artists' expression of the familiar by masking it with the foreign. Scholarship of the body as representation of culture has accompanied the move in literary, culture, and Jewish studies, from focusing on "culture as text" to "culture as performance" (Hödl 83). At least until the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century, Jewish identity and culture tended to be represented in isolation from non-Jewish culture and often in association with physical weakness. Even in the twentieth century, Jewish contributions to European culture were mostly identified as occurring through non-physical professions and talents, or in short, through text and book. Literary or cultural scholarship has only been giving attention to

the Jewish body for a limited number of years. Of those works, the majority focused on the male Jewish body, until feminist scholarship drew attention to the female Jewish body¹.

In his book *Muscular Judaism*, Todd Presner identifies the decades around the *fin-de-siècle* as the moment when a Jewish self-transformation takes place from a people "who had for centuries been considered weak, powerless, physically unfit, cowardly, and even degenerate [...] into a muscular, modern people, able to found a nation-state based on and inspired by the European model" (217). Since Nordau's term "the muscle Jew,"² which is central to Presner's book as well as to the discourse on Zionism, primarily refers to the male body, the female Jewish body is due its own consideration. In this essay, I turn to the aesthetic attention the female Jewish body received in the works of two Viennese Modernists. I concentrate on the depiction (and its lacking) of the Jewish female body by the non-Jewish Gustav Klimt and the assimilated Jew Peter Altenberg. My interpretation of both artists' work suggests that female Jewishness was transformed through elements of non-European imagery, in order to create an effective representation. Underlying this observation is the fact that the female Jewish body has no one specific location where her Jewishness can be identified. Because only the male Jewish body distinguishes itself as Jewish through circumcision, according to Sander Gilman, "the male Jew" was marked as "the exemplary Jew." Gilman writes: "The centrality of the act of circumcision in defining what a Jew is made the very term 'Jew' in the nineteenth century come to mean the male Jew" (*Freud, Race, and Gender* 49). Both Klimt and Altenberg created or described female bodies whose look was distinct from traditional appearances in Viennese society by drawing attention to foreign elements/cultures/races that have been pseudo-scientifically and stereotypically associated with Jewishness in popular culture around 1900.

Alison Rose observes about the *fin-de-siècle* that "The Jewish woman was an attractive figure on the Viennese stage despite anti-Semitism. Whether she functioned as a victim or as a villain, she almost invariably appeared exotic, alluring, and beautiful [...] The attraction of the

‘otherness’ of the forbidden Jewish woman undoubtedly contributed to her popularity on the stage” (Rose 213). As I intend to show, Rose’s characterization of the Jewish woman in Viennese theater can extend to other modes of cultural production where similar perspectives were prevalent. Furthermore, Klaus Hödl’s argument that the presentation and interpretation of Viennese Jewish history must shift its focus from “the existence of two distinct, Jewish and non-Jewish, social entities ” to “mutual exchange of Jews and non-Jews ” (Hödl 7), points out cultural production as a whole to be a particularly vibrant area of Jewish and non-Jewish exchange, and thereby, supports the intersection of the fine arts, literature, and theater. Different modes of cultural expression, therefore, may reveal overlapping perceptions.

Klimt and Altenberg, for example, share an affinity with women and have become known for their effort to interpret them in their life’s work. Strikingly, both men have moments in their career, when they turn to non-European cultures, which inadvertently represent and interpret their own. A selection of these two artists’ most well-known works demonstrate two frameworks in which Jewishness can be read through their alignment of the female body with Asian and African cultures. Gustav Klimt’s implements an aesthetic differentiation of the Jewish Viennese female body, which primarily aligns itself with cultural expression of Middle-Eastern and Asian cultures. Although Jewish presence in Vienna is not actually mentioned in Peter Altenberg’s *Ashantee*, his literary description of the Ashanti village on display in the Vienna Zoological Garden mirrors the status of the Jew in his world. Both Klimt’s aesthetic and Altenberg’s physical description of bodies different from the mainstream culture offer us examples of the perception of the Jew as a non-European race and culture, rooted in nineteenth-century European racial science.

Gustav Klimt was known for his large Jewish clientele throughout his career, which also made him subject to anti-Semitic jabs by contemporary critics including Karl Kraus (Brandstätter 29; Natter 69). Of course, the centrality of the Jewish body in Klimt’s portraits

was not an aesthetic one, but a financial one. After he withdrew himself from publicly commissioned work following the scandal of the university paintings³, he had to rely on his private patrons, many of whom belong to the Viennese Jewish upper-class. A result of Klimt’s close relationship with such families as the Bloch-Bauers, Lederers or Zuckerkandls is a number of Jewish family portraits which, by default, display the female Jewish body. “Indicative of Klimt’s reliance on these families are the myriad portraits he made of his patrons’ wives and daughters, with many of whom he forged strong alliances” (Lillie 56). Possibly because some of his Jewish patrons were also his strongest supporters, Klimt implemented a striking freedom in the portrayal of the families’ women. Many of these private portraits are marked by a transformation or even masking of the body with elements far outside of traditional nineteenth-century portraiture, resulting in an often ethnic interpretation of the female Jewish body. In particular, Klimt used Byzantine, Egyptian, Japanese, and Chinese thematic and stylistic elements. He tended to combine Byzantine mosaics with Egyptian, and Japanese ornaments, while employing the Chinese elements by themselves. Given Klimt’s many non-Jewish clients, one might argue that his oriental focus was likely not the Jewishness of his female subjects, but the creative expression of femininity. The commonality of elements between some of the Jewish family portraits with his mythical works, however, allows an identification of some common elements and themes among Jewish female bodies crafted by Klimt.

The works of Klimt and Altenberg also happen to mirror a trend among Viennese *fin-de-siècle* artists which Alison Rose identifies as non-Jewish artists depicting Jewish figures much more frequently than assimilated Jewish artists did (185). In contrast to Klimt stands Peter Altenberg, who included a very limited number of Jewish figures in his literary works. By itself, this observation is unremarkable, if it were not for the importance he placed on social class, which (in his vignettes about female characters and their lives) reflects national background. The lack of explicit Jewish presence in Altenberg’s literary texts, thus, contrasts his

otherwise demonstrated interest in people of different races, cultures, and nationalities. Whereas Klimt renders the female bodies Jewish through the aesthetic story he provokes in them and the, at times, stereotypically orientalized but also empowering stylization, Altenberg inevitably expresses the status of the Jew in Viennese society by engaging in racial discourse, albeit with an attempt at demonstrative innocence.

Gustav Klimt was a master at original interpretations of femininity. He regularly engulfed woman in artistic, exotic worlds and garments, often in direct relation to Asian art and culture. The present analysis concentrates on the first portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer that was privately commissioned by her husband Ferdinand and completed in 1907, along with the two Judith paintings (1901 and 1909) which have been speculated to portray Adele Bloch-Bauer as well (Kallir 42). *Judith I* and *II* mark the beginning and end of Klimt's famous golden period, whereas *Adele Bloch-Bauer I* represents one of the paintings at its pinnacle. *Adele Bloch-Bauer I*, of course, gained worldwide fame and skyrocketed in value due to the 2006 restitution case in which Austria returned it, alongside four other Klimt-paintings, to Bloch-Bauer's niece and remaining heir (Lillie 55). Here, I discuss *Adele Bloch-Bauer I* as one of the most well-known examples of the portraits Klimt painted of bourgeois female Jews between 1900 and 1918⁴ and *Judith I* and *II* as examples of Klimt's more controversial mythical work.

In his portraits, Klimt created an individual world for each of the women, a "dream world" as critics described his various spaces (Bailey 51). Paintings from the "golden period," portray either no movement, or movement that seems to be frozen in place, as in *Adele Bloch-Bauer I*, where the opulence of the precious gold lends the portrait a metallic and lifeless atmosphere (Natter, "Gustav Klimt: Female Portraits" 116). In many of Klimt's portraits, he outlines gestures by shaping the garment, not the body, as is certainly the case in *Adele Bloch-Bauer I*. Rather than loosely hanging down her body like the reform fashion Klimt liked to wear himself (Eder 53; Houze 40), this dress seems to hold up Bloch-

Bauer and thereby has the appearance and function not unlike a piece of furniture.

In many of his portraits, especially during the golden period, Klimt presents a displaced world, in which every element, including the woman "trapped" in its center, is a carefully crafted work of art (Kallir 32). Klimt's contemporary Hermann Bahr said: "This mutability of appearances in which none of the creatures is empowered in itself, but can be imposed on any one of the others, troubles him. He paints a woman as though she were a jewel. She merely glitters, but the ring on her hand seems to breathe, and her hat has more life in it than she herself. Her mouth is like a blossom, but one does not imagine it can talk—yet her dress seems to whisper" (qtd. in Schmidt 30). This artist's increased freedom in the representation of femininity, however, comes at a price. Along with the body, her personality and eventually even her identity disappear. The symbolic elimination of Bloch Bauer peaked in the erasure of her identity during the Third Reich, when the painting was exhibited as "portrait of a lady against gold background" (Lillie 80) and became known only as "lady in gold" (Natter, "Princess without a History?" 72-73). In *fin-de-siècle* scholarship, too, though, Adele's along with many other painted wealthy Jewish women's identities proved of little interest until the 2001 exhibit *Klimt and his Women* at the *Österreichische Galerie Belvedere*. Since said exhibit, scholarly interest in Klimt's Jewish patrons has increased drastically (Strauss; Lillie).

In portraits, Klimt was at his best when he removed the bourgeois women from the comforts of their domesticity and displaced them into unfamiliar and fantastic spaces, with *Adele Bloch-Bauer I* as one of the highpoints. When ignoring the subject's Jewish identity, one could simply argue that he enabled an escape through art by replacing her body shape and physical expression with foreign, but also estranging elements. When considering Bloch-Bauer's Jewish identity, one must question whether her stylization serves as an enhancement, a stereotyping or detraction from the Jewishness. For sure, the metallic disembodied woman Klimt portrays becomes a type of untouchable other, not unlike the Jewish characters we

find on Vienna's stages to refer back to Rose's quote. Further quoting Rose: "The conflation of the image of the Jew and the woman and the sexualized image of the Jew possibly found their most fertile soil in *fin de siècle* Vienna" (221).

In contrast stand two well-known portraits Klimt painted of non-Jewish women. The portraits of *Sonja Knips* (1898) and *Emilie Flöge* (1902) predate Klimt's golden period, but feature a toned-down version of many of the characteristics that make out his later portraits. *Sonja Knips* is the first portrait in a series of privately commissioned portraits painted for and of the modern Viennese bourgeoisie (Kallir 12). The square dimensions and the departure from the realist depiction determine the beginning of Klimt's art nouveau style (Kallir 12, Natter 84). The heaviness of the dress also previews Klimt's later tendencies to put emphasis on his subject's garment and not her face, as is epiphomized in *Adele Bloch-Bauer I*. The head dress and dress comprised of ornament in *Emilie Flöge* likewise anticipate the style of the golden period when garments were almost entirely constructed of ornament (Kallir 20). Yet, the images of these two non-Jewish women lack the references to the non-European which we find in the Judith and Adele Bloch-Bauer paintings. The contrast of the desexualized, albeit ornamental, European looking Emilie Flöge and the oriental, sexual *Judith I*—painted only one year apart—is an example of two drastically different interpretations of the female subject. *Sonja Knips* set the stage for the style of his later portraits, including *Adele Bloch-Bauer I*. "This was not the erotics of the typical fin-de-siècle *femme fatale*, but rather of a physically potent woman with great sensuous presence, as well as the freshness of youth [...]" (von Miller 197). This same interpretation could apply to *Emilie Flöge*, a painting likewise contrasting the ornamental heaviness of *Adele Bloch-Bauer I* and the fatal eroticism of *Judith I* and *II*. In *Adele Bloch-Bauer I*, Klimt replaces the delicate flowers implemented in *Sonja Knips* and *Emilie Flöge* with overpowering oriental symbols, giving this particular Jewish subject a more artificial, performative aura than the women in the earlier portraits.

Klimt's *Judith* paintings offer the staged sexuality *Adele Bloch-Bauer I* is missing. In this case, however, Klimt's interpretation of Judith follows the tradition of the character of the nineteenth century, but it turned out that the audience added its own twist by conflating Judith with Salome. The Judith of the Old Testament is a faithful widow who tries to prevent Holofernes from destroying her besieged town. She gains his trust and ultimately decapitates him in his sleep. Because she acted in faith, the murder is interpreted as a saintly action. Unlike the original story which painted Judith as a chaste heroess, the Judith since the second half of the 19th century has become the quintessential *femme fatale*, conneing sex with murder (Hammer-Tugendhat; Kultermann). Starting with a play by Friedrich Hebbel in 1840, cultural productions begin to present Judith as a sexual being, which also becomes the point at which a convergence of the figures Judith and Salome takes place in art and literature (Sine). Salome, from the New Testament, is famous for the dance in return to which she demands the head of John the Baptist. In Flaubert, "she twisted her waist, made her belly ripple like the swell of the sea, made her breasts quiver, while her expression remained fixed, and her feet never stood still. She danced like the princesses of India, like the Nubian women from the cataracts, like the Bacchantes of Libya" (qtd. in Kultermann 190). Like Judith, she did not acquire the image of the sexual revengess until the nineteenth century, but Salome's main characteristic also became an erotic orientalism.

Although Klimt named both of his paintings *Judith (I and II)*, and both paintings clarify that the severed head she holds is Holoferne's, critics persisted in changing the woman's identification from Judith to Salome. *Judith I* experienced the name-change from the beginning, but *Judith II* was not unofficially renamed until after Klimt's death (Kallir 42). This confusion of mythical figures represents a symptom of the newly found preference in art and literature for creating the deadly sexual woman. Because we do not see a weapon in the image, Judith's partly exposed body and posture exude a mixture of eroticism and power, but not militaristic strength. *Judith II* is the much more threatening figure

due to her posture, facial expression and the cramped positioning of her hands and fingers. The colorful robe has an organic quality that is in stark contrast to the artificial golden nature in *Judith I*. Here, the movement of the robe resembles that of a dancer, determining the alignment with Salome.

Klimt displays many of the elements of the biblical oriental story and inserts elements adopted from Egyptian, Japanese, and Chinese art, but gives his main subject what his contemporaries recognized as distinctly Jewish features. Commenting on *Judith I*, Felix Salten states, “One often encounters such slender, glittering Jewish women and longs to see these decorative, flirtatious and playful creatures suddenly hurled toward a horrid destiny, to detonate the explosive power that flashes in their eyes” (qtd. in Kallir 16). Jane Kalli summarizes: “Klimt’s artistic realization of the prevalent fantasy of sex with a dark and dangerous Jewess eloquently expressed the comingled strains of misogyny and anti-Semitism that characterized fin-de-siècle thought” (Kallir 16). So, in the *Judiths*, sexuality, Jewishness, and the Oriental merge to convey a powerful and dangerous woman, known for male fatality. She even represents a female contrast to Nordau’s “muscle Jew,” or the “new type of Jew who is corporeally strong and morally fit,” which themselves are the characteristics needed to realize the Zionist nation state and the “rebirth of the Jewish people” (Presner 1).

Peter Altenberg was one of Klimt’s fans who read his work through a romantic lens. Similar to his own intentions, Altenberg interprets Klimt’s artistic treatment of women as: [...] man hat sie erhöht zu ihren eigenen romantischen Gipfelpunkten! Man wird ihr gerecht, man verklärt sie, man macht sie sichtbarlich für die Skeptiker mit ihren trüben freudelosen Augen! Gustav Klimt, ein mysteriöses Gemisch von Ur-Bauernkraft und historischer Romantik, dir sei der Preis (Altenberg, *Bilderbögen des kleinen Lebens* 116).⁵ An artist’s role, then, is not only to display, but to offer an interpretation of the women he describes through paint or words. Although, at first glance, Altenberg is a master at tuning into the individual and revealing a moment in their lives

that encapsulates their entire being, in the end, he never just writes about one individual. Woman, in particular, is linked to myriad critiques Altenberg offers of bourgeois Viennese society (Schönberg 53). In *Ashantee*, he focuses on the Ashanti women contained and displayed in a prescribed space—similar to a performance in the theater—in the midst of bourgeois Viennese society.

In his *Ashantee*, we find an ostentatious “respect” for the Africans alongside passages that are in line with his contemporaries’ hierarchical classification of the races, Jews included. As Sander Gilman has discussed, in nineteenth century racial science, light-skinned Europeans were ranked above dark-skinned Europeans and black non-Europeans rank well below. The Jew ranked as black as the black African. “The Jews are black, according to nineteenth-century racial science, because they are not a pure race [...] But the blackness of the African, like the blackness of the Jew, was credited to the effect of certain diseases, [...] It is the change in the nature and color of the skin which marks the syphilitic; it is the color and quality of the skin which marks the Jew” (*The Jew’s Body* 99-100). Here, I read Altenberg’s portrayal of the Africans as a reflection of the Jewish presence in Viennese society. As Ian Foster points out, the presence of the Ashanti as the “symbolic absolute Other” in Vienna automatically placed them in the center of an ongoing “rhetoric of difference” which also included the casting of the Jewish population as outsider:

The significance of this rhetoric of difference—of belonging and not belonging—in a city where over half of the population had been born elsewhere and where virulent anti-Semitism was in the process of celebrating its political triumph is plain. Within a few weeks of arrival in Vienna, the Ashanti entered a highly differentiated language of racial/ethnic difference. (46)

Hence, Altenberg’s text fits into an expanded discourse that to a large degree revolves around the issue of Jewish inclusivity or exclusivity in Viennese society and culture.

In Altenberg's *Ashantee* of 1897, one of his most long-lived publications,⁶ the narrator (who Altenberg identifies as himself by naming him P.A. or Sir Peter) sketches out his encounters with a group of Ashanti from Ghana who resided the previous year in an ethnographic exhibit at Vienna's Zoological Garden. The text is dedicated to "meinen schwarzen Freundinnen, den unvergesslichen 'Paradieses-Menschen' gewidmet [Dedicated to my Black women friends, the unforgettable paradise people]" (trans. von Hammerstein). As the dedication reveals, the text primarily focuses on P.A.'s acquaintanceship with the Ashanti girls and women, although the tribal group also consisted of men and boys. Although researchers tend to disagree about the actual plot in the text (Wolter 144), the narrator's fascination and infatuation with three African women is clearly a major theme, if not the driving force of the "story."⁷ Contemporary Altenberg fans may wish to qualify *Ashantee* as a critical text in the postcolonial sense, but it is undeniable that the actual practice of human zoo displays is not the focus of Altenberg's criticism. Throughout, he juxtaposes critically-oriented sketches with moments of cultural and ethnic stereotyping (von Hammerstein 103), which results in an ambivalent perspective from which the assimilated Jew Altenberg presents not only the African other, but also provides a glimpse into his conflicted Jewish Viennese self.

Altenberg's readers are foremost drawn to his writing style and approach, both of which reflect the everyday present of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna through collections of short sketches. For over 100 years now, Peter Altenberg (born Richard Engländer) has been acknowledged in two ways: as a Viennese Modernist, whose Modernism hinges on his unique impressionistic writing, and as an eccentric Bohemian, who shines with moments of literary genius. Studies about him rarely discuss his works and his life or lifestyle separately, as both are equally unique and, more importantly, are easily linked. Except for analyses of *Ashantee*, Altenberg scholarship tends to be comprehensive, rather than focusing on a specific aspect of his work or a specific publication. Within these studies, topics that tend to receive attention are: Altenberg's eccentric lifestyle, Altenberg

as a literary impressionist, Altenberg's relationship to and representation of girls and women, Altenberg as a representative of Vienna's coffeehouse culture, and his struggle with his own physical and mental health.⁸ The subject matter of *Ashantee* automatically distinguishes the text from the rest of Altenberg's oeuvre and scholars tend to discuss it in the postcolonial framework (Wolter; von Hammerstein; Kopp; Schwarz). Hence, *Ashantee* is likely the most politically loaded of Altenberg's publications, even if its author did not intend it to be. While the author or narrator claims a unique and un-Viennese sensitivity to non-European cultural traditions, the actual language of *Ashantee* often suggests otherwise. The text's messages are, therefore, of mixed nature.

Altenberg begins *Ashantee* with an edited excerpted passage from *Meyer's Encyclopedia* about the Ashanti's homeland which provides mostly geographical and historical information.⁹ Information about the Ashanti people and culture is limited to the following sentences:

Die Aschanti sind echte, kraushaarige Neger, welche das Odschi sprechen; sie sind namentlich im Teppichweben und in Goldarbeiten sehr geschickt. Es herrscht Vielweiberei. Die Religion ist Fetischismus. Die mysteriöse Aufgabe der Priester besteht hauptsächlich darin, die bösen Genien durch geheimnisvolle Ceremonien und hysterische Tänze zu beschwichtigen. (1)¹⁰

According to Foster, Altenberg purposefully manipulates the encyclopedia article by evoking the most penetrative clichés about African peoples as a critique of the text and the attitudes it represents (48-50). Foster argues that Altenberg means to undermine stereotypes and generalizations by drawing attention to the Ashanti "as people, as individuals first and foremost" (51). Some passages of the text surely achieve just that, while others put into questions the author's noble intention. *Ashantee's* reader not only learns very limited information about the daily life and living culture of this African people, (s)he also does not learn much about the individual women at the center of the text. While Altenberg appears to criticize the focus on the Africans'

skin color in some moments (see “Der Hofmeister”), in others, he joins his fellow Viennese in the same skin—and body—focused gaze he just criticized. Even though the narrator displays racial tolerance by forming relationships with the Ashanti, his descriptions always include a note of the blackness of the African body.

He mixes his generalizations of the Ashanti (as the “black people”) with his ever-present infatuation with the young women. Here too, the body plays a role, as Altenberg succumbs to the inclination to point out the women’s breasts and describes which part of the body is bare and which is covered by clothing. In 2008, Sander Gilman argued that the stress on the women’s blackness changes the underlying motivation of the author. “Als Altenberg seinen Text verfasste, war im europäischen Bewusstsein die Vorstellung von schwarzer Sexualität als pathologisch bereits fest verankert” (“Schwarze Sexualität” 166).¹¹ The perception that skin color determines a different type of sexuality mirrors the perception of the Jewish woman on the stage or in a Klimt painting where she possesses a particularly powerful sexuality compared to her non-Jewish viewers. Werner Michael Schwarz observes that the media of the time promoted the sexual image of Ashanti and Jews alike: Die sexuelle Promiskuität, die man nicht nur in diesen Medien den ‘Aschanti’ unterstellte, wurde auf Juden und Tschechen projiziert und daraus eine Bedrohung der ‘deutschen Rasse’ konstruiert’ (Schwarz “Postliberales Spektakel’ 133).¹²

Altenberg, though, at the same time feeds and undermines the stereotypes of the black “visitors” in Vienna’s midst. On the one hand, his portrayal of the Ashanti reflects the general perception of non-white races, Jews included, by the surrounding media and popular culture. On the other hand, he provides passages which argue directly against the one-sided perception of the outsiders. I argue, therefore, that Altenberg’s text not only contains certain descriptive attitudes towards the black bodies which mirror the Viennese perception of the Jewish bodies among them, but his inconsistency reveals a personal identity conflict he may feel as an assimilated Jew who strives to be

part of Vienna’s mainstream culture, while living out the lifestyle of a bohemian.

In the book’s first sketch, Altenberg introduces the theme of the self and the other. He depicts a tutor who chastises his student for suggesting a cultural difference between the Ashanti and the Viennese: “Mache nur nicht gleich solche Abgründe zwischen Uns und Ihnen. Für Die, für Die. Was bedeutet es?! Glaubst du, weil das dumme Volk sich über sie stellt, sie behandelt wie exotische Thiere?! Warum?! Weil ihre Epidermis dunkle Pigment-Zellen enthält?! Diese Mädchen sind jedenfalls sanft und gut” (9).¹³ In the same sketch, however, the narrator undermines this standpoint of ostentatious respect when he describes one of the women he will later befriend: “Tioko im Garten, bebt, legt den dünnen heliotropfarbigen Kattun über ihre wunderbaren hellbraunen Brüste, welche sonst in Freiheit und in Schönheit lebten, wie Gott sie geschaffen, dem edlen Männer-Auge ein Bild der Weltvollkommenheiten gebend, ein Ideal an Kraft und Blüte” (12).¹⁴ Although the Viennese male visitor A.P. later uncovers the zoo’s outrageous rule that the tribe’s people were not allowed to wear Vienna-fall-weather appropriate clothing, as it would be pretentious and spoil the locals’ viewing experience, he also takes pleasure in the display, as he frequently mentions the bare upper female bodies for their beauty and their naturalness. David Kim judges the latter as “a fantastic idealization of the Other whereby anything African is celebrated as originally whole and naturally beautiful” (7). Sander Gilman goes so far as to argue that underlying Altenberg’s text is solely sexual fantasy: “Dieser starke Subtext vermittelt des Autors Assoziationen zwischen seinem ‘Sehen’ des Schwarzen und seinem Fantasieren über dessen Genitalien. Die Entschlüsselung dieser verborgenen Codes legt die Funktion des Schwarzen innerhalb der Fanatsiewelt von Peter Altenberg und von Wien im Fin de Siècle offen” (164).¹⁵ So, Altenberg’s text oscillates between cultural or at least humanistic sensitivity, or the immodest goggling of a self-declared romantic, and possibly raw sexual fantasy towards a non-European other. His portrayal of the African people is always lined with infatuation and the scenes he offers paint an image of a

naturally mild humanity, not of dangerous activism or sexuality like Klimt's Judith. Barbara Schönberg argues about Altenberg's oeuvre that "Whenever it is a matter of Altenberg's perception of the social injustices inherent in his world, he consistently expresses through the vehicle of 'Woman' the most severe indictments against his bourgeois society. Correspondingly, the females in Altenberg's work most often suffer and bear the brunt of social inequality and injustice" (56). While certainly not the objective of the text, *Ashantee* may serve as the one literary work in which Altenberg indirectly offers his commentary on racial differences in Viennese society, such as the Jewish presence in Austrian culture.

In an 1897 newspaper piece, Altenberg considers his experiences with the Ashanti and concludes that romanticism is the core of the experience.

Ein solches Medikament für die überladenen, überfütterten und dennoch schlecht genährten Seelen war der Verkehr mit diesen noblen würdevollen Lüge-losen schwarzen Menschen. Man kann es sagen, niemals störten sie unsere romantische Phantasie, welche sie zu 'Paradies-Menschen' umdichtete, niemals enttäuschten sie dieselbe. Und wunderbar war es zu sehen, wie 'weiße Menschen' in diesem Umgange poetisch, liebevoll und ein wenig schwärmerisch wurden, bei welchen bisher im Drang des Tages diese zarteren Blüten nicht trieben. ("Abschied der Aschanti" 111-112)¹⁶

Altenberg's perceptions of the Ashanti are clearly lined with infatuation, but they are also extremely egocentric. Ignoring the political reflections an exhibit such as this one may have offered of the Vienna of his time, Altenberg instead devotes himself to an interpretation of the Ashanti's presence as a timeless phenomenon that is disconnected from all political reality. I argue that the text as a whole suggests a different intention from Altenberg, who means to use some of his juxtapositions between Viennese and Ashanti to expose emotional deficiencies in traditional Western definitions of culture. Moreover, similarly to the *Ashanti* text itself, this commentary stays true to the focus on racial differences marked by skin color. The black Ashanti serve the white

Europeans by not forcing them to be confronted with any meaningful and enlightening knowledge or realizations about either culture. This devotion to stereotypes and preconceptions, and the resistance to perspectives that may undermine them, again reflects the political and cultural attitude towards Jewish culture at the *fin-de-siècle*.

In the end, Altenberg's infatuation with the Ashanti females and their bodies is less about them and more about the narrator's (and the author's) self-stylization, including an underlying conflicted identity. Katharina von Hammerstein concludes: "Literature of the turn-of-the-century Vienna served as a space that allowed for wishes, anxieties, and myths about the Self and Other to be represented and, at times, questioned" (103). Altenberg's piece, along with its contradictions, joins a larger public discourse about cultural legitimacy in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna. At the same time, *Ashantee* is the one literary text in which Altenberg may have masked a confliction about his own identity as an assimilated Jew in Vienna, which we otherwise only find in his personal correspondence (see letter quoted by Gilman, *The Jew's Body* 201). Simultaneously, and in contrast, by choosing to align the Jewish bodies with non-European culture in the three paintings I discussed, Klimt also removed the subject matter from his own biography and engaged in a purely creative exercise. Yet, the result is a further conflicted aesthetic representation of female Jewishness.

Although this essay does not settle on one interpretation of the image and role of the female Jewish body in Viennese modernist art and literature, it suggests that the representation and non-representation, the embodiment and disembodiment/masking of female Jewishness express a struggle with the complexities of society, identity, and intercultural contact. As the quote below from Hermann Bahr, the descriptor and critic central to Viennese Modernism, reflects, the presence of the Jew in Vienna around 1900 is part and partial to the definition of its culture and mentality:

The real Jew has no power in the city of Vienna. Unfortunately. It could use some of his diligence,

his industriousness, his earnestness. But the city has always defended itself against him. It doesn't want the competence, greatness, and strength of Jewry. But the Jew who doesn't want to be one, who betrays his race by leaving it, the one who plays something he is not, he is Vienna's kin. The artificiality of these fugitive beings who, emptied of all past, crave to cloak themselves in any present and any future, who are no more than shells of men ready to spout off something different every day, who are capable of being nothing but appearing anything—these have always allured the Viennese. (Bahr qtd. in Spector 621)

With respect to the cultural production during Bahr's time, the question of Jewish influence to the movement remains central in the scholarship on Viennese Modernism. Gustav Klimt and Peter Altenberg are two figures within that production whose art may reveal a perception of local Jewish culture through their different foci on the non-European female body image. Neither Klimt nor Altenberg deliberately set out to define the Jewish woman, but, taking the contemporary perceptions on race into account, the works of both inevitably complemented each other in offering insight into the image of female Jewishness in the Vienna of their time.

Notes

1. Early works include Sander Gilman's *The Jew's Body* (1991) and Susannah Heschel's *On Being a Jewish Feminist* (1983) for example.

2. Specifically, Nordau spoke about "Muskeljudentum" in 1903 before and in reference to a group of gymnasts belonging to a Jewish gymnastics society in Berlin (Stanislawski 92).

3. After the public scandal around three paintings, Klimt was commissioned in 1894 to paint for the new university in Vienna, the artist vowed to step away from publicly commissioned work. The scandal involved a vehement protest against the artist's unconventional depiction of the subjects *Philosophy*, *Medicine*

and *Jurisprudence*. Eventually, Klimt forfeited the commission for the paintings and returned all advances. In 1905, the authorities returned the paintings to him. In 1945, all three paintings were destroyed in a fire.

4. Refer to the catalog for the exhibit *Klimt and his Women* held at the *Österreichische Galerie Belvedere* from September 20 to January 7, 2001.

5. Author's Translation: "You elevate them so they reach their own romantic peaks! You do her justice, you glorify her, you make her visible to the sceptics with their hazy joyless eyes! Gustav Klimt, a mysterious mixture of primordial natural power and historical romanticism, you deserve the prize! "

6. The first edition of the text was published in 1897 by Samuel Fischer and counted 33 sketches. In 1904, Altenberg extended *Ashantee* by five sketches and included it in the fourth edition of *Wie ich es sehe*, published by Fischer in 1904.

7. Altenberg does not write stories in the traditional sense. Instead, each of his books is a collection of sketches expressing an observation he makes of himself or the world around him. Altenberg himself calls them "extracts of life" (*Was der Tag mir zuträgt* 6).

8. See: Barker, Andrew. *Telegrams from the Soul*. (1996); Kosler, Christian. *Peter Altenberg: Leben und Werk in Texten und Bildern*. (1981); Köwer, Irene. *Peter Altenberg als Autor der literarischen Kleinform*. (1987); Schaefer, Camillo. *Peter Altenberg oder Die Geburt der modernen Seele*. (1992); Simpson, Josephine M. N. *Peter Altenberg: a Neglected Writer of the Viennese Jahrhundertwende*. (1987). Von Wysocki, Gisela. *Peter Altenberg: Bilder und Geschichten des befreiten Lebens*. (1979); Wellerling, Peter. *Zwischen Kulturkritik und Melancholie Peter Altenberg und die Wiener Jahrhundertwende*. (1999); Zeisl Schoenber, Barbara. *The Art of Peter Altenberg: Bedside Chronicles of a Dying World*. (1984).

9. See Ian Foster for a comparison of original Meyer's encyclopedia and excerpted sentences used by Altenberg (Foster 47-48).

10. "The Ashantee are full-blooded, authentic, curly-haired Negroes who speak Odschi; they are especially skillful in weaving rugs and making gold jewelry. They practice polygyny. Their religious practice consists of fetishism. The priests' mystical duties lie mainly in appeasing evil spirits through obscure ceremonies and hysterical dances." (Trans. von Hammerstein)

11. Author's Translation: "When Altenberg composed his text, the image of black sexuality as pathological was already deeply anchored into European consciousness" ("Schwarze Sexualität" 166).

12. Author's Translation: "The sexual promiscuity of which not only these media accused the Ashanti, was projected onto Jews and Czechs and presented as a threat to the 'German race.'"

13. "Don't place such an abyss between us and them. To them, to them. What does that mean? Do you think that way because there are stupid people who act as if they are superior to them, and treat them like exotic animals? Why?! Because their epidermis consists of dark pigmentation?! These young girls, at any rate, are gentle and good." (Trans. von Hammerstein 32).

14. "Tioko was shivering in the garden. She wrapped her thin, heliotrope-colored cotton shawl over her wonderful light brown breasts, which otherwise existed in freedom and beauty, as God had created them, offering the noble male gaze an image of earthly perfection, an ideal of strength and flowering." (Trans. von Hammerstein 34).

15. Author's Translation: "This strong subtext communicates the author's association of his 'seeing' the black person and his fantasy about his genitals" ("Schwarze Sexualität" 164).

16. Author's Translation: "The association with these noble dignified lie-less black people was such medicine for the overburdened, oversaturated and still poorly nourished souls. One can say, that they never disturbed or disappointed our romantic imagination which transformed them into 'paradise-people.' And it was wonderful to see how 'white people' became poetic,

loving and a little infatuated in their association, even those for whom the delicate flowers had not bloomed until now in the pressure of the everyday" ("Abschied der Aschanti" 111-112).

Works Cited

Altenberg, Peter. "Abschied der Aschanti." *Ashantee: Afrika und Wien um 1900*. Ed. Kristin Kopp and Werner Michael Schwarz. Vienna: Löcker, 2008. 111-113. Print.

---, "Ashantee." 1897. *Ashantee: Afrika und Wien um 1900*. Ed. Kristin Kopp and Werner Michael Schwarz. Vienna: Löcker, 2008. 11-86. Print.

---, *Ashantee*. Trans. Katharina von Hammerstein. Riverside: Ariadne P, 2007. Print.

---, *Bilderbögen des kleinen Lebens*. 3rd ed. Berlin: Reiss, 1909. Print.

---, *Was der Tag mir zuträgt*. 3rd Rev. ed. Berlin: Fischer, 1906. Print.

Bailey, Colin B., Ed. *Gustav Klimt: Modernism in the Making*. New York: Abrams, 2001. Print.

Berger, Ursel. "Fremde im Atelier." *Wilde Welten: Aneignung des Fremden in der Moderne*. Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang, 2010. 83-96. Print.

Brandstätter, Christian, Ed. *Vienna 1900: Art, Life, Culture*. New York: The Vendome P, 2005. Print.

Dreesbach, Anne. *Gezähmte Wilde: Die Zurschaustellung 'exotischer' Menschen in Deutschland 1870-1940*. Frankfurt/New York: Campus, 2005. Print.

Eder, Franz. "Gustav Klimt and Photography." *Klimt's*

- Women*. Ed. Natter, Tobias and Gerbert Frodl. Vienna: Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, 2000: 50-56. Print.
- Fischer, Lisa. "Gender Asymmetries in Viennese Modernism." *Klimt's Women*. Ed. Natter, Tobias and Gerbert Frodl. Vienna: Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, 2000: 32-37. Print.
- Foster, Ian. "Altenberg's African Spectacle: *Ashantee* in Context." *Theatre and Performance in Austria: From Mozart to Jelinek*. Ed. Ritchie Robertson and Edward Timms. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1993: 39-60. Print. Austrian Studies IV. Print.
- Gillerman, Sharon. "More than Skin Deep: Histories of the Modern Jewish Body." *The Jewish Quarterly Review*. 95.3 (Summer 2005): 470-478. Print.
- Gillman, Abigail. *Viennese Jewish Modernism: Freud, Hofmannsthal, Beer-Hofmann, and Schnitzler*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State UP, 2009. Print.
- Gilman, Sander. *Freud, Race, and Gender*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993. Print.
- , *The Jew's Body*. New York: Routledge, 1991. Print.
- , "Schwarze Sexualität und modernes Bewusstsein in Peter Altenbergs *Ashantee*." Ed. Kristin Kopp and Werner Michael Schwarz. *Ashantee: Afrika und Wien um 1900*. Vienna: Löcker, 2008. 163-173. Print.
- Grabovszki, Ernst and James Hardin. *Literature in Vienna at the Turn of the Centuries: Continuities and Discontinuities around 1900 and 2000*. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2003. Print.
- Hammer-Tugendthat. "Judith." *Klimt's Women*. Ed. Natter, Tobias, and Gerbert Frodl. Vienna: Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, 2000. 220-225. Print.
- Hödl, Klaus. "From Acculturation to Interaction: A New Perspective on the History of the Jews in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna." *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*. 25.2 (2007): 82-103. Print.
- Houze, Rebecca. "Fashionable Reform Dress and the Invention of 'Style' in Fin-de-siècle Vienna." *Fashion Theory*. 5.1 (2001): 29-56. Print.
- Kallir, Jane. *Gustav Klimt: 25 Masterworks*. New York: Abrams, 1995. Print.
- Kim, David D. "The Task of the Loving Translator: Translation, Völkerschauen, and Colonial Ambivalence in Peter Altenberg's *Ashantee* (1897)." *Transit* 2.1 (2006): 1-21. Print.
- Klimt, Gustav. *Adele Bloch-Bauer I*. 1907. Oil and gold on canvas. Neue Galerie New York, New York.
- , *Judith I*. 1901. Oil on canvas. Österreichische Galerie, Vienna.
- , *Judith II*. 1909. Oil on canvas. Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Venice
- Kopp, Kristin and Werner Michael Schwarz Ed. *Ashantee: Afrika und Wien um 1900*. Vienna: Löcker, 2008. Print.
- Kultermann, Udo. "The 'Dance of the Seven Veils.' Salome and Erotic Culture around 1900." *Artibus et Historiae*, 27.53 (2006): 187-215. Print.
- Lillie, Sophie. "The Golden Age of Klimt. The Artist's Great Patrons: Lederer, Zuckerkandl, and Bloch-Bauer." *Gustav Klimt: The Ronald S. Lauder and Serge Sabarsky Collections*. New York: Prestel, 2007: 54-89. Print.
- Natter, Tobias and Gerbert Frodl, ed. *Klimt's Women*. Vienna: Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, 2000. Print.
- Natter, Tobias. "Princess without a History? Gustav Klimt and 'The Community of All who Create and All who Enjoy.' *Klimt's Women*. Ed. Tobias Natter

- and Gerbert Frodl. Vienna: Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, 2000. 57-74. Print.
- , "Gustav Klimt: Female Portraits." *Klimt's Women*. Ed. Tobias Natter and Gerbert Frodl. Vienna: Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, 2000. 76-147. Print.
- Nebehay, Christian. *Gustav Klimt. Dokumentation*. Vienna: Nebehay, 1969. Print.
- Presner, Todd. *Muscular Judaism: The Jewish body and the politics of regeneration*. New York: Routledge, 2007. Print.
- Rose, Alison. *Jewish Women in Fin de Siècle Vienna*. Austin: U of Texas P, 2008. Print.
- Schmidt, Regine. "Of Sweet Young Things and Femmes Fatales: Gustav Klimt and Women around 1900. A Path to Freedom." *Klimt's Women*. Ed. Tobias Natter and Gerbert Frodl. Vienna: Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, 2000: 25-31. Print.
- Schönberg, Barbara. "'Woman-Defender' and 'Woman-Offender,' Peter Altenberg and Otto Weininger: Two Literary Stances vis-à-vis Bourgeois Culture in the Viennese 'Belle Époque.'" *Modern Austrian Literature*. 20.2 (1987): 51-69. Print.
- Schwarz, Werner Michael. *Anthropologische Spektakel: Zur Schaustellung 'exotischer' Menschen, Wien 1870-1910*. Vienna: Turia + Kant, 2001. Print.
- , "'Postliberales' Spektakel und Leidenschaft im Konjunktiv." *Peter Altenberg. Ashantee: Afrika und Wien um 1900*. Ed. Kristin Kopp and Werner Michael Schwarz. Vienna: Erhard Löcker, 2008: 115-140. Print.
- Scott, Marilyn. "A Zoo Story: Peter Altenberg's Ashantee (1897)." *Modern Austrian Literature* 30.2 (1997): 48-64. Print.
- Simpson, Josephine M.N. *Peter Altenberg: Bilder und Geschichten des befreiten Lebens*. Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 1987. Print.
- Sine, Nadine. "Cases of Mistaken Identity: Salome and Judith at the Turn of the Century." *German Studies Review*. 11.1 (1988): 9-29. Print.
- Spector, Scott. "Modernism without Jews: A Counter-Historical Argument." *Modernism/modernity* 13.4 (2006): 615-633. Print.
- Stanislawski, Michael. *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle: Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism from Nordau to Jabotinsky*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2001. Print.
- Strauss, Monica. "Klimt's Last Retrospective." *Forward.com*, Nov. 7, 2007. Web. Mar 25, 2011.
- Von Hammerstein, Katharina. "'Black is Beautiful,' Viennese Style: Peter Altenberg's Ashantee (1897)." *Peter Altenberg. Ashantee*. Trans. Katharina von Hammerstein. Riverside: Ariadne P, 2007: 101-113. Print.
- Von Miller, Manu. "Embracing Modernism: Gustav Klimt and Sonja Knips." *Gustav Klimt: The Ronald S. Lauder and Serge Sabarsky Collections*. New York: Prestel, 2007: 189-211. Print.
- Wanken, Christiane. "Einleitung." *Wilde Welten: Aneignung des Fremden in der Moderne*. Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang, 2010: 5-24. Print.
- Wolter, Stefanie. *Die Vermarktung des Fremden: Exotismus und die Anfänge des Massenkonsums*. Frankfurt/New York: Campus, 2005. Print.

Bio

Susanne Kelley is Assistant Professor of German at Kennesaw State University. She holds a PhD from the University of California, Los Angeles. She has published on the role of Vienna 1900 in contemporary Vienna's self-marketing strategies as well as on the travel motif in post-Wende German literature. Her current research focus is modernism and Viennese culture, fin-de-siècle and the visual arts, tourism and travel literature, and orientalism in literature and visual arts.

Bio

Susanne Kelley est maître de conférences en allemand à L'université Kennesaw State. Elle est titulaire d'un doctorat de l'Université de Californie Los Angeles. Ses publications se concentrent sur le rôle du Vienne des années 1900 dans les stratégies contemporaines d'autopromotion, ainsi que sur le thème du voyage dans la littérature allemande d'après la Réunification. Actuellement elle mène des recherches sur le modernisme dans la culture viennoise, les arts visuels de la fin de siècle, la littérature de tourisme et de voyage, ainsi que l'orientalisme dans la littérature et dans les arts visuels.

(E) MERGING DISCOURSES ARCHITECTURE AND CULTURAL STUDIES

SARAH MCGAUGHEY, DICKINSON COLLEGE

Abstract

Three recent works, Rosalind Galt's *Pretty*, Anne Cheng's *Second Skin*, and Daniel Purdy's *On the Ruins of Babel* incorporate architectural history and architectural discourse into their analyses in ways that are new to their respective fields ranging from studies of film, gender, and race to intellectual history. Placing these three works in one essay allows for a detailed review of the ways in which each author employs architecture, at the same time as it reveals the benefits and challenges of incorporating architecture into cultural studies. The essay discusses the contributions of each work to their fields and also takes advantage of the different approaches to culture and architecture to explore the ways in which this relationship might continue to inform and generate productive studies.

Résumé

Trois œuvres récentes : « *Petty* » par Rosalind Galt, « *Second Skin* » par Anne Cheng, et « *On the Ruins of Babel* » par Daniel Purdy intègrent l'histoire architecturale et le discours architectural d'une façon innovatrice à des domaines qui vont des études filmiques aux études sur les genres, aux études raciales et à l'histoire des idées. Regrouper les trois œuvres dans un article permet d'examiner la manière selon laquelle chaque auteur emploie l'architecture, ainsi que de faire ressortir les avantages et les défis d'incorporer l'architecture dans le domaine des études culturelles. Cet article évalue les contributions de chaque œuvre à son domaine respectif, mais il profite aussi de la variété d'approches de la culture et de l'architecture pour explorer la possibilité que ces rapports interdisciplinaires puissent continuer à ouvrir la voie à des formes de recherches novatrices.

Architecture is a medium that appears in our daily lives. We experience a building as a façade, a visual field that is as part of daily life as the flickering images of the television or the advertisements on buses or in windows. We also experience its spaces, both those of the interior and those which frame the exterior world.¹ Both an optic and haptic experience, architecture is most often experienced in distraction, as Walter Benjamin once aptly noted.² In scholarship, as in daily life, architecture appears most often, and most visibly, as architectural practice, i.e. completed construction. In recent years, cultural studies have recognized the significance of the built landscape and produced works that focus on specific architects and architectural movements or speak to urban building programs and their social, political, economic, or cultural effects.³ These studies rely, for the most part, on architectural practice as a physical representation or embodiment of policies and cultural themes. Architecture, however, is more than construction or a resulting building; it is a discourse that (in its place between science and art and in its reference to history and culture) contributes to numerous other discourses. Despite this, cultural studies do not often look to architectural thought and debate to understand its contribution to our understanding of culture or other media forms.⁴ Such an understanding of architecture as discourse is at the center of the three works to be reviewed here. As a group, Rosalind Galt's *Pretty*, Anne Cheng's *Second Skin*, and Daniel Purdy's *On the Ruins of Babel* reveal architectural practice and discourse as productive fields for cultural studies.

In all three works, European architectural discourse is woven into cultural and historical analysis. In this, however, each scholar employs aspects of architectural discourse to very different cultural contexts. Two of the titles, namely Galt's *Pretty* and Cheng's *Second Skin*, contribute to Film Studies, and as they do so, they rely upon early film and film criticism's development at the time of the emergence of Modernism in architecture. While Galt investigates ornament and its use as a descriptor of marginalized films in the history of film criticism from then to now, Cheng uses architects' fascination with Josephine Baker as a way of reconceptualizing

race within European Modernism. Both studies employ themes of architectural discourse in their projects to redefine critical discourses on film, bodies, gender, sex, nationality, and race. Purdy's *On the Ruins of Babel*, in contrast, has neither a focus on film, nor does it elaborate on critical discourses of sex, race, or gender. His work takes a broader historical perspective than Galt's or Cheng's and traces architecture as a metaphor in modern German intellectual history. Like Galt and Cheng, Purdy sees architecture as more than a history of buildings and asks how architectural discourses and structures change over time. This historical perspective provides the reader with a deeper understanding of how German culture conceptualizes issues of aesthetics, epistemology, the individual, and history in architectural terms.

All three works expose different conceptions of what constitutes architectural discourse and how it can be mobilized to better understand other fields. As already mentioned, architecture engages both visual and spatial themes. In European architectural Modernism, however, architectural change is often measured visually and through changes in the surface of architecture. Indeed, radical shifts in the understanding and creation of architecture as a visual field take place during the early twentieth century in Europe. This is the period in which the Viennese architect Adolf Loos denounces ornament as a crime and architects in the US and Europe use glass and steel architecture beyond its already common industrial forms. Amongst this debate and development of a new visual landscape of architecture, Josephine Baker is at the height of her career and film emerges as a field of criticism. For Galt, architectural discourse and its anti-ornamentalism allows her to understand the origins of the aesthetic assumptions of film criticism. For Cheng, the same discourse on ornament is more than a debate over the visual and is tied inextricably to an understanding of its relationship to the interior. This relationship, Cheng notes, is undergoing transformation, and Modernism's differentiation between the surface of a building and its interior thus allows her to reconceptualize the relationship between skin and flesh. Purdy also recognizes that discourse on

the surface and façade of architecture is connected to its spatial constructions. His work looks at this aspect of architectural discourse, in order to better understand how intellectuals deploy architectural metaphors in their thought.

The works of Purdy, Galt, and Cheng show how moments of transformation in architectural discourse reflect in and upon other fields. In what follows, I will trace and evaluate the ways in which these three scholars employ architecture in their works. I will discuss each work separately, for not only does each interact with architectural discourse to different effect, but each work also has consequences for their fields of study beyond their use of architectural discourse. In conclusion, however, I will return to the question of how all three works base key arguments upon understandings of architectural history, architectural discourse, and architecture's cultural impact.

In *Pretty*, Galt mobilizes architectural discourse in order to understand an emerging visual culture at the outset of the twentieth century. Her work focuses on marginalized cinematic forms and themes, which she collects under the term "pretty." The "pretty," as she defines it, is a minor taste concept, and to that end, she appropriately invokes Ngai's work on "cute."⁵ Although a seemingly innocent, even neutral, term in the spoken vernacular, Galt argues that film criticism associates the term "pretty" with the feminine, decorative, and everyday, and in the association with these concepts, has negative connotations. Early film criticism valued masculine, realist forms of film and these characteristics defined a theory of art and avant-garde films that continue to determine which films are culturally significant. As Galt points out, this view of film did not consider the ways in which it silently excluded non-Western film and aesthetics. Further, it continues to do so. Her book's goal is to recover "pretty," in order to generate a new film criticism, one that is global in its form, content, and reception and thus more reflective of the geopolitics of film today.

To establish a history of the source of anti-ornament in film, Galt turns to Loos and Modern architecture. Loos is the central figure of, and his writings and buildings are the evidence for, the Western rejection of ornament in Modernism. Loos's emphatic rejection of ornament in his lecture turned influential essay "Ornament and Crime" is also a rejection of non-Western aesthetics; he locates the ornamental in the tattoos of the Papuans in order to denounce it as inferior and antiquated.⁶ Galt relies on this anti-ornamental reading to construct her history of aesthetics since Modernism and in so doing neither considers alternative perspectives in architectural discourse nor takes into account that Loos's essay is not isolated in its rejection of non-Western aesthetics and that he might be exaggerating in order to emphasize a point. Stated more explicitly, Galt reads Loos's anti-ornamentalism as evidence for European Modernism's collective rejection of non-Western aesthetics and for its definition of ornament as exotic and foreign.⁷ She supports this through a traditional reading of architecture that begins with Loos, is supported by Le Corbusier, and is made permanent in the work of architectural historian Nikolas Pevsner.⁸ She then pairs this view of European Modernism with the history of iconoclasm in art history, philosophy, and film and with a history of Classicist and Neoclassicist aesthetics and their rejection of decoration, particularly the arabesque, in favor of the (masculine) line. These various strands of aesthetic history, she argues, collude with an emerging European film criticism at the start of the twentieth century and find an echo in film criticism's categorical rejection of decoration and ornament in film, a rejection based in the sexed, raced, and gendered language of critics and constructed in order to establish cultural validity for the emerging medium in Europe and the US. This early film criticism, as Galt goes on to describe, relies upon a discourse of feminization and exoticism to establish the avant-garde, artistic, and political character of "real" or "culturally valuable" film against a commercialized and (feminized) popular film industry.

Galt boldly asserts a political view of film that insists upon looking at the filmic "pretty" in new ways, and she does so with ample evidence from film criticism and

with acute analyses of a diverse array of marginalized films, such as Baz Luhrmann's *Moulin Rouge!*, the work of Derek Jarman and Ulrike Ottinger, and Mikhail Kalatozov's *Soy Cuba*. This is certainly the strength of her study: her innovative discussion of post-war film theory and film. In this part of her analysis, she considers alternatives to the common binaries of surface/depth, white/black, subject/object, "pretty"/real and lays out a complex network of the ways in which the discourse of film criticism constructs decorative, ornamental, pleasurable surface, and image-oriented film as politically, aesthetically, and culturally impotent. She continues and notes that this discourse disregards subversive possibilities and closes its eyes to a theory of film that breaks free of its Western binds to starkness and distance as the sole forms of political viability in film.

Due to the significant work Galt performs in her analysis of film and film criticism since the late 1940s, it is unexpected that her work positions itself much less critically vis-à-vis historical discourse and contexts. While she presents and criticizes the history of film criticism, she does not include more than brief references to pre-WWII films. In addition, her work assumes, for the most part, that Western aesthetics has a history of binary categorization that rejects one value (non-Western, feminine, ornamental, exotic) for another (white, masculine, Western). This history is presented as continuous and linear, with some slight shifts in the view of its content but no fundamental debate over its basic form.⁹ Put more simply, Galt's study implies that the binary and hierarchical views of the past (those of early Modernism and post-WWII film criticism) must be overcome in the present, suggesting that the entire history of Western aesthetics constitutes a raced, gendered, and sexed discourse that positions the white European male as the source of power and domination.

An example from early film criticism that characterizes Galt's tendency in her work to assert, and not question, such hierarchies (particularly before WWII) is her discussion of the film critic Emile Vuillermoz and his reference to "craft." (Galt 107) Galt cites a 1918 review

by Vuillermoz in which he refers to the filmmaker Abel Gance as a "good craftsman." Pointing to Loos's denigration of craft to establish the concept's historical context, Galt claims that Vuillermoz's use of the word "craftsman" to describe a filmmaker implies said filmmaker is not an "artist," for it is the artist who has a higher cultural value. Certainly, this is a possible reading of Vuillermoz's use of the term; however, it is not the only implication of the use of "craftsman" in the context of the early twentieth century. Galt neglects to note that architects, philosophers, and designers of the early twentieth century are in the midst of a debate on the relationship between craft and art, set into motion by a rise in technology and new means of mass production. This debate generates a much more subtle relationship between craft and art than the simple hierarchy she invokes here. Loos himself wrote of the respect that needs to be given to a master craftsman when it comes to the design of objects.¹⁰ Indeed, the necessity of promoting craftsmanship in design and design education is also a central goal of the Bauhaus, a school whose social and aesthetic import in Modernism is widely acknowledged and to which Galt does not refer in her overview of architectural history. As in her presentation of Loos's comments on ornament, Galt puts aside the historical context of debate and with it any renegotiation of Western aesthetics, in order to present a stark picture of the period as anti-ornament and anti-decorative.

I do not wish to imply that Galt presents false information in her discussion of the Western history of aesthetics, as she has certainly done much historical work to present her narrative of Classicism, Neoclassicism, and Modernism. Instead, I suggest that these remain historical excursuses, simplified and isolated as presentations of Western aesthetics, and thus they detract from the complexity of the main focus of her work, which is the politics in and of film criticism and film since 1960. It is in her investigation of the "pretty" and her call for a look at ornament, style, surface detail, arabesque camera movement, and color as a marginalized political force in film after 1960 that *Pretty* constitutes a substantive contribution to Film Studies. In this endeavor, Galt offers ample evidence from the history of film criticism

and repositions a wide array of films within that history. The breadth of films she analyzes—from avant-garde and queer film to commercialized popular film and art cinema—and her careful articulation of the decorative images and objects in the films and in their contexts is impressive. Here in her work, discourses of gender, race, sex, and the exotic become visible and are unpacked by exploring alternative ways of generating political meaning. For instance, *Soy Cuba*, a film commonly praised as significant for film history yet denounced as politically and socially impotent, gains new depth and texture with Galt's exposition of key scenes, in particular the funeral procession. And, as Galt compellingly argues, positioning film's surface, image, and decoration at the center of film criticism has revolutionary potential for film theory in global cinema today. Thus, her work on post-1960 film is an essential contribution to renewing the field of film criticism.

In her presentation of ornament and surface, Cheng's *Second Skin* offers an alternative to Galt's *Pretty* when examining the discourses of race, gender, and sex in Western Modernism. Cheng does not contradict the assertion that Western Modernism is a discourse dominated by white Western males. She, like Galt, stresses how the privileged position of the masculine, white, straight model generated a hierarchy to the detriment of the objectified Other. And yet, she asks new questions of this hierarchy: in what ways does this relationship change the object *and* subject? How can we consider agency on both sides of the subject-object relationship? And how does this provide new insight into the construction of race?

To answer these questions, Cheng invokes Modern architectural discourse surrounding ornament and surface, in order to approach the construction of race from a radically new direction. Architecture allows her to review the relationship between skin and flesh, as well as object and subject, for in Modernism, the surface gains a material significance independent of its structural dimensions at the same time as the spaces of architecture are radically redefined. Like Galt, two central figures of architectural Modernism form Cheng's

discussion here: Adolf Loos, who designed a never-to-be-built house for Baker, and Le Corbusier, with whom Baker had an affair. Admitting that Loos's polemic essay "Ornament and Crime" invokes racial and gendered speech in order to establish the need to advance a new aesthetic program, Cheng does not assume that Loos takes this stance throughout his work. As a result, she approaches Loos's design of the Josephine Baker house in a way as yet unexplored in scholarship. She sees the objectification of Baker in its construction but refuses to eliminate Baker's agency or reduce Loos's role in the project to one of master over performer. This discussion and others rely upon unique connections amongst cultural products of the time. She notes, for example, the role of plastic, prison stripes in fashion, gold, and dirt, at the time of Josephine Baker's performances and these provide her with new interpretations of common Modernist readings of skin, surface, and race.

Through examples from film, literature, architecture, and art, Cheng delves into the complexities of a critical discourse on Modernism which emphasizes the agency of European white males and thereby assumes the passivity of non-European subjects. Here, Picasso's famous visit to the Trocadéro, Le Corbusier's affair with Josephine Baker, and Portia's choice of a leaden coffin become the textual evidence of the contamination of both object and subject in the (visual) construction of race and gender. These, she argues, revise our view of race and Primitivism as simple issues of "Otherness" in Modernism. As her work redefines our understanding of Primitivism and Orientalism, race and subjecthood, Cheng does not stray far from the figure of Baker, the core of her study. She incorporates analyses of all aspects of Baker's performance from her films to her photographs and her biography. Thus, her work is both an innovative study of Josephine Baker as well as an important contribution to Cultural, Film, and Visual Studies of Western Modernism.

Ultimately, however, Cheng's interest does not lie in all of these important revisions to our understanding of Western Modernism. Instead, she aims to present a more nuanced view of the history of race in order to approach

contemporary racial politics. Refusing to look at skin as an embodiment of subjectivity, Cheng challenges contemporary constructions of race, particularly those that stress the agency of the performance or the mastery of the subject that colonizes or dominates the “Other”. Her historical work on race demands a new racial politics that accepts authenticity as contradictory and recognizes “the predicament of embodiment” (Cheng 170-171). Like Galt, Cheng calls for contemporary political change, and architectural discourse provides her with an essential referent in the construction of race.

Cheng’s work starts with the visual in her study of Baker in architecture, film, theater, and photography and out of these discourses emerges her new view of the modern subject. It is this modern subject and the specifically architectural connections which intellectuals invoke in its creation that are the subject of Purdy’s *On the Ruins of Babel*. From the outset, Purdy establishes that architecture lies at the center of philosophy, poetry, and critical theory in Europe even as it emerges as a discipline. Indeed, architectural terminology and debates structure both European society and thought. His exhaustive study begins in the seventeenth century with the European rejection of the classical order of columns and continues into discourses on building and memorialization in contemporary Europe and the US.

Important to the development of architecture in Europe is the major shift in architectural thought from a regulated aesthetics to one that is open to change in style and in period in the sixteenth century. Prudy takes this shift as a starting point to discuss the role of architecture in German intellectual thought, most notably in the work of Kant, Goethe, and Benjamin. In case studies on each of these writers, Purdy illuminates the way in which they refer and rely upon architectural metaphors. To do so, he delves into the discourse of architecture and architectural theory of their time. All of the significant names of European architectural history and theory are referenced—from Palladio to Laugier and Gideon—but also some of the more specific disciplinary names (see his extensive bibliography of primary and secondary sources). Furthermore, he firmly locates these thinkers

within their historical and cultural contexts and examines the influence of architectural discourse in the work of other philosophers, perhaps most significantly Hegel, but also Descartes and others. The result is both an overview of the history of European architectural theory from a German perspective, at the same time as it is a history of intellectuals’ response to and use of architectural theory in their work.

To this breadth of context, Purdy does not neglect detail, and it is in his ability to read carefully that his work gains in depth. For his study of each author’s work, he follows choices in terminology, traces patterns and developments of themes, and elaborates on etymological and historical contexts. He reveals readings that are substantive and insightful. For instance, Goethe’s architectural references, Purdy shows, are informed by his experiences with architecture as a child, at the same time as they form his concept of poetry and poetic genius. Exploring such paths in the works of the authors and intellectuals he mentions leads Purdy to include not just the usual writings addressed in scholarship or those most often referenced for their views on architecture. In his study of Benjamin, for example, Purdy draws upon works as diverse as Benjamin’s early *Denkbilder* and his study of Goethe’s *Wahlverwandschaften* (*Elective Affinities*). Purdy’s combination of understanding words and themes in the authors’ oeuvres, as well as in their cultural and historical context, allows him to identify otherwise unnoticed references to architectural discourse; it also highlights the value of reading carefully across disciplines.

Purdy’s work is accessible to a general scholarly audience and does not assume the reader has a vast knowledge of architectural history or even of the work of Kant, Goethe, and Benjamin, although those who do are presented with a nuanced and new view of both. He highlights these particular intellectuals because of their fundamental roles in German intellectual thought, as well as due to their influences and connections to one another. Kant’s work informs much of modern philosophy, including Hegel, while Goethe’s architectural concepts and writings reappear in Benjamin’s work. Purdy thus

draws upon the history he traces at each new stage of his study's presentation of its development.

This dense chronological approach changes somewhat in his final chapters, as Purdy extends his discussion of architecture into the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. As he notes in his introduction and shows in his discussion of architectural metaphor into the early twentieth century, there is a long history of architecture in German thought that continues to inform an understanding of the architectural and intellectual landscape today. This aspect of his argument substantiates his temporal jump to the contentious debates on building in the unified Berlin of the late twentieth century, particularly those on ruin, monument, and museum in the new capital. Purdy's insightful comparison of Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum to the work of Hegel shows how significant this connection is. His analysis of the museum shows the ways in which an awareness of historical understanding of architecture continues to underscore the power of contemporary building.

The works of Purdy, Cheng, and Galt are built upon different perspectives on the history of architectural discourse, but each also point towards further potential for studies in pursuing intersections with architectural discourses. For both Galt and Cheng, the early twentieth-century architectural debates on ornament and façade are productive contexts in order to establish and question normative assertions of race and film. Galt's work uses architectural discourse to explore early cinema and its critics as they establish the field. It allows her to view the emergent field in a broader context and include art historical and architectural debates over ornament, decoration, craft, and technology. While her current study refrains from incorporating architectural discourse in anything more than an allusive role, it does suggest that a study of early film criticism would benefit from further exploration of its connections to Modern architectural discourse in its many and complex dimensions. Cheng's work constitutes a shift in our understanding of the legacies of Modernism and highlights the ways in which architecture contributes

to this shift. As she notes in her conclusion, this has ramifications for contemporary racial politics, but it also, I would argue, calls for a look at the history of architecture's relationship to surface beyond the one that coalesces around the figure of Josephine Baker. Purdy's range—both diachronic and synchronic—on topics of architecture, writing, and thought is immense. Indeed, it left me hoping that Purdy consider writing an additional book devoted to contemporary or post-WWII architectural thought in German culture. As it stands, the analysis of Libeskind's museum would be better served as a separate article. For while removing this discussion of post-unified Germany from the book would limit the historical import of his analysis of pre-WWII architectural metaphor and intellectual thought, it would also allow for more thematic and temporal coherence. The references to the World Trade Center, the Jewish Museum, and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe thrust the reader into different historical contexts and discourses than the remainder of the book.

What becomes clear in the work of these scholars is the importance of understanding the complexity of architecture as a discipline and a practice. While Galt focuses primarily on architecture as a visual medium, Cheng adds the haptic and structural dimensions of the field to her cultural analysis. Building further upon the concept of architecture and its discourse allows Purdy to recognize architecture's role in the public sphere, as well as the implications of its use in creating a private space for the individual. All three works show how architecture contributes to the complexities of cultural discourses and all also recognize the ways in which architecture structures and informs debates on surface, identity, popular culture, ideas, and worldviews. Debates over architecture's meaning and its role in society allow it to become a key metaphor for epistemology and cultural criticism. Architecture provides a visual and spatial element around which discourses on the body, the self, aesthetics, and history emerge and coalesce. In their different uses of architecture and the major themes of its discourse, these works show the benefits and potential of breaking architecture out of the boundaries of its field to become a resource for understanding the

cultural conditions upon and with which twentieth and twenty-first century thought, popular culture, and visual media have developed. Indeed, these three scholars emphasize the need to move architecture's reach into a transdisciplinary space.

Notes

1. For a recent discussion of architecture as visual and spatial, see the appropriately titled conference volume: Antony Vidler, *Architecture between Spectacle and Use* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).
2. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in: Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. by Harry Zohn (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1968) 239.
3. There are too many works on architects and architectural movements to list here. A selection of recent significant books that discuss Central European architecture and architects are: Deborah Ascher Barnstone, *The Transparent State: Architecture and Politics in Postwar Germany* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2005); Sabine Hake, *Topographies of Class: Modern Architecture and Mass Society in Weimar Berlin* (University of Michigan Press, 2008); Jennifer Jenkins, *Provincial Modernity: Local Culture & Liberal Politics in Fin-de-Siècle Hamburg* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); John V. Maciuka, *Before the Bauhaus: Architecture, Politics, and the German State, 1890-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Despina Stratigakos, *A Women's Berlin: Building the Modern City* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); and Janet Ward, *Weimar Surfaces: Urban Visual Culture in 1920s Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).
4. A notable exception in intellectual history is Mitchell Schwarzer, *German Architectural Theory and the Search for Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995). Janet Ward's book (see footnote 3) also looks at architecture in the context of the media landscape of the Weimar Republic.
5. Sianne Ngai, "The Cuteness of the Avant-Garde," *Critical Inquiry* 31.4 (2005): 811-47.
6. Adolf Loos, "Ornament und verbrechen," in: *Ornament und verbrechen. Ausgewählte Schriften*, ed. Adolf Opel, Wien: Prachner, 2000.
7. In his study of Gottfried Semper and the nineteenth-century debates on ornament, Harry Mallgrave notes, for example, that Loos is a "sentimental ornamentalist." See: Harry Francis Mallgrave, *Gottfried Semper: Architect of the Nineteenth Century. A Personal and Intellectual Biography*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996. 370.
8. See Galt 114 and the corresponding footnote (Galt 320).
9. An example: "Realism is attributed to Western aesthetic values, whereas symmetry, stylization, and the decorative are linked to the Orient. Thus in thinking ornament, we find a colonial and Orientalizing logic at work from the beginning." (Galt 105)
10. For example, see: Adolf Loos, *Trotzdem. Gesammelte Schriften. 1900-1930*. Vienna: Prachner 1982, in particular the essay "Der Sattelmester."

Works Cited

- Cheng, Anne Anlin. *Second Skin: Josephine Baker and the Modern Surface*. New York: Oxford UP, 2011. Print.
- Galt, Rosalind. *Pretty: Film and the Decorative Image*. New York: Columbia UP, 2011. Print.
- Purdy, Daniel L. *On the Ruins of Babel: Architectural Metaphor in German Thought*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP, 2010. Print.

Bio

Sarah McGaughey is assistant professor of German at Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. She is completing a manuscript tentatively titled *Ornament as Crisis: Architecture, Design, and Modernity in Hermann Broch's Die Schlafwandler*. Her research focus is on spatial theory and architectural theory as it intersects with literature. She has published articles on topics ranging from fashion and furniture to the concept of style and architecture in Broch's early works. Her next project is on architectural interiors of Modernism. Sarah McGaughey is a member of the board of directors of the international association of scholars working on Hermann Broch (IAB) and of the editorial advisory board of *Imaginations: Journal of Cross-Cultural Image Studies*.

Bio

Sarah McGaughey est professeure adjointe en allemand au Dickinson College à Carlisle, en Pennsylvanie. Elle est en train de terminer un manuscrit ayant le titre provisoire de « *Ornament as Crisis: Architecture, Design, and Modernity in Hermann Broch's Die Schlafwandler* ». Ses recherches se concentrent sur l'intersection entre la littérature, la théorie spatiale, et la théorie architecturale. Ses publications vont de la mode et de l'ameublement au concept du style et à l'architecture dans les premières œuvres de Broch. Son prochain projet traite des intérieurs architecturaux dans le cadre du modernisme. Sarah McGaughey est membre du conseil d'administration de l'association internationale des spécialistes de Hermann Broch, ainsi que du comité scientifique d'*Imaginations : revue d'études interculturelles de l'image*.

ANNEX 1

Concrete Poetry

01. femininity 1984
02. cement finger, from cement 04, 2011-02-02
03. unruhstift, from weißer neger 23, 2011-05-9
04. concrete hijab, from weißer neger 24, 2011-05-9
05. concrete wall, from concrete party 01, 2011-05-27
06. walled in: ANTI GONE, from concrete party 27, 2011-08-11
07. engsternig, from oral call 06, 2011-09-09
08. HIJAB, from oral call 06, 2011-09-12
09. writing on the wall to wall, from oral call 09, 2011-09-26
10. femininiation 2011
11. Lady of Ephesus, from oral call 20
12. I Ching, from oral call 23
13. suspended beliefs, from oral call 22
14. cross word, from cross word 2a
15. bleu de chanel, from cross word 2b
16. eradicate my roots, from cross word 2c
17. silly cone, from cross word 2d

Information:

In its style and intention the concrete poetry is a collection of jumbled, abstract ideas that reflect the day-to-day life and mood of the artist. Above all, it is improvised and written down immediately - in essence it is automatic writing. Tanya Ury's written poetry may be regarded as "concrete" because of its visual design, and unconventional aural effect when spoken - the texts thereby gain in dimension beyond accepted meaning.

Du point de vue du style et de la visée la poésie concrète est un assemblage d'idées abstraites et en pagaille qui reflète le quotidien et l'humeur de l'artiste. Et avant tout, elle est improvisée et écrite sur-le-champ — essentiellement, il s'agit d'une écriture automatique. La poésie écrite de Tanya Ury peut être considérée comme "concrète" en raison de son design visuel et de l'effet auditif inusité qu'elle produit lorsqu'elle est récitée. Cela lui confère une dimension au-delà du sens consensuel.

Im Stil und Absicht sind sie „konkrete Poesie“, eine Kollektion aus durcheinander geworfenen, abstrakten Gedanken, die alle zusammen, Alltag und Gemüt der Künstlerin reflektieren. Es ist hervorzuheben, dass diese Poesie improvisiert ist und in einer Art "Écriture Automatique" sofort niedergeschrieben wurde. Tanya Ury's geschriebene Poesie könnte man als „konkret“ bezeichnen: wegen des visuellen Design beim Betrachten und des unkonventionellen Klangs beim Aufsagen derselben – die Texte gewinnen dadurch Dimensionen jenseits der gängigen Wort-Bedeutung.

ANNEX 2

Alibijude

A photograph: height 713,74 mm x width 1014,6 mm (edition of 7)

Une photographie: hauteur 713,74 mm x largeur 1014,6 mm (tirée à 7 exemplaires)

Eine Photographie: Höhe 713,74 mm x Breite 1014,6 mm (Edition 7)

Information:

In the spring of 2011 I took part in the exhibition “Kunst und Gedenken. Kölner Künstler/innen mit Arbeiten zur Auseinandersetzung mit dem Nationalsozialismus” (Art and Remembering – Cologne Artists and Art on National Socialism) in EL-DE-Haus, the National Socialist Documentation Centre, Cologne. Ingeborg Drews, who had been a friend of Wilhelm Unger, gave a talk on the life and career of my great uncle, as part of the accompanying programme. A discussion ensued in which a member of the public accused the newspaper magnate Kurt Neven-DuMont, now recognised as having been a former Nazi, of having profited in his support of Wilhelm Unger, whom the visitor named an “alibi Jew”.

The photograph, which I have named *Alibijude* (Alibi Jew), originally taken by the journalist Helmut Koch [Information on the back of the photograph: Helmut Koch. Bildberichterstatter (photo Journalist), Köln-Klettenberggürtel 78, Fernruf (long distance call): 212313 Presse-Haus (PRESS HOUSE)] is one that I acquired from my mother and kept, long before her death in 1998. It is fortuitous that I still have this image at all, for the bulk of the families’ photographs went missing when the Historical City Archives of Cologne collapsed, in March 2009, due to negligence on the part of various official bodies. Along with the loss of this large Archival museum, much unpleasant evidence of recent German history will also have been mislaid, temporarily at least, a fact, which has resulted in many crocodile’s tears having been openly shed.

My reason for having put this particular photograph aside for myself was because it epitomised the strangeness of the times – it is a sign of the time. The photo was taken during the Cologne Carnival of 1955; my grandparents Alfred and Nina Unger, stand to the left wearing evening gowns decorated with fake carnival medals (my grandmother’s looking like a fake Star of David). In the foreground is the young heir to the newspaper throne, dressed in traditional, pseudo medieval garb as the Carnival Prince. At the centre of the photograph, being clasped by the Carnival Prince are my great-grandparents, Flora and Samuel Unger, who are in their 80’s. They were survivors of Terezin, two of whose children had been murdered in the camps. They appear bemused in the image, forlorn – where the Prince smiles, their faces are unsmiling. Flora, having escaped the Russian pogroms of the 19th Century, by fleeing to Germany with her mother as a child, wears no carnival garb on the occasion of this press photo call, but a simple scarf with paisley design. The enforced performance is a travesty.

Behind the Carnival Prince and his father, Wilhelm is conspicuous by his absence, he appears to be hiding – one sees only his forehead and hair.

Postscript: In January this year (2012), my aunt Annette Pringle (née Felske) came over to Cologne from the USA, after the death of her brother Gerd. They were both born before the war. She told me that she had found a copy of the very same photograph that I recently adopted to make an artwork of, amongst her brother’s possessions, but was surprised at my interpretation of the image – living in Boston Annette had not yet heard of the Neven DuMont scandal some 6 years ago. She informed me that the Neven DuMonts had done much to assist family members who were in hiding in Cologne, during the war, something that I had not been aware of, so that I must again review this complex, symbiotic relationship, between our family and that of the Neven DuMonts.

I would like to thank Dr. Jürgen Müller for discussion and advice in the development of the accompanying text to *Alibijude*.

Au printemps 2011, j'ai participé à l'exposition « Kunst und Gedenken. Kölner Künstler/innen mit Arbeiten zur Auseinandersetzung mit dem Nationalsozialismus » (L'Art et le souvenir – des artistes de Cologne présentant des œuvres sur le national-socialisme) au EL-DE-Haus, le Centre de documentation sur le national-socialisme à Cologne. Dans le cadre du programme d'accompagnement, Ingeborg Drews, un ami de mon grand-oncle Wilhelm Unger, a fait un exposé sur sa vie personnelle et professionnelle. Cet exposé a suscité une discussion pendant laquelle un membre du public a accusé le magnat de la presse Kurt Neven-DuMont d'avoir tiré profit de son soutien à Wilhelm Unger. Auparavant, Neven-DuMont avait acquis la réputation d'être un ancien nazi. Le même membre du public a profité de cette occasion pour surnommer Unger « Alibi Jew » (alibi de Juifs).

Le journaliste Helmut Koch [L'information au verso de la photo indique Helmut Koch. Bildberichterstatler (Photojournalist), Köln-Klettenberggürtel 78, Fernruf (appel longue distance): 212313 Presse-Haus (Maison PRESS)] a pris cette photographie que j'ai nommée *Alibijude* (alibi de Juifs). J'ai acquis cette photo, parmi d'autres, de ma mère bien avant sa mort en 1998. J'ai gardé cette photo par hasard, puisque la plupart de mes photos de famille ont été perdues dans l'effondrement de l'Historisches Archiv der Stadt Köln (Les Archives historiques de la ville de Cologne), un résultat de la négligence de plusieurs cadres officiels. En plus de la perte de ce musée d'archives, beaucoup de preuves de la tragique histoire récente de l'Allemagne ont été égarées, au moins temporairement. À cet égard, on a versé beaucoup de larmes de crocodile dans l'espace public.

J'ai gardé cette photo parce qu'elle illustre une époque très étrange. Elle a été prise au Carnaval de Cologne en 1955. À gauche se tiennent mes grands-parents, Alfred et Nina Unger, qui sont décorés de fausses médailles, le type de médailles qu'on trouve au carnaval – celle de ma grand-mère ressemble à l'Étoile de David. Au premier plan se tient leur héritier, celui qui allait succéder au trône de l'empire médiatique, déguisé en Prince du Carnaval avec des vêtements médiévaux. En serrés au

centre se tiennent mes arrière-grands-parents, âgés de 80 ans. Flora et Samuel Unger avaient survécu à Terezin où ils avaient perdu deux enfants. Ils ont l'air perplexe ou triste, ils ne sourient pas, tandis que le Prince, lui, sourit. Flora avait fui en Allemagne avec sa mère pour échapper aux pogroms russes du 19ème siècle. Elle porte une écharpe à motifs cachemire au lieu d'être déguisée, même si elle savait qu'on allait prendre des photos, fait qui démontre que cette mise en scène est un véritable travestissement.

Derrière le Prince du Carnaval se tient son père, Wilhelm, dont l'absence dans la photo est sensible. Il semble se cacher; on ne peut voir que la moitié de sa tête.

Post-scriptum: En janvier de cette année (2012), ma tante Annette Pringle (née Felske) est venue à Cologne des É-U, après la mort de son frère Gerd. Tous deux sont nés avant la guerre. Elle m'a dit avoir trouvé dans les possessions de ce dernier la même photographie que j'ai utilisée dans la présente œuvre. Vivant à Boston, elle n'avait pas entendu parler du scandale Neven DuMont quelques 6 ans plus tôt. Elle m'a appris que les Neven DuMonts ont fait beaucoup afin d'aider les membres de notre famille qui se cachaient à Cologne durant la guerre, ce que j'ignorais. C'est pourquoi il me faut à nouveau réévaluer la relation complexe, symbiotique, entre ma famille et celle des Neven DuMonts. Je tiens à remercier le Dr. Jürgen Müller pour nos échanges et pour ses conseils dans le développement du texte d'accompagnement de *Alibijude*.

Im Frühling 2011 nahm ich an einer Ausstellung im EL-DE-Haus, dem Kölner NS-Dokumentationszentrum, teil: "Kunst und Gedenken. Kölner Künstler/innen mit Arbeiten zur Auseinandersetzung mit dem Nationalsozialismus". Ingeborg Drews hielt im Rahmen des Nebenprogramms einen Vortrag über das Leben und die Karriere meines Großonkels Wilhelm Unger, dessen Bekannte sie gewesen war. Eine Diskussion schloss sich an, bei der ein Zuschauer den Zeitungsmagnaten Kurt Neven-DuMont, dessen Nazi-Vergangenheit mittlerweile aufgedeckt wurde, beschuldigte, von der Unterstützung Wilhelm Ungers – den der Besucher „Alibijude“ nannte – profitiert zu haben.

Die Photographie, die ich *Alibijude* genannt habe, und die ursprünglich von dem Journalisten Helmut Koch [Information auf der Rückseite des Photos: Helmut Koch. Bildberichterstatter, Köln-Klettenberggürtel 78, Fernruf: 212313 Presse-Haus] aufgenommen wurde, habe ich von meiner Mutter, lang vor ihren Tod 1998, übernommen und behalten. Es ist reiner Zufall, dass ich dieses Bild überhaupt noch besitze, weil der Großteil der Familienphotos verschwunden ist, als das Historische Archiv in Köln im März 2009 durch die Nachlässigkeit verschiedener Behörden einstürzte. Mit dem Verlust dieses archivarischen Museums sind viele unbequeme Belege der neuesten deutschen Geschichte zumindest vorläufig verloren gegangen, eine Tatsache, über die auch eine Menge öffentlicher Krokodilstränen vergossen wurden.

Ich hatte diese bestimmte Photographie bei mir behalten, weil sie die Fremdheit jener Epoche verkörpert – ein Zeichen der Zeit. Das Photo wurde während des Kölner Karnevals 1955 aufgenommen; meine Großeltern Alfred und Nina Unger stehen im Abendkleid, geschmückt mit falschen Karnevalsorden (die von meine Großmutter sieht wie ein Davidstern aus), zur linken Seite des Bildes. Im Vordergrund sieht man den jungen Erben des Zeitungsthrons in traditionellem, pseudomittelalterlichem Kostüm als Karnevalprinz verkleidet. Im Mittelpunkt des Photos, vom Karnevalprinz untergehakt, sind meine damals über 80 Jahre alten Urgroßeltern, Flora und Samuel Unger. Sie waren Überlebende von Theresienstadt, deren zwei Töchter im KZ ermordet wurden. Auf dem Bild wirken sie benommen, verloren – wo der Prinz lächelt, bleiben ihre Mienen ernst. Flora, die noch im 19. Jahrhundert als Kind, mit ihrer Mutter vor den russischen Pogromen nach Deutschland geflüchtet war, trägt trotz dieses Presse-Fototermins keine Karnevalskleidung nur einen einfachen Schal mit Paisleymuster. Diese gezwungene Performance ist eine Travestie.

Hinter dem Karnevalprinzen und seinem Vater fällt Wilhelm durch seine Abwesenheit auf – er scheint sich zu verstecken – man sieht nur seine Stirn und den Haaransatz.

Postskriptum Januar: in diesem Jahr (2012), ist meine Tante Annette Pringle (geborene Felske), nach dem Tod ihres Bruders Gerd, aus den USA hierher nach Köln gereist. Sie erzählte, dass sie unter den Papieren ihres Bruders eine Kopie von demselben Photo gefunden hatte. Sie zeigte sich überrascht über meine Interpretation des Bildes – Annette, die in Boston lebt, hatte noch nicht von dem Neven-DuMont-Skandal von vor 6 Jahren gehört. Sie erzählte mir, dass die Neven DuMonts Mitgliedern unserer Familie, die sich während des Krieges in Köln versteckt hatten, sehr geholfen haben, etwas das mir nicht bekannt war, so das ich diese komplexe symbiotische Beziehung zwischen unsere Familie und den Neven-DuMonts, wieder revidieren muss.

Ich danke Dr. Jürgen Müller für die Diskussion und Beratung bei der Entwicklung der begleitenden Texte zu *Alibijude*.

ANNEX 3

Fading into the foreground

The photo series *Fading into the Foreground* consists chiefly of portraits or snapshots of civilians globally wearing camouflage design or other military-style fashion on the street, while going about their daily business.

For years it has been in vogue to wear the soldiers uniform as clothing, but the trend was even more marked in the years 2006-2008; for this artwork I have taken more than 1,633 photographs in Cologne (D), Budapest (HU), London (GB) Jerusalem (IL), Berlin (D), Amsterdam (NL), Lublin, Warsaw (PL), Bochum (D), New York, Boston (USA), Munich(D), Paderborn (D), Kassel (during Documenta 12) (D), Glasgow (GB) Faro (P), Braunschweig (D), San Francisco (USA), Vienna (AT), Zurich (CH), Vancouver (CAN), New Orleans (USA), Sofia (BG), Biel/Bienne (CH), Montreux (CH), Lausanne (CH), Basel (CH) and Strasbourg (FR).

La série de photos *Fading into the Foreground* consiste principalement en des portraits de civils portant des vêtements à motif camouflage ou d'autres styles militaires, et qui s'adonnent à leur routine quotidienne.

Il est depuis longtemps à la mode de porter des uniformes militaires comme tenue civile, mais la période de pointe de cette tendance a été entre 2006 et 2008. Pour ce projet artistique, j'ai pris plus de 1,633 photos à Braunschweig, à Berlin, à Bochum, à Cologne, à Kassel (pendant Documenta 12), à Munich, à Paderborn (Allemagne), à Vienna (Autriche), à Sofia (Bulgarie), à Vancouver (Canada), à Boston, à New York, à la Nouvelle-Orléans, à San Francisco (États-Unis), à Strasbourg (France), à Glasgow, à Londres (Grande-Bretagne), à Amsterdam (Hollande), à Budapest (Hongrie), à Jérusalem (Israël), à Faro, à Lublin, à Varsovie (Pologne), à Basel, à Biel/Bienne, à Montreux, et à Zurich (Suisse).

Die Photoserie *Fading into the Foreground* besteht hauptsächlich aus Schnappschüssen von Zivilisten global, die Camouflage-Design oder anderen Militärlook auf der Strasse tragen.

Seit Jahren ist es en vogue, im Alltag Soldaten-Uniform zu tragen, doch in den Jahren 2006-2008, ist der Trend viel deutlicher geworden. Für dieses Kunstwerk habe ich bis jetzt mehr als 1.633 Photos in Köln (D), Budapest (HU), London (GB) Jerusalem (IL), Berlin (D), Amsterdam (NL) Lublin, Warschau (PL) Bochum (D), New York, Boston (USA), München, Paderborn (D), Kassel (D) (während der Documenta 12) (D), Glasgow (GB) Faro Portugal (P), Braunschweig (D), San Francisco (USA), Wien (AT), Zürich (CH), Vancouver (CAN), New Orleans (USA), Sofia (BG), Biel/Bienne (CH), Montreux (CH), Lausanne (CH), Basel (CH) und Strasbourg (FR) aufgenommen.

ANNEX 4

Who's Boss: Soul Brothers & Sisters

Eine Serie holzgerahmter Photographien, jede jeweils Hochformat B 38,13 x H 42 cm, Querformat B 51,63 x H 28 cm (Edition 7)

A series of wooden-framed photographs, each: upright format W 38.13 x H 42 cm, landscape format B 51,63 x H 28 cm (Edition of 7)

Une série de photos à cadre en bois, format portrait : 38.13 x 42cm. Format paysage : 51,63 x 28 cm (tirée à 7 exemplaires)

Konzept | Concept | Idée : Tanya Ury
Kamera | Camera | Caméra : Tanya Ury
Digitale Bearbeitung | Digital processing | Numérisation : Ingolf Pink

Spring 2005, Hugo Boss manufactured and presented a new men's cologne with the advertising campaign: Body, Mind and Soul: "Do you have what it takes to be successful? Behind the surface of every man is his soul. Sharpen your mind. Challenge your body."

The photo series Soul Brothers & Sisters is a collage of the Hugo Boss "Body, Mind and Soul" advert digitally combined with portraits of people wearing Tanya Ury's T-shirt with her transformed Boss Logo design that incorporates the SS Rune. Displaying the Nazi symbol is illegal in Germany. But a complete reappraisal of history is often not made; those depicted in Soul Brothers & Sisters are individuals who, having discovered the history of the fashion business Hugo Boss that made Nazi uniforms, with a forced labour personnel, wished to be involved in the exposure of this fact to a wider public.

* Soul Sister: Tanja. Tanja Ostojic, interdisciplinary artist and cultural activist, at a gentrification site taking place in her neighbourhood, Berlin-Mitte, 5.11.2010

* Soul Sister: Iris. Iris Hefets-Borchardt, Israeli-Jewish political activist, in Café Bravo, Kunstwerke, Institute

for Contemporary Art, Berlin 5.11.2010

* Soul Brother: Wayne. Wayne Yung, queer video artist, at home. in Berlin Prenzlauerberg, 6.11.2010

* Soul Brother: Amit. Amit Epstein, video and performance artist, fashion and theatre designer at his studio, in Berlin-Schöneberg, 8.11.2010

* Soul Sister Ruth: Ruth Novaczek, filmmaker with her artwork "Yid", at her home in Finsbury Park, London, 3.12.2010

* Soul Brother Nick: Nick Stewart, artist, in the backyard of the Scooter Caffè, in London, 4.12.2010

* Soul Sister Cécile: Cécile Chich, art lover, writer, Queer activist, in London, 5.12.2010

* Soul Brother Roland: Roland Graeter (cello and voice improvisation) in front of Gerhard Richter's "Bridge 14 FEB 45" (2000/2001), before the Music Marathon concert, # 194 in Tanya Ury's flat, Cologne 13.7.2011

Au printemps 2005, Hugo Boss a conçu une nouvelle eau de Cologne et l'a lancée à travers une campagne publicitaire intitulée Body, Mind and Soul : Do you have what it takes to be successful? Behind the surface of every man is his soul. Sharpen your mind. Challenge your body. (« Corps, Esprit et Âme : Avez-vous ce qu'il faut pour réussir? Il y a une âme sous la peau de chaque homme. Aiguisez votre esprit. Défiiez votre corps. »)

La série de photos Soul Brothers & Sisters est un collage des annonces de la campagne Body, Mind and Soul numériquement combiné avec des portraits de gens portant des t-shirts ornés du logo Hugo Boss manipulé par Tanya Ury afin qu'y apparaisse la rune SS. Il est certes interdit d'exposer le symbole nazi en Allemagne, mais on n'y fait habituellement pas pour autant une réévaluation complète de l'histoire. Les participants de Soul Brothers and Sisters sont des gens qui, ayant pris conscience de cet épisode inédit de l'histoire, ont voulu démasquer Hugo Boss pour avoir confectionné des uniformes nazis à travers l'exploitation du travail forcé.

* Soul Sister: Tanja. Tanja Ostojic : artiste interdisciplinaire et militante culturelle sur un lieu de gentrification dans son quartier, Berlin-Mitte, 5.11.2010

* Soul Sister: Iris. Iris Hefets-Borchardt, militante juive

israélienne au Café Bravo à Kunst-Werke, Institut d'art contemporain de Berlin, 5.11.2010

* Soul Brother: Wayne. Wayne Yung, vidéaste queer chez lui à Berlin, à Prenzlauer-Berg, 6.11.2010

* Soul Brother: Amit. Amit Epstein, vidéaste, artiste de performance, designer de mode et scénographe dans son studio à Berlin-Schöneberg, 8.11.2010

* Soul Sister Ruth: Ruth Novaczek, cinéaste, avec son œuvre « Yid » chez elle à Finsbury Park, à Londres, 3.12.2010

* Soul Brother Nick: Nick Stewart, artiste dans l'arrière-cour du Scooter Caffè, à Londres, 4.12.2010

* Soul Sister Cécile: Cécile Chich, amatrice d'art, écrivaine, militante queer, à Londres, 5.12.2010

* Soul Brother Roland: Roland Graeter (improvisation de violoncelle et de voix) devant le Bridge 14 FEB 45 par Gerhard Richter (2000/2001), avant le concert Music Marathon, n°194, dans l'appartement de Tanya Ury à Cologne. 13.7.2011

Im Frühjahr 2005, präsentierte Hugo Boss einen neuen Männerduft mit der Werbe-Kampagne Body, Mind and Soul her: „Do you have what it takes to be successful? Behind the surface of every man is his soul. Sharpen your mind. Challenge your body.“ (Haben Sie alles um erfolgreich zu werden? Unter der Oberfläche eines jeden Mannes ist seine Seele. Schärfen Sie Ihren Verstand. Fordern Sie Ihren Körper heraus.)

Die Photoserie Soul Brothers & Sisters besteht aus einer Kollage der Hugo-Boss- Werbung „Body, Mind and Soul“ digital kombiniert mit Portraits von Personen die Tanya Ury's T-Shirt mit dem verfremdeten Boss-Logo, das nun eine SS-Rune einbezieht, tragen. Das öffentliche Zurschaustellen von Nazi-Symbolen ist in Deutschland illegal. Dennoch findet eine vollständige Aufarbeitung der Geschichte häufig nicht statt; die in Soul Brothers & Sisters dargestellten Personen haben erfahren, dass Hugo Boss Nazi-Uniformen durch eine Belegschaft von Zwangsarbeitern anfertigen ließ, und wünschen sich nun, dass diese Tatsachen einer breiteren Öffentlichkeit enthüllt werden.

* Soul Sister: Tanja. Tanja Ostojic, interdisziplinäre

Künstlerin und Kulturaktivistin, an einem Gentrifizierungsprojekt, das in ihrer Nachbarschaft in Berlin-Mitte stattfindet, 5.11.2010

* Soul Sister: Iris. Iris Hefets-Borchardt, Israelisch-Jüdische, Polit-Aktivistin, im Café Bravo, Kunstwerke, Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin 5.11.2010

* Soul Brother: Wayne. Wayne Yung, Schwuler Videokünstler, zuhause in Berlin Prenzlauerberg, 6.11.2010

* Soul Brother: Amit. Amit Epstein, Video- und Performancekünstler, Mode- und Theater-Designer in seinem Atelier in Berlin-Schöneberg, 8.11.2010

* Soul Sister Ruth: Ruth Novaczek, Filmemacherin mit ihrem Kunstwerk: „Yid“ (Jidd), zuhause in Finsbury Park, London, 3.12.2010

* Soul Brother Nick: Nick Stewart, Künstler, im Hinterhof des „Scooter Caffè“, in London, 4.12.2010

* Soul Sister Cécile: Cécile Chich, Kunstliebhaberin, Schriftstellerin, Queer-Aktivistin, in London, 5.12.2010

* Soul Brother Roland: Roland Graeter (Cello/Stimme) vor dem Kunstwerk „Bridge 14 FEB 45“ (2000/2001) von Gerhard Richter, in Tanya Urys Appartement vor dem Musikmarathon-Konzert # 194, Köln (D) 13.7.2011

ANNEX 5

Herme

Eine Photographie: Höhe 31,5 cm x Breite 23,5 cm (Edition 7)

A photograph: height 31.5 cm x width 23.5 cm (edition of 7)

Une photographie: hauteur 31.5 x largeur 23.5 cm (tirée à 7 exemplaires)

Konzept | Concept | Idée : Tanya Ury
Digitale Bearbeitung | Digital image processing | Numérisation : Ingolf Pink

In several of her works Tanya Ury has adopted the name of Hermès or Herme (her & me):

Hermeneurotic 1984- (collection of literary texts)
Hermes Insensed 2000-2001 (photo series with 15 short stories)
Building Bridges 2001 (short story)
Between the Lines or The Three Rs 2001 (short story)
Holding the Baby 2002 (2 photographs and short story)
Stick Insect 2003 (short story)
Getta Life 2003 (short story)
Night and Day 2003 (short story)
Hermesignet 2005 (gold ring with inscription)
Herme 2010 (digitally processed 1950's fashion cover)

The photograph Herme is the re-working of a fashion pattern publication cover, probably from the 1950's, by J. Niedermeier of Stuttgart, Germany (publishers Gustav Lyon). The woman on the right of the image, like Hermes, wears a winged cap. A dedication to the female Hermes has been added, which is likewise a dedication to her other, herself, the self – it is her story (not his). But the work is also suggestive of a sexual talisman, in this case of the feminine.

A Herma, herm or herme is a sculpture with a head, and perhaps a torso, above a plain, usually squared lower section, on which male genitals may also be carved at the appropriate height. (...) In ancient Greece the stat-

ues functioned as a form of apotropaic and were placed at crossings, country borders and boundaries as protection. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herma>

Dans plusieurs de ses œuvres, Tanya Ury a adopté le nom de Hermès ou Herme (elle et moi)* :

*Ntd : Ury joue avec la morphologie du mot anglais qui peut s'interpréter par « elle et moi ».

Hermeneurotic 1984- (assemblage de textes littéraires)
Hermes Insensed 2000-2001 (série de photos avec 15 nouvelles)
Building Bridges 2001 (nouvelle)
Between the Lines or The Three Rs 2001 (nouvelle)
Holding the Baby 2002 (2 photos et 1 nouvelle)
Stick Insect 2003 (nouvelle)
Getta Life 2003 (nouvelle)
Night and Day 2003 (nouvelle)
Hermesignet 2005 (bague en or avec inscription)
Herme 2010 (couverture d'une publication de mode des années 50 numérisée)

La photo Herme est une nouvelle version de la couverture d'une publication de mode (éditeur Gustav Lyon) par J. Niedermeier de Stuttgart en Allemagne, datée probablement des années 50. La femme à droite de l'image porte un bonnet à ailerons évoquant Hermès. L'artiste a ajouté une dédicace à Hermès, la femme, qui est aussi une dédicace à son autre, comme à elle-même, comme au concept de soi : c'est son histoire et non celle de la divinité Hermès. Mais l'œuvre évoque aussi un talisman sexuel féminin.

Un hermès est la sculpture d'une tête, ou parfois d'un buste, placée sur un bloc quadrangulaire simple, et qui est parfois ornée d'un phallus à la hauteur appropriée (...). En Grèce antique, ces statues étaient des symboles apotropaïques qui étaient placés aux carrefours, aux frontières entre les pays ou aux autres lisières territoriales pour s'assurer la protection des dieux. <http://en.wikipedia.org/Herma> (Notre traduction)

In mehreren ihrer Arbeiten hat Tanya Ury den Namen Hermès oder Herme angenommen (her & me, also Sie & ich):

Hermeneurotisch 1984- (Eine Kollektion von Texten)
Hermes Insensed 2000-2001 (Photoserie mit 15 Kurzgeschichten)
Brücken Bauen 2001 (Kurzgeschichte)
Between the Lines or The Three Rs 2001 (Kurzgeschichte)
 Holding the Baby 2002 (Kurzgeschichte mit zwei Fotos)
Stechmücke 2003 (Kurzgeschichte)
Getta Life - Nimm das Leben in die Hand 2003 (Kurzgeschichte)
Tag und Nacht 2003 (Kurzgeschichte)
Hermesiegel 2005 (Goldring mit Inschrift)
Herme 2010 (digitale Bearbeitung eines 1950er Jahren Modezeitschrift -Covers)

Die Photographie Herme zeigt das bearbeitete Cover einer Schnittmuster-Modezeitschrift, wahrscheinlich aus den 1950er Jahren, von J. Niedermeier aus Stuttgart (Verlag Gustav Lyon). Die Frau zur rechten Seite des Bildes trägt wie Hermes einen geflügelten Helm. Eine Widmung an den weiblichen Hermes wurde hinzugefügt, gleichzeitig als Reminiszenz an ihr Gegenstück, ihr Selbst, das Ich – es ist „her story“, ihre Geschichte (nicht Seine). Aber die Arbeit verweist auch auf einen Talisman für die Sexualität, in diesem Fall das Weibliche.

Herme bezeichnet eine Skulptur mit einem Kopf, eventuell auch einem Torso, auf einer geraden, üblicherweise rechteckigen unteren Basis, an der auch männliche Genitalien in der entsprechenden Höhe ausgemeißelt sein können. Im antiken Griechenland dienten diese Stauen als eine Art Schutzzauber und waren an Wegekreuzungen, Landesgrenzen und Übergängen als Schutz aufgestellt. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herma> (Übersetzung Amin Farzanefar)

Call for papers

Imaginations invites academic articles that discuss the historical inheritances of 20th century discourses on and between images as they are in dialogue with and articulated in 21st century cultural contexts. Potential contributions should innovatively reflect on the image. Points of departure could include new technologies, interactions between text and image, text as image, image and the self, dynamic and static images, omnipresence of screens (big and small), thinkers of the image, image across the disciplines and forms of thought (visuality, medicine, science, urban studies, political studies, gender studies, queer studies, etc.). We are also seeking, on an ongoing basis, one review essay per issue that compares three or four books on the image. Each issue of the journal will also feature one artist, and an interview with the invited/selected artist to contextualize his/her artistic contribution(s). If you are interested in conducting an interview with a specific artist, please send a proposal; if you are an artist who would like to be considered as the feature artist, please send sample work with some indication of what type of artistic contribution you would like to feature in the journal's online format. We accept papers in English and French on an ongoing basis.

La revue en ligne *Imaginations* est à la recherche d'articles proposant une réflexion sur la manière dont l'histoire a laissé son empreinte sur les discours dédiés à l'image, et plus spécifiquement sur les discours ancrés dans le XXe siècle. Nous nous intéressons également à la manière dont les images ont été pensées et produites, en interrelation les unes avec les autres, dans le temps et en lien avec les nouveaux contextes culturels du XXIe siècle. Les propositions de contribution devront faire montre d'une réflexion innovatrice sur le sujet. Sont bienvenues toutes propositions portant par exemple sur : le rôle de l'image dans les transferts culturels, l'intégration des nouvelles technologies, les interactions entre texte et image, le texte en tant qu'image, les liens entre image, identité et représentations, les images dynamiques et statiques, l'omniprésence de l'écran (« petit écran » et « grand écran ») dans notre monde contemporains, les penseurs de l'image, la pénétration par l'image de disciplines telles que la médecine, la science, les études urbaines ou politiques, etc. Les textes soumis peuvent être rédigés en anglais ou en français.

imagination@ualberta.ca
www.csj.ualberta.ca/imaginations/

HER AND ME

