Surfing the Interzones:

Posthuman Geographies in Twentieth Century Literature and Film

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ABSTRACT

ALEX MCAULAY: Surfing the Interzones: Posthuman Geographies in Twentieth
Century Literature and Film
(Under the direction of Pamela Cooper)

This dissertation presents an analysis of posthuman texts through a discussion of

posthuman landscapes, bodies, and communities in literature and film. In the

introduction, I explore and situate the relatively recent term "posthuman" in relation to

definitions proposed by other theorists, including N. Katherine Hayles, Donna Haraway,

Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston, Hans Moravec, Max More, and Francis Fukuyama.

I position the posthuman as being primarily celebratory about the collapse of restrictive

human boundaries such as gender and race, yet also containing within it more disturbing

elements of the uncanny and apocalyptic. My project deals primarily with hybrid texts,

in which the posthuman intersects and overlaps with other posts, including

postmodernism and postcolonialism. In the first chapter, I examine the novels

comprising J.G. Ballard's disaster series, and apply Bakhtin's theories of hybridization,

and Deleuze and Guattari's notions of voyagings, becomings, and bodies without organs

to delineate the elements that constitute a posthuman landscape. In the second chapter, I

address Andy Warhol, Valerie Solanas, and Werner Herzog in terms of issues of identity,

mechanization, and replication with regards to the posthuman. In chapter three, I turn to

posthuman cinema, and apply the notion of the cyborg to the work of David Lynch, as

well as delineate the elements that constitute a posthuman film through a discussion of

the Danish Dogme 95 film movement. In chapter four, I extend my discussion of

modified bodies to address texts by Iain Banks and Angela Carter in terms of gender

disruptions and new myths for the posthuman age. The final chapter, "Second Life vs.

The Mole People," examines both the optimism that the posthuman provides and also the

tangible, social cost of the posthuman, through a juxtaposition of the elite metaverse of

Second Life with the homeless subway tunnel dwellers in New York City, termed the

"mole people."

For Lisa

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INTRODUCTION

The term "posthuman" is one that, in its relatively recent history, has already

acquired a multitude of contradictory definitions. The word holds within it both a great

sense of power as well as unease. To call something "posthuman" can often suggest

liberation from the restrictive boundaries of the human condition, such as race and

gender. Yet it can also conjure apocalyptic images of a world in which humans have

ceased to matter and no longer possess any agency. The term's ambiguity therefore

complicates notions of what it means to be posthuman, or to live in a posthuman culture.

While the idea of the posthuman has implicitly been an integral part of romantic, realist,

modernist and postmodern literature, in texts ranging from *Frankenstein* to *Orlando* to *A

Scanner Darkly*, the term itself was first introduced and employed as a tool for critical

analysis in Ihab Hassan's 1977 article "Prometheus as Performer: Towards a

Posthumanist Culture?" Here Hassan states: "the human form—including human desire

and all its external representations—may be changing radically, and thus must be re-

visioned… five hundred years of humanism may be coming to an end as humanism

transforms itself into something we must helplessly call posthumanism" (qtd. in Hayles

247). Yet from Hassan's somewhat bleak conjecturing about the death of humanism has

come the outgrowth of modern posthuman theory. As I will demonstrate, an array of

theorists have attempted to grapple with the term "posthuman" in the years since Hassan's

article, and many have found great promise and optimism in notions of reenvisioning the human form.[1]

In fact, any attempt to define the "posthuman" calls for an adjustment of what it means to be human. The term "posthuman" is already in dispute, as evidenced from the varying interpretations of what constitutes a posthuman text. A survey of the existing literature and major posthuman theorists, from Hassan to N. Katherine Hayles, is useful in illustrating the disparity of meaning and usages. For Hayles in *How We Became Posthuman*, the word "posthuman" implies a mindset of "post humanism" that runs counter to humanist philosophy, although not in a negative way. Hayles considers the posthuman a "dynamic partnership" between humans and intelligent machines, rather than the end of humanity itself. She also focuses on the posthuman as a post-World War II development, rather than emphasizing the vibrant current of what might be called "pre-posthuman" thought emergent before that time. While Hayles admits that the word "posthuman" conjures up both feelings of terror and pleasure, she primarily views the merging of the natural and the artificial as a positive social development. For Hayles, the posthuman is a means by which the elitist desires of the liberal humanist subject to dominate and control the natural world can be subverted and destroyed. She writes that "the posthuman evokes the exhilarating prospect of getting out of some of the old boxes and opening up new ways of thinking about what being human means" (285).

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[1] Although technically Hassan introduces the term "posthumanism," indicating a movement away from humanist values and philosophy, rather than the term "posthuman," a term which lacks any sense of moral judgment (i.e. it does not suggest that works of this nature will be anti-humanist, or inhumane), Hassan is the starting point for modern posthuman theory. I believe that the term "posthuman" is a more useful and applicable term than "posthumanism," in addition to sounding nonpejorative, and it will be the term that I engage with in this dissertation.

In "A Manifesto for Cyborgs," published in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, Donna Haraway pursues a line of thinking similar to Hayles in exploring a literal representation of a posthuman figure: the cyborg. She defines a posthuman entity, or cyborg, as one that has overcome biological, neurological and psychological constraints to be free of such boundaries as gender and race, and she defines a posthuman text as one that clearly validates the act of looking beyond human physical and psychological limitations for answers. For Haraway, the posthuman is a source of hope; the cyborg, who is the offspring of the military-industrial complex, holds within itself the potential to demolish the binaries that created it.[2] This optimistic reading of the term "posthuman" is also shared by Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston in *Posthuman Bodies*. For them, the posthuman suggests new interfaces between humans and technology, and a rupturing of confining boundaries, especially those involving gender and sexuality. Halberstam and Livingston assert that we are already living within a posthuman era, and "lingering nostalgia for a modernist or humanist philosophy of self and other, human and alien, normal and queer is merely the echo of a discursive battle that has already taken place" (19). For them, the posthuman represents a solidarity of both the disenchanted and disenfranchised while it simultaneously redistributes identity, and also "repudiates the psychoanalytical" (13). This movement away from psychoanalytic interpretation is crucial, for it places the posthuman "beyond any therapy that attempts to rectify the disorder and illogic of desires with health, purity and stability" (13). For Halberstam and Livingston, the posthuman therefore becomes a term of

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[2] The term "cyborg" was first popularized by Manfred E. Clynes and Nathan S. Kline in their article "Cyborgs and Space" in the September 1960 issue of *Astronautics*, yet the notion of "cybernation" and cybernetic organisms can first be found in Norbert Wiener's book *The Human Uses of Human Beings*, first published in 1948.

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absolute physical and psychic liberation, and an invitation to participate in the creation of one's own identity within an idealized society in which all are welcome but none privileged.

These are somewhat different approaches from the one taken by roboticist and theorist Hans Moravec in *Mind Children: The Future of Robot and Human Intelligence*. Like many who engage with the posthuman, Moravec focuses primarily on the scientific implications of the term, rather than the sociological.[3] Moravec advocates the transferal of human personalities into machines with greater capacities for physical strength and intellectual expansion than the human body. In this way he hopes the human race might subvert age and time, and become immortal. He also posits that robots will be the true descendants of the human race, evolving into a new species within the next fifty years to create a "postbiological world dominated by self-improving, thinking machines" (5). Moravec is joined in his optimism by Max More's burgeoning online Extropian movement, which believes in the potential of harnessing the inorganic to reach a cyborgian state that will allow the human race to achieve much more than "unaugmented" humans ever could. In his article "On Becoming Posthuman," More notes that "Humanity is a temporary stage along the evolutionary pathway," and passionately declares with the zeal of cult leader, "No more gods, no more faith, no more timid holding back. Let us blast out of our old forms, our ignorance, our weakness, and our

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[3] The term "posthuman," which is intrinsically linked to nonorganic life on a linguistic level, invites science-heavy readings; yet the sociological ramifications of the posthuman are complex and nebulous, and are therefore avoided by purely technophilic critics. In this dissertation, however, I will examine posthuman elements in linguistic, social and political terms, while eschewing a purely technological-scientific approach in order to apprehend the often underappreciated aspects of the posthuman.

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mortality. The future belongs to posthumanity" (par. 20).[4] This radical take on the

posthuman as uncomplicatedly positive indicates the celebratory manner in which certain

theorists advocate it as the next necessary, and inevitable, evolutionary step.

Not everyone who engages with the posthuman does so to promote a posthuman

ideology, however. In *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology*

Revolution, Francis Fukuyama strikes a far more cautionary note. He envisions the

potential of a nightmarish future, in which human nature is irrevocably destabilized via

genetic and neuropharmacological manipulation, with destructive results for human

society. Fukuyama is concerned primarily with the negative social and moral

consequences that might stem from the abuse of advanced technology. Designer babies,

or "chimeras" (which Fukuyama defines as humans with animal genes spliced in)[5], and

the proliferation of a nonfunctional aged population whose bodies work but whose minds

have failed, are but a few of the doomsday scenarios he presents. As a means of

preserving "human nature" (218), which he sees as a partially flexible but mostly stable

set of intrinsic qualities, and preserving our "liberal democracy" (111), Fukuyama

advocates strict regulation of new technology. *Our Posthuman Future* is reactionary and

fearful, although phrased in measured language that works to conceal Fukuyama's

distaste for his subject matter. And although he begins by citing familiar cautionary

dystopian tales like *Brave New World* and *1984*, he shows a resistance to engage with the

artistic implications of a posthuman future; for Fukuyama, the political implications of

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[4] More is also an advocate of "transhumanity," a term he defines as a specific element of the posthuman that is concerned solely with augmenting human abilities for the purpose of enacting positive social change.

[5] While "chimeras" still sound like they belong in the realm of science fiction, in 2000, American scientists managed to splice human genes with cow genes. The resulting organism was viable, but was destroyed before it could grow due to a government mandate.

the posthuman appear to exist in a realm separate from popular culture. I believe that in defining and exploring issues of the posthuman, it is necessary to strike a balance between Moravec's unguarded optimism and Fukuyama's desire to regulate and restrict technological and cultural advancements.

The conflicting definitions and critical approaches to the posthuman must also be separated from the popular meaning of the term posthuman, which currently tends to convey a merely apocalyptic sense.[6] I would argue that although the apocalyptic and posthuman frequently intersect, they are by no means identical. It is possible to have an apocalyptic text that clearly does not advocate any kind of posthuman boundary blurring; in fact many popular apocalyptic postmodern works, such as films like *The Matrix* trilogy or David Cronenberg's *Videodrome*, stand as warnings against the demolition of boundaries between the organic and inorganic, and serve as moralistic fables about the societal and personal cost of tampering with nature. It is equally possible to have a text that is vehemently posthuman but not apocalyptic. Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, for example, is much more of a posthuman text than *The Matrix*: Orlando is a protagonist freed from human temporal and gender constraints, while in *The Matrix*, a veneer of "sci-fi" jargon and special effects works to conceal a dated critique of technology, while promoting a skewed retelling of the Christ story via Neo's ascendancy to godhood as a digital messiah.

As the term "posthuman" has already gained a degree of popular cultural currency, it is also important to consider what is gained and what is lost by assigning that

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[6] Apocalyptic science fiction films about worlds in which humans are an endangered species, such as *Screamers* (1996), based on a short story by Philip K. Dick, or *I Am Legend* (2007), based on a Richard Matheson novel, are not necessarily posthuman, although they are frequently advertised, discussed, and reviewed in those terms.

label to a work of literature or film. Texts that engage with the term span a wide array of

different disciplines, such as sociology, biology, gender studies, literary criticism,

psychology, media studies and philosophy, to name just a few. Clearly this is a term that

crosses many boundaries, as it should, and holds a multitude of different definitions and

applications. Tom Tykwer's 1998 film *Run Lola Run*, for example, was advertised as

"hot, fast and post-human," and gender-bending shock rocker Marilyn Manson founded a

record label in 2001 called Posthuman Records, to release industrial dance music. There

are even posthuman personal ads on the internet, such as, "recent posthuman… would

like to meet posthuman guys or girls for fun and possible relationship."[7] Inevitably we

are heading towards, or already located within, a time when "posthuman" becomes a term

as frequently invoked and misused as "postmodern."

It is, of course, appropriate that the term "posthuman" should be in extreme flux,

for the word represents the present status of the human body and mind: more mutable and

flexible than ever before, and becoming more cyborg-ized all the time.[8] It is also fitting,

and perhaps essential, that the term remain liberated from any monolithic interpretation.[9]

However, because present definitions of the posthuman are so contradictory, or vague, I

propose a redefinition of the posthuman. In my exploration of texts in this dissertation, I

will work to locate the posthuman as a category that has developed and emerged over the

course of the twentieth century as a mutant strain of postmodernism, now poised to

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[7] This fascinating page can be accessed at www.multi.co.uk/Quorums.htm

[8] The recent proliferation of portable communication devices such as the BlackBerry, the iPhone, and the Bluetooth headset are creating true human-machine cyborgs. It is as though E.M. Forster's humanist declaration "Only connect" has become transformed into a posthuman doctrine: "*Always* connect."

[9] Perhaps the most compelling reason behind any attempt to locate the term "posthuman" is not to specifically define it in a limiting way, but to allow for texts that superficially seem quite different from one another to be considered in relation to each other; in this manner, posthuman theory can encourage the creation of new linkages and forms of analysis.

become a dominant mode of contemporary discourse. Human boundaries have become permanently destabilized, and while modernist and even many postmodernist texts frequently attempted to shore up those boundaries, they did not always succeed. I believe that part of the confusion over defining the term "postmodernism" stems from the fact that the split between the postmodern and the posthuman has not been properly acknowledged. Although postmodernists frequently invoke the relationship between humans and machines, they nearly always display concern over the dehumanizing effect of technology rather than a desire to embrace technology as a means of transcending human limitations. Postmodern authors such as Pynchon, DeLillo, and Atwood join modernists like Orwell, Burgess, and Huxley in expressing distrust of machines and pointing out the dangers of putting one's faith in technology. Don DeLillo's *White Noise*, for example, endorses a sentiment that runs against the posthuman in its overt criticism of unchecked technological advance, and stands as an excellent example of an anti-posthuman postmodern text. Therefore, while the posthuman and the postmodern both often deal with issues of human-machine interaction, they can express radically different ideas about the consequences. This is not to suggest that the posthuman can never be dark and complicated, or critical and threatening. Yet I will argue that posthuman texts, while not always completely free from a degree of anxiety and ambivalence over the "loss" of the human, are generally celebratory on some, or sometimes all, levels about the possibilities and opportunities that the posthuman provides.

In order to discuss exactly how the posthuman might provide these opportunities for liberation, and as a further step in defining the territory of the term, it is also crucial to note that the posthuman frequently intersects with other "posts"—in particular

postmodernism and postcolonialism—and it is necessary to locate the term in relation to them. However, it can become difficult to position the posthuman with regards to these "posts," because they are such flexible, disputed terms as well. Certainly Frederic Jameson's definition of postmodernism is very different from Ihab Hassan's, or Jean-Francois Lyotard's. The postcolonial also intersects with the posthuman, although there are important differences: while both involve the collapse of boundaries and binaries, the postcolonial does not always emphasize an escape from human physical and mental biological limitations in the same way that the posthuman does. However, the posthuman is frequently a means by which the postcolonial can be accessed, as technological advancements provide access to the tools needed to document and explore postcolonial issues.

The posthuman does not displace these other posts, but rather coexists with(in) them. For the purpose of this Introduction, perhaps the location of the posthuman in relation to these other terms might best be considered via a spatial model. In *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha, who notes the "current and controversial shiftiness of the prefix 'post'" (1), presents the model of the haunted house—an "interstitial" space—to explore postcolonial issues in literature. Bhabha, who argues that hybridity and "multivocality" can destabilize colonial binaries, examines Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, and the "unspoken, unrepresented pasts that haunt the historical present" (12). For Bhabha, the borders between the home and outside world are dissolving, creating a new kind of interstitial space that can give way to new opportunities for selfhood and identity, not confined by racial boundaries or other "organic" traits. The fact that Bhabha's postcolonial theory provides a means by which to enter into an analysis and discussion of

the posthuman demonstrates how the posthuman does not negate, or inscribe itself on top of, issues of postcoloniality. If anything, the postcolonial and the posthuman can function in tandem within a given work to better elucidate the text and produce new, hybrid readings.

I believe that the posthuman deserves a model similar to Bhabha's liminal zone of the haunted house—perhaps a microchip—to help categorize the term as something that holds within it all kinds of violent, contradictory notions. Although very small, each microchip harnesses great power, as well as huge reserves of data that remain hidden from view. Much like the house in *Beloved*, in which energy is unleashed only by the return of the deceased, the microchip only releases its power when the encoded data is accessed.[10] There is also a further haunting contained in every microchip: the ghost of its future self, which will become discarded "E-waste" to be mined for precious, and toxic, metals for recycling.[11] Yet any spatial model could only serve to suggest how the posthuman might be defined; the posthuman is a term as constantly in flux as the postcolonial, and by definition it can never be fully resolved. Any model, even that of the microchip, could not account for all the diverse manifestations and elements of the posthuman, which are best approached through an analysis of specific texts. It should be noted that the theorists who struggle with defining the term "posthuman" are frequently influenced by the different disciplines they bring to it. Haraway holds a doctorate in biology, for example, and therefore takes a quasi-biological approach; Fukuyama is a

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[10] The notion of the haunted computer, or haunted microchip array, has been a staple of Japanese anime and science fiction, most notably in the popular manga *The Ghost in the Shell* (1995). However, I would posit by definition any microchip could be considered haunted—by the invisible data it contains.

[11] As Jennifer Baichwal's 2006 documentary *Manufactured Landscapes* makes clear, these discarded microchips are mostly shipped to China, where marginalized, uneducated workers chip the hazardous metal off the microchips with stone-age tools—and become the true secret ghosts haunting any microchip model and the Western world's culture of colonialist industrialization.

sociologist and therefore deals more with the social and political implications. My study

of the posthuman is meant as an exploration of the term in relation to twentieth century

art, specifically to literature and film.

The term "posthuman" has already been adopted by the American media and

applied to both our technologically dependent culture at the dawn of the twenty-first

century, and to specific works of art produced within that culture, just as

"postmodernism" was applied earlier in the twentieth century. For those who see the

posthuman as a potential threat, like Fukuyama, their approach no doubt stems from a

desire to define the term as a means of rendering it impotent and defusing its power. The

fact that Fukuyama advocates government legislators "stepping up to the plate and

establishing rules" (211) to limit scientific progress—because "human nature… is not

infinitely malleable" (218)—suggests his conservative, moralistic bent. For Fukuyama,

"the posthuman world could be one that is far more hierarchical and competitive than the

one that currently exists, and full of social conflict as a result…. We do not have to

regard ourselves as slaves to inevitable technological progress" (218). Conversely, for

those who revel in the term, like Max More and the Extropians, their theorizing

represents a desire to exploit the energy bound in the word posthuman as a means of

advocating an overthrow of our organic-based human society via an apocalyptic process.

Max More notes in "The Extropian Principles 2.5" online that "In aspiring to

posthumanity, we reject natural and traditional limitations on our possibilities…. We

recognize the absurdity of meekly accepting 'natural' limits" (par. 9). I therefore believe

the term "posthuman" needs to be recovered, if not given a monolithic definition, in such

a way that it becomes synonymous with liberation, without blindly embracing its

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power.[12] The posthuman is certainly a valid current and future mode of discourse, and by harnessing its potential, humans—or rather, posthumans—might be able to take control of their own destinies, and perhaps expand the possibilities and parameters of their lives.

As a means to engage with the term posthuman, I have divided this book into two sections: Posthuman Landscapes, and Posthuman Bodies and Communities.[13] While there is certainly a degree of overlap in tracing the development of the posthuman in the twentieth century, the landscapes tend to emerge first, as though necessary liminal zones must be in place before the first posthuman bodies appear, just as organic humans evolved from the specific conditions necessary for carbon-based life millions of years ago. The first section of this dissertation will consist of two chapters, each analyzing the construction of posthuman landscapes in specific works of literature and film and serving to clarify the elements or traits which comprise a "posthuman landscape," or, to borrow a term from William Burroughs, "an interzone."[14] While the term "posthuman" might conjure up images of apocalyptic wastelands or worlds in which technology has subjugated humankind, I argue that a "posthuman landscape" is instead a landscape in

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[12] Posthuman zealotry for a non-organic world seems to frequently, and often unintentionally, suggest a nihilistic future, in the manner that the Italian Futurists and Vorticists slid toward fascism. The term "posthuman" also contains unsettling echoes of Nietzeche's "overhuman" (or "superman"), and I would argue that part of Haraway's and Hayles' projects has been to reclaim the term from pseudo-fascist usage. My explorations of the posthuman will engage with notions of fascism primarily in chapter four, in which I discuss the works of Angela Carter and Iain Banks.

[13] This division is somewhat artificial, as landscapes, bodies and communities are obviously intertwined in the context of the posthuman. Yet separating the posthuman into component parts for the purposes of this study helps clarify elements of the evolution of posthuman theory in the second half of the twentieth century and separate the term from other related "posts."

[14] "The Interzone" is Burrough's reconfiguration of Tangiers in *Naked Lunch*, a liminal and transitional space in which the human body has become permanently destabilized: a truly posthuman landscape situated within a postmodern work.

which the external environment has become indistinguishable from the human body. In this manner, there is a merging of the technological with the biological to such a degree that humans are not clearly separate entities from their surroundings. The body is in a state of flux, able to incorporate the inanimate just as the inanimate begins to take on human biological attributes. While thematically this might seem similar to postmodern works such as Thomas Pynchon's *V.*, Pynchon, like most other classically postmodern authors, ultimately works to critique such a collapse of boundaries rather than celebrate the disintegration. More recent postmodern works, such as Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2006)*,* function in the same manner, by attempting to shore up boundaries through presenting a nightmarish, fascistic world in which "bodies" and humanist notions of the body, are literally dismantled for nefarious and morally suspect purposes of organ harvesting from living donors.

In my study of the posthuman, I am primarily interested in exploring the development and presentation of the posthuman in texts which are not overtly science fiction, or apocalyptic, in nature. While there is much to be gained from examining the posthuman implications of landscapes in William Gibson's *Spook Country* (2007), for example, or George Lucas's *Star Wars* (1977), it is often difficult, and perhaps pointless, to separate the posthuman from "sci-fi" archetypes, as science fiction is a genre which inherently encompasses posthuman elements such as the mechanization of society, cyborg bodies, and time travel, among many others. The posthuman and science fiction often function in conjunction with each other. Yet, as the posthuman is a hybrid construction, and one that thrives best in marginal regions, I argue that it often presents itself in more intriguing ways within texts which do not, superficially, seem to deal with

posthuman elements. In fact, I am most interested in those texts that are hybrids themselves, in which the posthuman can more easily be isolated in relation to other elements, and "posts" within the text. Therefore, the texts I have chosen to cover in Posthuman Landscapes are essentially ones that avoid tech-heavy science fiction, in favor of a focus on more subtle, liminal posthuman works in which the posthuman sometimes functions on a metaphoric level. As noted, Orlando surely proves a more convincing and celebratory cyborg than the cyborg menace of "The Borg" found in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, or the cyborg uber-policeman of the *Robocop* trilogy.

In the first chapter of Posthuman Landscapes, "Myths for the Posthuman Age: J.G. Ballard's Disaster Series," I will discuss the British author J.G. Ballard's explorations and creations of posthuman landscapes in two novels from his disaster series, *The Drowned World* and *The Crystal World,* as well as his later experimental novel *The Atrocity Exhibition*. Ballard's novels clearly express an interest in looking beyond human landscapes and form due to their themes and his unique prose constructions. Ballard's superficially deadpan style masks an array of different voices that can be explored, using Bakhtin's notion of hybridization, to reveal Ballard's intention of parodying typical human, and humanist, notions.[15] By adopting various styles and languages of human discourse, Ballard reveals their limitations, just as his posthuman themes suggest the limitations of the human body, suggesting that both the body and its language must change. Yet it is in his invention of posthuman landscapes, fields in which the biological and technological merge, that Ballard has exerted the most influence.

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[15] Bakhtin, with his emphasis on the heteroglossic mixing of linguistic consciousnesses within a single text, provides the best set of tools to begin decoding the variant strands of discourse present in Ballard's fiction, and separating out the posthuman elements.

Ballard invokes the merging of the mechanical and the human without any clear indication that this is something to be feared. Rather, he treats it as something to aspire to, that will push humans beyond their current boundaries, marking him as posthuman rather than solely postmodern. While individually the four novels that comprise Ballard's disaster series could appear to indicate naive concern over the future of humanity, taken as a whole they suggest an author reveling in the notion of humanity's collapse, and an ongoing attempt to puzzle out the elements of human transformation into a posthuman state. In *The Crystal World*, for example, Ballard presents a world in which an African forest is slowly crystallizing, as time takes on a physical dimension. At one point a character freed from petrification within this spreading crystalline entity begs to return to the crystal forest—his liminal, or "unhomely" realm—rather than stay with his human rescuers and return to organic civilization, suggesting that an unhomely posthuman landscape might offer more possibilities of identity exploration than a human one.

In *The Atrocity Exhibition*, Ballard is equally perceptive in developing a metaphor to explore and analyze how humans and the inanimate negotiate posthuman spaces. Through a series of fragmented vignettes, Ballard explores the human body as an exterior landscape, and writes of the external world in terms of human characteristics. The illustrated version of his novel takes his themes one step further, with drawings that conflate human sexuality with technological and medical imagery. Yet it is his ambiguity towards an emergent posthuman landscape, expressed by his all-too-human characters, that remains the most engaging element in his analysis of the implications of posthuman culture. Using Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concepts of the rhizome, striated spaces, and the "body without organs" as discussed in *A Thousand Plateaus,* I will

examine how Ballard constructs posthuman landscapes, and the implications of these landscapes for humans and posthumans. Along with Bakhtin, Deleuze and Guattari provide one of the best lenses for analyzing Ballard's work, both because their anti-psychoanalytic approach complicates typical readings of Ballard's disaster series as an exegesis on Jungian archetypes, and because they emphasize "voyagings," "becomings," and the subversion of organic hierarchies through the advocating of "nomads" and "probe heads" who disrupt traditional human spaces, bodies and planes of existence.

Ballard's landscapes of the mid-1960s find their analogue and amplification in several unlikely places: Andy Warhol's early films and his lone novel *a*, Valerie Solanas's *SCUM Manifesto*, and the cryptic quasi-documentaries of the German filmmaker Werner Herzog. The second chapter in the Posthuman Landscapes section, "Ecstatic Untruths: Posthuman Landscapes in the Works of Andy Warhol, Valerie Solanas and Werner Herzog," will involve a dissection of *a* and Warhol's underground film *Empire*, as well as an examination of the posthuman landscapes created by the radical feminist—and Warhol's would-be assassin—Valerie Solanas, followed by a move toward Werner Herzog's films *Fata Morgana* and *Lessons of Darkness*. More than any other figure in the 20th century, Warhol pointed the way towards the future in terms of posthuman developments. His work stands as an excellent example of how the posthuman can coexist with the postmodern, in terms of hybridity and mechanization. Warhol also suggests that elements of the origins of posthuman landscapes can be traced back to the 1960s, and what might be considered the height of innovation within the postmodern movement, a notion which, while complicating the historicity of the term posthuman, also serves to locate it within our known culture. Warhol's films present the most

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dramatic example of early posthuman worlds, especially works such as the eight-hour silent film of the Empire State Building, *Empire*, in which the building itself—the "landscape"—is transformed into the "star." The building even "performs" for the camera when its lights are turned on part of the way through the film. During the filming of *Empire* and a number of his other films, Warhol would often walk away from the camera, an action suggesting his films are intended as transmissions of recorded events, rather than shot and edited under the control of a director. Warhol employed the same kind of mechanical mindset in writing his novel *a*, which is merely a minimally edited transcription of a twenty-four hour tape recording typed up by secretaries and other employees, who each added their own layer of authorial intrusions.

Warhol himself is perhaps his greatest artistic, posthuman creation, and his famous decree, "I want to be a machine," was not meant as ironic. His chronic abuse of amphetamines, which he used to escape the need for sleep; his multiple plastic surgeries and ritualistic application of heavy makeup; and his obvious silver wig suggest someone desperately looking to escape, or at least subvert, the limitations of the human form. In fact, Warhol carried a tape recorder and polaroid camera with him at all times, referring to the tapedeck as his "wife," which suggests a union between the human and the inorganic. Warhol as a pop culture and posthuman icon has had as much cultural influence as any of his works. He even generated his own potentially posthuman landscape in which to work—"The Factory" in New York City—with space age silver decor to match his silver wig. The fact that he not only painted, but wrote a novel, produced a record for his house band The Velvet Underground, and directed films, means

that his posthuman aesthetic and influence was spread across a wide array of different artistic forms via the dissemination of Pop Art and postmodernism.

Yet Warhol finds an unwanted posthuman double in the figure of Valerie Solanas, a polemical writer and his would-be assassin. Her now infamous *SCUM Manifesto* presents a compelling, if maniacally fascistic, argument about how to construct a posthuman world free of all biological restraints, in which humans are liberated from work, money, sex, and ultimately, death. Solanas's text has primarily been considered critically from a feminist perspective, with little attention paid to the crux of her argument, that her new world order will come into being solely via the automatization of human society. Through a close reading of her text with regards to her advocation of mechanization, I will demonstrate that her beliefs, and Warhol's, virtually coincide, and that one of her prime motivations in shooting him paradoxically appears to be that he let her down, and was not "posthuman" enough. Solanas could be seen as Warhol 2.0, and her failed attempt on his life viewed as an effort to replace a first generation artistic cyborg with a newer model.

From Warhol and Solanas, I will move to the second section of chapter two, and a discussion of Werner Herzog's posthuman documentaries *Fata Morgana* and *Lessons of Darkness*, as well as his book *Of Walking in Ice,* a document dealing with his attempt to transcend human limitations, and control life and death, through the exertion of mental and physical energy during a winter journey on foot from Munich to Paris. Although frequently categorized as a humanist, Herzog actually extends Warhol's posthuman project by creating, filming and writing about landscapes that are intended for beings other than humans. *Fata Morgana*, which began as a science fiction film until Herzog

discarded the concept in favor of a documentary-like approach, is Herzog's attempt to film mirages in the Sahara, along with the disenfranchised people who live in the African desert, resulting in a compendium of startling images of truly un-Earthly landscapes. *Lessons of Darkness* consists of footage of the burning oil wells of Kuwait after the first Gulf War: another landscape that appears to be from a distant planet, and that cannot support human life.

From posthuman landscapes, I will turn to posthuman bodies and communities in the second section of this study, moving from an analysis of Ballard, Warhol and Herzog to examining the significance of posthuman bodies in terms of how they are created, and what the implications are for human bodies. What, precisely, makes a body posthuman? While the term primarily suggests cyborgs and the overt presentation of physically modified bodies, as I have noted in general terms, a posthuman body is one which is in some way liberated from human restraints such as time or gender. This liberation frequently consists of some kind of technological modification, although it does not always have to involve mechanical aspects. The use of a "posthuman ideology" to explore more subtle non-technological issues of race, gender and sexuality seems to be one of the more fascinating and useful aspects of the term. The posthuman, as Haraway points out when discussing the cyborg, allows for a "post" body state of existence in which limiting binaries are deconstructed. I will explore several texts whose protagonists illustrate the posthuman ideal of liberation from the human constraints of the body and suggest the future of the body in a posthuman world.

The first chapter of this section, "Projecting the Future: David Lynch, Lars von Trier, Harmony Korine and Posthuman Cinema," will deal with an exploration of

posthuman bodies in film, focusing on David Lynch's debut 1977 feature, *Eraserhead*. In the film, a severed human head is turned into pencil erasers, characters feed on miniature man-made chickens, and the narrative revolves around an alien-like baby who seems more the product of electrical currents than organic copulation. This posthuman infant, terrifying at first, actually becomes a pathetic creature who is murdered by the only "human" character, the protagonist Henry. As I will show, Lynch takes his cinematic posthuman even project further than Warhol and Herzog by deliberately constructing his films to deflect psychological readings. Lynch manages to develop a form of posthuman cinema in which a nonhuman body with a new set of attributes is forced to interact with the human, with (literally) shocking consequences. Lynch's notions and films have also managed to exert a great influence on a younger generation of filmmakers: I will examine Lynch's influence on new directors who are invested in exploring metaphoric posthuman bodies, such as *julien donkey-boy's* Harmony Korine, as well as Lars von Trier and his Dogme 95 film collective in Denmark. From here I will isolate the features that position a film as posthuman, and I will generate a list of elements that constitute a posthuman film in order to create a "Manifesto for Posthuman Cinema."[16]

The manifesto provides a segue into the second chapter of the Posthuman Bodies section, and the ways in which posthuman bodies can be used to subvert rigid distinctions of sexuality, gender, and race, and function in tandem with postcolonial theory. In "Posthuman Bodies, Gender Disruptions, and Fascistic Tendencies in *The Wasp Factory* and *The Passion of New Eve*," I will examine the construction of posthuman mythologies in Iain Banks's and Angela Carter's novels, as both texts present images of altered,

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[16] My manifesto is in the spirit of von Trier's "Dogme Manifesto," as well as Herzog's rebuttal to von Trier: "The Minnesota Declaration," and will serve as both an amplification of, and response to, their theories.

posthuman bodies while exploring how to cope with and harness the powers of liberation from gender. In Banks's *The Wasp Factory*, a sixteen year old girl named Frank has been raised to believe she is a mutilated, castrated boy. Her deranged father keeps her supposedly severed male genitals, which are actually a wax effigy, in a glass jar in his study. After murdering numerous children, animals, and insects, and becoming a self-proclaimed monster outside of any human society, Frank ultimately learns the truth about her identity. Banks presents a paradox: a body that believes itself to be a manufactured posthuman one, but is in fact unaltered. However, this expectation of posthumanity creates a permanent, traumatic mental rift, so that the subject can never think of itself as merely human again. Like *Eraserhead*, the novel also provides a critique of the dangers of feeling, or being, posthuman in a "human" world, as well as suggesting that posthuman bodies could in fact be a state of mind, and do not have to involve postbiological elements, an idea which runs counter to the popular, technophilic theories of Moravec or the Extropian movement, among others.

Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* presents truly posthuman characters who inhabit dramatically altered bodies, the most compelling of which are the protagonist Evelyn—who is transformed through an unsolicited sex change operation and psychological conditioning into Eve—and "Mother," a monstrous posthuman figure and scientist/goddess who is responsible for Evelyn's metamorphosis. Mother is particularly intriguing, as, unlike the baby in *Eraserhead*, she is self-created and has given herself the agency to deliberately assume a posthuman body. Even though she ends up failing at her task and physically decaying, abandoned on a beach, it seems at least that her project in reshaping Evelyn has been something of a success. The agency Mother shows in

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transforming herself is worth exploring further in terms of the power, as well as the

dangers, inherent in harnessing the posthuman. In this chapter I will also consider

posthuman bodies in terms of the construction of new mythologies for a posthuman

age—myths to fill the posthuman spaces and provide both historicity and a future for the

body. Using the works of Banks and Cater, I will also explore how posthuman gender

mythologies might draw upon, and parody, humanist mythologies.

The third and final chapter of this section, "Posthuman Communities: Second Life

vs. *The Mole People*," will look at both the optimism the posthuman provides, and also

the tangible, social cost of the posthuman. My concluding chapter will both serve as a

snapshot of current posthuman trends and contain speculation as to what the future holds

with regards to posthuman bodies and communities. The prominent Australian

performance artist and body modification theorist Stelarc has declared on his website,

"The body is obsolete!"[17] But is the body truly "obsolete," or is it just altered mentally

and physically, and/or altered through textual representations? Through a discussion of

the virtual online community Second Life in relation to a community of homeless subway

tunnel dwellers that Jennifer Toth details in her nonfiction work, *The Mole People*, I will

explore the ramifications of what it means to give up one's body and position in society in

order to transition into life in a new, unexplored interstitial zone.

Second Life, which is gaining popularity online and now has nearly two million

members, will be posited as one means for humans to access the posthuman without fully

giving up their "humanity." Second Life provides a virtual, non-organic representation of

the human world, complete with all aspects of current American society, including

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[17] Stelarc's most recent artistic project is attempting to have a third ear grown on his head, which follows an abortive attempt to insert a piece of sculpture into his stomach and film it in its new "gallery space." His interactive website can be accessed at www.stelarc.va.com.au.

shopping malls, advertisements, and other commodifications. Yet I will also consider the cost of the posthuman, by examining the idea of the "johatsu," a Japanese term for one who has lost his or her identity. A truly posthuman society, that of the tunnel dwellers, or self-defined "mole people," beneath New York City will be examined, and the notion of a technological underclass will be explored: the hidden corollary to the much touted technotopia of Second Life. While the technological elite join Second Life, and are able to potentially run two productive lives that can function within capitalist America, the "mole people" are apparently denied a single life, in capitalist terms. By moving away from works of fiction, I believe such disparities within notions of the posthuman, and posthuman societies, can be better analyzed. From this vantage point, I will examine the potential of the posthuman to contribute to and amplify the inequities of our society, and the possibility for its use and misuse. Although it is certainly unlikely that, unless given a very broad definition, the posthuman will ever become the sole strain of literature or culture, it is certainly a valid, if frequently hidden, offshoot of postmodernism that has developed over the course of the twentieth century. Both celebratory and profoundly disturbing to human(ist) archetypes, the posthuman holds within it a great deal of potential, both positive and negative, for the twenty-first century.

PART ONE:

POSTHUMAN LANDSCAPES

CHAPTER ONE

Myths for the Posthuman Age:
The Drowned World, The Crystal World and *The Atrocity Exhibition*

J.G. Ballard's first four novels form a series, each one dealing with a different apocalyptic event which renders the earth's surface drastically altered. In these novels, commonly referred to as Ballard's "Disaster Series," a different environmental element goes out of control, wreaking worldwide havoc. In *The Wind from Nowhere* (1961), the earth becomes engulfed in a massive global storm, in which an ever-increasing wind of five-hundred miles an hour devastates the landscape, leaving only a small band of survivors who seek refuge underground.[18] In *The Drowned World* (1962), the earth is flooded due to global warming, and humans abandon their cities and flee to the Arctic Circle. The reverse process occurs in *The Drought* (1964)[19], in which the earth's water dries up, leaving the land desiccated and humanity dying of thirst. The final novel of the disaster series, *The Crystal World* (1966), presents a spreading crystalline entity in an African jungle that threatens to engulf both the planet and ultimately the universe itself.

In these disaster novels, Ballard is interested primarily in the moment of transformation, rather than the cause. His brief explanations for the catastrophic

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[18] These underground dwellers are both a nod to the Morlocks of H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine*, and a precursor to Jennifer Toth's *The Mole People*, a text I deal with in greater detail in the final chapter of this dissertation.

[19] Originally published in the United States in an edited version under the title *The Burning World*.

planetary changes are deliberately vague and unsatisfying, to signify that his interest does not lie in scientific explanations of how or why the earth is being altered, but rather the process of alteration (or "becoming") itself. Ballard also shows little interest in exploring the end result of his catastrophic planetary transformations. The four novels either stop at the moment at which the protagonist decides to completely embrace the earth's changes, as in *The Drowned World* and *The Crystal World*, or the changes themselves abruptly cease, as in *The Wind from Nowhere* and *The Drought*.[20] Frequently read in terms of analytical psychology, most commonly the theories of Carl Jung and R.D. Laing, Ballard's disaster novels, like the marauding crystals in *The Crystal World*, reveal more complex facets when considered as posthuman texts.[21] In addition, despite his frequent identification as an author of "science fiction," Ballard is not concerned with the scientific-mechanical aspect of posthuman theory in his disaster series. Instead, he focuses on how the creation of posthuman landscapes enables the act of becoming posthuman, and affects the organic: both physically and psychologically. In these novels, Ballard merely uses some of the traditional superficial elements of science fiction to engage with and explore issues of the posthuman. Ballard only engages with "hard" science fiction—that technophilic mode dealing with the more clichéd elements of "sci-fi," such as space travel and mechanical lifeforms—in his short stories.

Ballard's first four novels also draw upon the tradition of the 1950s British disaster novel, a staple of British science fiction best exemplified by books like John

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[20] The cessation of the gale in *The Wind from Nowhere* is so sudden and illogical that, as Peter Brigg points out in his book *J.G. Ballard*, it seems as though "an almost bored Ballard arbitrarily switches off his plot device" (44).

[21] As an indication of Ballard's desire to write texts that push past the limit of generic psychological interpretation, he states that he was thrilled when the first editor who read his 1973 novel *Crash* wrote that "the author of this book is beyond psychiatric help" (Amis 81).

Wyndham's *Day of the Triffids*, in which possibly bioengineered plants feast on a human population mostly blinded by a meteor shower.[22] Roger Luckhurst points out in *The Angle Between Two Walls: The Fiction of J.G. Ballard*, that British disaster novels generally supply a metaphoric presentation of the anxiety surrounding the post WWII nuclear age and the decline of the British empire:

> The period between 1945 and 1951 saw the reduction of imperial subjects from 475 million to 70 million, and the 1950s continued with a series of violent and unceremonious colonial withdrawals…. This process was coupled with reverse migrations of Africans and Caribbeans to the colonial center, the liberal narrative of tolerance shattered by the 1958 Notting Hill riots and subsequently progressive restrictive immigration laws. (41)

These colonial anxieties are expressed and parodied in *The Wind from Nowhere* when London is destroyed by the invasive gale, and in *The Drowned World* when the city is flooded. Yet, as I will discuss, Ballard reconceptualizes the tropes of the disaster novel to explore not only the anxiety of a colonial empire in decline, but also the fate of a declining humanity itself. Unlike Wyndham, for example, Ballard positions the collapse of the colonial powers as a positive opportunity to create a new kind of world, one that lacks distinctions of class and race. The posthuman becomes a means by which Ballard can both address postcolonial issues and position the future of humanity in relation to a rapidly changing exterior environment.

In creating his sprawling landscapes, it is worth noting that Ballard's writing draws heavily on surrealism, especially surrealist painting, for some of its most evocative images. Ballard makes his influence most explicit in *The Drowned World*, in which

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[22] Brian Aldiss derisively termed *Day of the Triffids* and other British disaster fiction, "cozy catastrophes," due to the fact they generally involve a small group of survivors trying to rebuild a simulacrum of bourgeois British life. Ballard presents the inverse: formerly bourgeois British survivors willingly, and often gleefully, surrender themselves to their posthuman-apocalyptic fate.

surrealist paintings hang on the walls of the penthouse, including one by Delvaux, "in

which ashen-faced women danced naked to the waist with dandified skeletons in

tuxedos" (29). There is also a painting by Max Ernst of a "self-devouring

phantasmagoric jungle" (29) that is clearly intended to echo the landscapes and characters

of the novel; Ballard even writes that the sun in the Ernst painting affects his protagonist,

the scientist Robert Kerans, deeply by "illuminating the fleeting shadows" (29) of his

unconscious. By mentioning these surrealist works, Ballard is not only signaling a

connection between the paintings and inhabitants of the flooded world of the novel, but

also suggesting that his will not be a traditional "hard" science fiction novel, despite his

controlled prose, but perhaps a "melting" one. Kerans even has dreams of a character

named Colonel Riggs "striding about in a huge Dalinian landscape… planting immense

dripping sundials" (63). Ballard's reference to Dali and the melting timepieces of *The

Persistence of Memory* suggest the collapse of time for Kerans within the landscape of

The Drowned World. Just as London has been flooded, rendering both geography and

postcolonial anxiety irrelevant, so has time become destabilized in the mind of Kerans.

In fact, it is Kerans' attempt to actualize his surreal dreams, by ultimately heading into the

heart of the drowned world at the end of the novel, that determines the narrative. Ballard

therefore uses surrealism as a means to express the progression of the characters and the

landscape to a posthuman state.[23] In addition, as Scott Bukatman points out in "Postcards

from the Posthuman Solar System," when writing about the cyberpunk movement, the

surrealists provide a means by which one can "transform the rational structures of

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[23] This is not to claim that surrealism itself is posthuman, although there are certainly some ideological
connections in the way surrealism thwarts restrictive boundaries. What I am suggesting is that Ballard
merely uses familiar surrealist images to indicate to his readers that his novel is making the transition from
a realist work of "hard" science fiction to something more fluid that will explore collapsing boundaries of
time, space and the human psyche.

technological discourse to produce instead a highly poeticized, dreamlike liberation" (8).

Like the later cyberpunks that Bukatman covers, for Ballard, "the languages of science

and technology are inverted by a metaphorical system of language which effaces the

borders between conscious and unconscious, physical and phenomenal realities, subject

and object, individual and group, reality and simulacrum, life and death, body and

subject, future and present" (8). To that list I would only add that in Ballard's disaster

series, the borders between "human" and "nonhuman" are also effaced.

The four novels of Ballard's disaster series present a trajectory in which he

demonstrates multiple facets of the construction of a posthuman landscape. In this

chapter, I will consider only two of them, *The Drowned World* and *The Crystal World,* in

terms of posthuman landscapes and identity. *The Wind from Nowhere* and *The Drought*

are worth mentioning only briefly as they fail to successfully engage with posthuman

issues and are considered failures even by Ballard himself. *The Wind from Nowhere*

presents a disaster in its purest, most realistic form, and serves only as a starting point for

Ballard's project. It is far closer to a conventional 1950s British disaster novel than the

three other books in the series, and apart from merely describing an apocalyptic event in

detail, the novel does not attempt to engage with the issues of reality and identity

suggested by the plot. *The Wind from Nowhere* is therefore the least significant of the

series, and is only interesting to consider in that it contains the germ of Ballard's major

preoccupations with the posthuman that he explores more successfully in later works.

Ballard has in fact disowned the novel, complaining that he wrote it in two weeks for the

sole purpose of making money, and that it wasn't meant to be "serious" (Goddard 21).

Ballard correctly asserts that he used "all the clichés there are… the standard narrative

conventions" (Goddard 21) and the novel lacks Ballard's distinctive style.   The third

novel of the disaster series, *The Drought*, is similarly ineffective, and Ballard has said

that he considers the novel an interesting failure, stating in a 1975 interview that it was

"too arid—and it didn't take off for me. I… don't care for it very much" (Goddard 23).

With a scattered point of view, inconsistent characterization, and an illogical ending, the

novel also fails to deliver on the promise of its premise. While it does contain some

provocative and potentially posthuman characters, such as the deformed mutant Quilter

who thrives in the desert climate, the novel as a whole functions as a less interesting

rewrite, and an ironic reversal, of *The Drowned World.*

Both *The Drowned World* and *The Crystal World,* however, deviate from the

traditional modes and anxieties of the British disaster novel, as Ballard recontextualizes

the form to explore notions of humanity and identity. In an interview with David Pringle,

Ballard stated:

> I use the form because I deliberately want to invert it—that's the whole point of
> the novels. The heroes, for psychological reasons of their own, embrace the
> particular transformations. These are stories of huge psychic transformations…
> and I use this external transformation of the landscape to reflect and marry with
> the internal transformation, the psychological transformation of the characters.
> This is what the subject matter of these books is: they're transformation stories
> rather than disaster stories. (Goddard 25)

"Transformation" is the key term, and in addition to psychic transformations, physical

transformations occur that demonstrate the possibilities of rearranging human landscapes

and forms. To delineate how these issues of transformation are used to explore concepts

of the posthuman, I will use Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "the Body without

Organs" as presented in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Deleuze

and Guattari's theories, especially with regards to the rhizome and the assemblage,

provide a fascinating lens for a discussion of Ballard with regards to posthuman

landscapes.[24] I will apply their notions of smooth and striated space to explore how

posthuman landscapes develop and persist in a state of constant flux. For Ballard, the

"disaster motif… is thus grounded, not in a nihilistic wish for extinction, but in the desire

for transcendence" (Stephenson 41), and the transcendence that Ballard's characters seek

is a transformation of body and mind that liberates them from the confines of being

human.[25] As Peter Brigg writes in "The Global Disaster Quartet," both *The Drowned*

World and *The Crystal World* offer "a surreal and baroque environment in which man

must find in his inner self the new correspondences needed for meaning and survival"

(52).

Reclamation: Holey Space and *The Drowned World*

The Drowned World presents a surreal vision of a flooded planet, in which the

scientist Kerans and his companions prepare to leave a tropical lagoon they have been

studying, which was once central London. Ballard's descriptions of the transformed

landscape suggest a prehistoric earth, replete with "intruders from the Triassic past" (10)

including giant reptiles. Through such descriptions, Ballard indicates that the posthuman

is also the prehuman, as the future he imagines for humanity looks very similar to the

world before humans existed. Ballard has one of his characters, Dr. Bodkin, describe

their situation as "an avalanche backwards into the past" (42), and Kerans states that "in

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[24] Deleuze and Guattari use the concept of the rhizome—a non-hierarchical "subterranean stem" (6) like
that of "bulbs and tubers" (6)—to delineate their notions about creating new lines of flights and
assemblages. They write that "any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other…. A rhizome
ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances
relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles" (7).

[25] Ballard's explicit distinction between "disaster" and "transformation" also indicates the celebratory aspect
of his novels in terms of freedom from human boundaries.

response to the rises in temperature, humidity and radiation levels, the flora and fauna of this planet are beginning to assume once again the forms they displayed the last time such conditions were present—roughly speaking, the Triassic period" (42). The few remaining humans are no longer privileged in such an environment, and have in fact become, as Kernas notes, "anomalous" (42). Kerans muses that with time running backwards in such a way, "the genealogical tree of mankind was systematically pruning itself… and a point might ultimately be reached where a second Adam and Eve found themselves alone in a new Eden" (23).[26] Ironically, at the end of the novel, Kerans himself becomes both the "second Adam and Eve" in one body, as I will soon discuss. Yet the "new Eden" is far more complex than what Kerans imagines, and gives rise to something beyond the human.

Ballard first connects the temporal fluctuations of the exterior landscape to the human brain and psyche. As the novel opens, Kerans and the other characters consistently experience intense dreams of prehistoric landscapes, and sensations of déjà vu. Keran's assistant, Dr. Bodkin, raises the issue of biological memories, telling Kerans that humans carry within them submerged memories of a prehistoric time when they were at the mercy of predatory animals:

> "The brief span of an individual life is misleading. Each one of us is as old as the entire biological kingdom, and our bloodstreams are tributaries of the great sea of its total memory. The uterine odyssey of the growing foetus recapitulates the entire evolutionary past, and its central nervous system is a coded time scale…. The further down the CNS you move, from the hindbrain through the medulla into the spinal cord, you descend back into the neuronic past." (44)

Bodkin is advancing an essentially Jungian philosophy of archetypes of the collective unconscious, yet Ballard complicates the legitimacy of this approach by examining how

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[26] Much more is to come on the subject of a new "Eve" in posthuman terms—see chapter four, which covers Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* and its protagonist, (Eve)lyn.

the metamorphosis of the landscape forces a radical alteration in the thoughts and behavior patterns of the human characters. Kerans notes that his own personality has been altered out of necessity, and that in this new world, "old categories of thought would merely be an encumbrance" (14). As a survival technique he must deliberately suspend himself outside of "normal time and space" (15) and prepare a new "internal landscape" (14) to match the altered exterior landscape. As time is no longer on a human scale, but rather on a geological one, Kerans muses that "a million years [is] the shortest working unit" (48), making human problems and needs basically irrelevant. Kerans' increasingly surreal dreams represent "ancient organic memories millions of years old" (74).[27] He dreams that his body is merging with the landscape, and he feels some kind of primal pull towards the water that now covers most of the earth. Ballard writes that Kerans feels "the barriers which divided his own cells from the surrounding medium dissolving" so that the waters become "an extension of his own bloodstream" (74). Kerans' thought patterns are consistently characterized by such pre-human and posthuman longings to become one with the inanimate earth.

Kerans is an advocate for the changing nature of the planet and of humankind, and he finds his opposite in Strangman, a violent pseudo-pirate who wishes to reclaim the lost land and loot it by draining the lagoon.[28] Wearing a gleaming white silk suit and piloting a ship of bare-chested black sailors, Strangman represents the archetypal colonial

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[27] Again this echoes Jungian philosophy, but as L.J. Hurst points out in "The Material World: J.G. Ballard's *The Drowned World*," Ballard invokes Jung to "ironically counterpose" Jung's ideas against the pure physicality of the massive alterations of landscape in the novel. The collective unconscious is negated or radically altered if humankind takes an unexpected evolutionary shift, or becomes altogether extinct. Ballard's titles, such as "Towards a New Psychology," with its emphasis on "new," also suggest he is attempting to look beyond Jung and Laing in his examination of the human psyche.

[28] Strangman's name suggests, literally, "strange man," and indeed he is the stranger in the posthuman landscape of the drowned lagoon, with his outmoded colonialist ideology and agenda.

force. Two different characters call him a "white devil," and Kerans thinks to himself

that Strangman looks like "a decaying vampire, glutted with evil and horror" (171).

Strangman wants to drain the lagoon and reapply a hierarchical order to the landscape

and the remaining humans. He orchestrates a bizarre, parodic ceremony termed "The

Feast of Skulls" in which the sailors beat on bongo drums with human bones and torture

Kerans. When Strangman finally succeeds in draining the lagoon, Kerans watches in

horror as the water level goes down, and buildings slowly reemerge like ghosts of the old

world order, vivified by Strangman's colonialist desires. Kerans implores Colonel Riggs

"to flood it again" and cries that the streets and buildings are "obscene and hideous! It's a

nightmare world that's dead and finished, Strangman's resurrecting a corpse!" (159).

The relationship between the forces Strangman and Kerans represent is best

decoded through Deleuze and Guattari's notions of smooth and striated space, and the

concept of deterritorialization—two models that can help to isolate the posthuman in

Ballard's work. In the chapter "1440: The Smooth and the Striated" in *A Thousand*

Plateaus, Deleuze and Guattari define smooth space as "nomad space" (474) or an

intensive space in which "the points are subordinated to the trajectory" (478) and

movement alone is privileged. Striated space is the opposite of smooth space, a

"sedentary space" (474) in which "lines or trajectories tend to be subordinated to points"

(478). The smooth and the striated exist together "in mixture: smooth space is constantly

being… transversed into a striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed,

returned to smooth space" (474). In their "Maritime Model," Deleuze and Guattari locate

the sea as an ideal smooth space, but one that has been striated due to the imposition of

nautical coordinates. Yet this striation is constantly being written over by the smooth, for

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"the smooth always possesses a greater power of deterritorialization than the striated" (480).

This notion is expressed in the way Kerans appreciates how the flooding of the earth has literally washed away striations imposed by humanity in favor of a vast smooth space that allows for "becomings" and the physical and psychic metamorphosis of humankind. By reversing the effects of the global apocalypse and draining the lagoon, Strangman has re-imposed order on the smooth space of the ocean. As the "white devil," he strives to control and subjugate the other characters, for as Deleuze and Guattari write, "the great imperial religions need a smooth space like the desert, but only in order to give it a law that is opposed to the nomos in every way" (495). Strangman is attempting to use the opportunities presented by the smooth space of the drowned world to assert his own dominance and establish a rigid social order as a mimicry of colonialism.[29] Yet he is ultimately unsuccessful in his plan, as Kerans manages to sabotage Strangman's project and re-flood the lagoon, thus deterritorializing the striated space and returning it to nomad space. After this event, Kerans flees the lagoon and becomes a literal nomad himself, as he takes a boat and travels south, in Ballard's words, "a second Adam searching for the forgotten paradises of the reborn sun" (175). The last remnants of human civilization exist only to the north, so Kerans is heading toward certain death—or transformation—in the burning, submerged jungles. Kerans thus inhabits a "zone of transit" (14) in which he demarcates, in Deleuzian terms, a "line of flight" from restrictive human boundaries of selfhood and society.

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[29] This element also provides Ballard's parody of typical British disaster novels and the "brave" group of survivors who wish to rebuild the Empire. Strangman, whose impulses to return the city to its previous un-drowned state, might be a hero in a "cozy catastrophe," but not here, where his motives are merely to plunder the landscape for personal gain.

The Drowned World advocates a posthuman ideology, expressed by the manner in which Kerans embraces the very changes that mean the end of the human race. Without a clear motive or destination, he heads south toward death, but also with the suggestion that he, and humankind, might be reborn as something new. His potential fate is mirrored in that of Hardman, a helicopter pilot who leaves the safety of the lagoon and disappears into the water in the first section of the novel, long before the departure of Kerans. Kerans discovers a drastically altered Hardman on his journey south: "The man's long legs, like two charred poles of wood, stuck out uselessly in front of him… His arms and sunken chest were… strung together with short lengths of creeper… Both eyes were almost completely occluded by corneal cancers" (171). Blind, raving, and covered with flies, Hardman is tended by Kerans until he is well enough to continue his journey south, crawling on his hands and knees. Hardman's physical condition does not concern Kerans at all. In fact, Kerans notes that his own ankle is "black and swollen" and that he "might not long survive the massive unbroken jungles to the south" (174). Kerans recognizes his own condition, and that of Hardman, as a "becoming" rather than an ending. Their respective transformations are a necessary process in response to their altered physical environment. Kerans' journey south is not the manifestation of a latent death wish, as some critics have read the book, but rather an illustration of his desire to fuse his human interior and exterior with the landscape.[30] Just as Hardman's body has become "poles of wood" overgrown with "creeper," so too will Kerans willingly become part of the drowned world.

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[30] Ballard told Martin Amis in an interview in 1984 that "the American publisher said, 'We have a problem with the ending. It's too negative. Couldn't we have him heading *north*?' But it's a *happy* ending. South is where he *wants* to go. Further. Deeper. South!'" (Amis 81)

Kerans' journey is not merely an attempt to retreat or escape into the prehistoric past or nullify his identity. Nor is it a Jungian effort to decode the surreal dreams generated by his unconscious mind through the exploration of submerged archetypes. In fact, Ballard refutes this reading by having Kerans worry early in the novel that his desire to stay at the lagoon stems merely from the fact that the water reminds him of "the drowned world" of his "uterine childhood" (28). Admittedly, this does seem to be the case at first; in Chapter Nine, Kerans descends into the depths of the flooded lagoon in a diving suit and has a vision of an ecstatic merger between his body and the water:

> He lay back… the soothing pressure of the water penetrating his suit so that the barriers between his own private bloodstream and that of the giant amnion seemed no longer to exist. The deep cradle of silt carried him gently like an immense placenta… he was only aware of the faint glimmer of identity within the deepest recesses of his mind…. Epochs drifted. Giant waves, infinitely slow and enveloping broke and fell across the sunless beaches of the time-sea, washing him helplessly in it shallows. He drifted from one pool to another, in the limbos of eternity… (110)

However, this journey is not just a retreat into the womb for Kerans—or rather, any kind of human womb—but also a representation of the potential power inherent in the notion of a cosmic rebirth. Strangman correctly points out that Kerans "*wanted* to become part of the drowned world" (111) and suggests that Kerans deliberately anchored his cable on something in order to drown. With regards to this concept of rebirth in *The Drowned World*, Ballard writes:

> I wanted to look at our racial memory, our whole biological inheritance, the fact that we're all several hundred million years old, as old as the biological kingdoms in our spines, in our brains, in our cellular structure; our very identities reflect untold numbers of decisions made to adapt us to changes in our environment, decisions lying behind us in the past like some enormous largely forgotten journey. (Hennessy 62)

Some critics, like Roger Luckhurst and Patrick Parrinder, see Ballard's statements solely

in light of Jungian notions of the collective unconscious. While it is true that *The*

Drowned World invites such readings, a Jungian interpretation provides an easy way to

disengage from the forward-looking elements of the novel. If anything, the novel

suggests the total collapse of familiar archetypes, and Ballard's comment on "identities"

suggests that a redefinition of the human body and psyche in relation to traditional

humanist notions of self is required. This is essentially the posthuman body, one that is at

once deconstructed and augmented, and linked both to an eternal, universal past and to

elements of a future physical landscape. As L.J. Hurst writes in "The Material World,"

The Drowned World "is not Jungian, and part of its power lies in its denial of the Jungian

interpretation before a material one—the experience of a future, changed world" (39).

Analysis via a Jungian perspective would therefore require a focus on the relation of the

psyche of the characters to the past, rather than to the future.

In Deleuzian terms, Kerans and his fellow traveler, Hardman, can be thought of as

nomads, engaged in constructing a nomadology across the strata comprising the

posthuman landscape of the novel. By writing notes on walls as he journeys south,

Kerans is recording "the opposite of a history" (Deleuze and Guattari 23) because he is

recording his own de-evolution and that of the planet. Time has lost its meaning and is

running backwards, despite Strangman's failed efforts to striate the lagoon.[31] The novel

ends with Kerans lost in the jungle, scrawling the words "All is well" on the wall of a

ruined building, "sure that no-one would ever read the message" (175). But of course

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[31] Strangman even has his men paint a sign thirty feet high reading "TIME ZONE" (97) in an attempt to assert order and striate the lagoon by restarting a forward temporal progression.

The Drowned World presents the reader with the message, thus inviting analysis of, and questions about, why Kerans is content with his fate.

I believe that as a nomad mapping out a line of flight from humanity, Kerans is involved in the construction of what Deleuze and Guattari term "holey space" (Deleuze and Guattari 413). As Kerans journeys through the smooth space of the flooded world, he carves out holes, making his home in the landscape first in "the remains of a small temple" (169) and later in "ruined apartment houses" (174) as well as in the jungle itself. He therefore becomes the "second Adam," a posthuman Adam, by completing the merger of himself with the environment, in the culmination of his "neuronic odyssey" (Ballard 174). The "new Eve" is both his subconscious, which has been reunited with his conscious mind, and also the landscape itself, with which he will physically unite. His nervous system has become one with the landscape in rhizomatic fashion, so that together they are the "new Adam and Eve" in one. The "new Eden" is therefore indistinguishable from the "new Adam and Eve," which is indicative of the power of the posthuman to effect boundary breaking and recombination, as well as its power to destroy (or complicate) archetypes and humanist myths. In fact, Deleuze and Guattari locate the brain itself as a potential rhizome, a notion which can be applied to Kerans. For Deleuze and Guattari, "the discontinuity between cells, the role of the axons, the functioning of the synapses, the existence of synaptic microfissures, the leap each message makes across these fissures, make the brain a multiplicity" (15). The flooded landscape, with its islands, lagoons, remnants of buildings, and prehistoric wildlife serves as an actualization of Kerans' neural landscape, and vice versa.

If *The Drowned World* explores notions of smooth, striated and holey space in relation to the desire to become posthuman, it does not attempt to explain what a posthuman form might look like. By ending with Kerans still alive and his journey incomplete, Ballard avoids describing the details of Kerans' potential transformation.[32] He also does not fully engage with the consequences of Kerans' choice, except in terms of Kerans' psyche, and therefore elides some elements of the power of the posthuman to disrupt the body. Luckhurst notes that the catastrophes that occur in Ballard's disaster novels should be "theorized as that irruptive and unrepresentable event, which blocks mimesis, narrative and historiographical containment… The repetition of the catastrophe… should be comprehended as being called forth by the 'hole' blasted in signification by the catastrophe" (39). Yet I posit that it is not a simple repetition of catastrophe, but instead a repetition that progresses and expands, so that the "hole" widens with each successive disaster. The final novel of the series, *The Crystal World*, attempts to address and resolve the issue of what the depths of this "holey space" might reveal, in its complex exploration of the creation of posthuman bodies in relation to posthuman landscapes.

Armor of Diamonds:
Bodies Without Organs in *The Crystal World*

The desires of the characters in *The Crystal World* can best be explored with regards to the posthuman through Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the "Body without Organs," or "BwO." *The Crystal World* presents a forest, and potentially a universe,

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[32] Whether this transformation proves to be an ascension, or a declension, to a posthuman state is immaterial to Ballard, as the posthuman is anti-hierarchical and obliterates conventional notions of evolution and decay.

succumbing to a process of petrification by a crystalline entity that engulfs its frequently

willing victims. Time and space become frozen in this crystallizing process, so that

anything exposed to it becomes immobilized in a glaze of reflective, ice-like crystals.

Ballard uses this device to explore both the features and the sociological implications of a

proliferating posthuman landscape, one which actualizes the potentials of desire and

repression held within the concept of the posthuman. Much of the novel is devoted to an

exploration of the crystallizing forest, a liminal space in which anything that enters it is

eventually held in infinite stasis.[33]

Like *The Drowned World*, *The Crystal World* hinges on the relation between

smooth and striated space. Most of the action takes place at Mont Royal, the site of a

diamond mine in Africa where the unusual crystallizing process was first discovered.

The jungle, like the ocean, is a good representation of smooth space, while the presence

of the diamond mine indicates a Strangman-like colonial attempt to striate, or give order,

to this space. The appearance of the crystals, which renders the jungle a silent, frozen

space, suggests smoothness reasserting itself and allowing for the creation of a nomadic

space. This negotiation between the smooth and the striated allows Ballard to advance

the presentation of his posthuman landscape as he effects a critique of colonialism. The

land that has been striated and exploited by a "fleshy" mine owner named Thorenson has

rebelled. There is an ironic comedy to the fact that now, due to the crystallizing process,

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[33] With its emphasis on hallucinatory visions and temporal dislocation, *The Crystal World* has frequently been read as a metaphoric presentation of the effects of LSD. While Ballard admits experimenting with the drug, he insists his first dose came three years after writing the novel, although he claims "the book does convincingly, in my experience, describe what an LSD vision is like; particularly the effects of light and time" (Vale 25). Roger Luckhurst suggests that "the bizarre images of the crystallizing forest derive from hallucinogenic drugs, deployed as treatment by R.D. Laing as a strategy of annealing 'the divided self', with much the same affirmative rhetoric evident at the close of *The Crystal World*" (61). This seems unlikely, although the dog-eating protagonist of Ballard's 1975 novel *High Rise* is indeed named "Dr. Laing," but presumably as a joke rather than a tribute.

diamonds are essentially plentiful: both overabundant and deadly. The buildings of the

mine are uninhabitable, and the novel's protagonist, Dr. Sanders, notes that, so to speak,

"the forest had re-entered the plantation" (60), indicating the triumph of the landscape

over human striation.

Ballard has Dr. Sanders explain the fairly implausible, vaguely apocalyptic

crystallizing process responsible for this dramatic environmental change in a letter to a

fellow doctor:

> We now know that it is time… which is responsible for this transformation. The
> recent discovery of anti-matter in the universe inevitably involves the conception
> of anti-time as the fourth side of this negatively charged continuum. Where anti-
> particle and particle collide they not only destroy their physical identities, but
> their opposing time-values eliminate each other, subtracting from the universe
> another quantum from its total store of time. It is random discharges of this
> type… which have lead to the depletion of the time-store available to the
> materials of our own solar system…. Just as a super-saturated solution will
> discharge itself into a crystalline mass, so the super-saturation of matter in our
> continuum leads to its appearance in a parallel spatial matrix (96).

Sanders continues to explain that as time increasingly gets depleted, a kind of "super-

saturation" occurs by which atoms and molecules replicate endlessly, "in an attempt to

increase their foot-hold upon existence" (96). Thus, as a kind of compensatory

mechanism for the decreased amount of time, these duplicates swell outwards in

crystalline form in a potentially infinite process. Sanders states that they will "fill the

entire universe, from which simultaneously all time has expired" (96). This explanation

is unsatisfying, not to mention scientifically unsound, which suggests Ballard's intention

of indicating that the language of science is not equipped to explain or describe the

"wonders" of the crystal forest.[34]

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[34] The brief, absurd explanation for the crystallizing process also suggests Ballard's utter disinterest in why
the planetary changes are occurring. His focus is always on how those changes affect humans and their

The crystals allow for a collapse of binaries and confining boundaries between the human form and psyche, and the external environment. The forest, and anything that enters, becomes "neither living nor dead" (101). With the collapse of time comes the eradication of the distinction between night and day within the crystal field. The crystals emit light but darken the sky so much that Sanders first thinks the sun is eclipsed when he arrives at the forest. He asks himself at one point, "Day and night—do they mean much any longer?" (159), as the divisions that exist outside the forest are collapsed inside. Radek tells Kerans that "outside this forest everything seems polarized, does it not, divided into black and white? Wait until you reach the trees, Doctor—there, perhaps, these things will be reconciled for you" (79). The jungle gleams with phantasmagoric prismatic crystals, "as if the whole scene were being reproduced by some over-active Technicolor process" (76).[35] The crystallized forest is a study in paradox, both "motionless" (97) and "cold" (86), but also "enchanted" (84), "paradisal" (77), and "rejuvenating" (100).

The forest creates ambivalence, mirrored by Sanders' feelings for Suzanne, a fellow doctor who is suffering from leprosy. Sanders realizes he is "as much attracted as repelled by her injured face" (150), an insight that deeply troubles him. He is aroused by Suzanne's condition and locates those feelings as coming from the part of himself drawn to death, decay, and boundary transgression. On a conscious level, he is disgusted by these urges, and views the crystal forest as a hopeful psychic projection, a manifestation of the possible reconciliation of his divided psyche with a world in which life and death

environment rather than exploring the reasons for the disasters. His explanation here becomes a deliberate parody of his earlier tech-heavy "hard" science fiction.

[35] The reference to Technicolor heightens the artificiality and performative nature of the novel, and serves as an early indication that this will not be a realist text.

cease to matter. The posthuman landscape of the forest, to which Sanders ultimately

longs to surrender his burdensome humanity, allows for posthuman bodies. Those who

enter the forest become cyborgs, sacrificing their "physical and temporal identities" for

"the gift of immortality" (202) via a kind of "instant mummification" (163) through

crystallization. This sacrifice provokes feelings of anxiety, while the promise of

immortality within the forest remains enticing. The forest allows for a process of

becoming, one that Deleuze and Guattari might term "becoming-tree," given that human

bodies essentially become welded by crystals to the foliage. The crystals create a unique

assemblage between the elements of the jungle and the human body, on a molecular

level. The forest is posthuman because, in the words of Halberstam and Livingston, it

actively "participates in re-distributions of difference and identity" (10).

Those who choose to enter the forest "voyage in place" (Deleuze and Guattari

482) and are "nomads by dint of not moving, not migrating, of holding a smooth space

that they refuse to leave… Voyaging smoothly is a becoming" (482). They are bodies

without organs, that which remains "when you take everything away" (151). The BwO

defies psychoanalysis, which is why the obsessed, neurotic Sanders wishes so eagerly to

return to the crystal forest and escape himself via a means of transgression ultimately

more appealing than Suzanne's leprosy.[36] Deleuze and Guattari write that "The BwO is

opposed not to the organs but to that organization of the organs called the organism"

(158). Thus, the crystallizing process allows for the subversion of the hierarchy of the

human body. Deleuze and Guattari also assert that "the BwO is a limit… one is forever

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[36] Deleuze and Guattari write that in creating a BwO, "what you take away is precisely the phantasy….
Psychoanalysis does the opposite: it translates everything into phantasies, it converts everything into
phantasy, it retains the phantasy" (151). Sanders longs for the relief of the absence of "phantasy" provided
by the crystal jungle.

attaining it" (159), which suggests that the characters within the forest are on an endless

journey that will perhaps cease only when the entire universe is crystallized, a process

that might take eternity. As Deleuze and Guattari describe it, becoming a BwO is not an

easy process; it hinges on intense self-discipline that is suggestive of masochism, and

Deleuze and Guattari recommend an intense program of dismantling the self.[37] Pain is

involved, just as the crystallizing process involves pain, and to take the wrong step on the

journey to becoming a BwO invites disaster. Deleuze and Guattari warn against too-

rapid destratifications, which can lead to destabilization and destruction, while Ballard

presents several gruesome examples of those who become only partially frozen in the

forest and end up irrevocably mutilated.

Succumbing completely and correctly to the crystalline process as a "becoming"

is positioned as an opposite to human suffering, which is represented in *The Crystal

World* by the bodily disintegration of the lepers from a nearby leper colony. Despite the

fact that the lepers are also engaged in becoming, literally, "bodies without organs," their

transformation represents the negative side of the BwO, along with the examples Deleuze

and Guattari give of the "hypochondriac body" and the "drugged body." They write of

such bodies, "Why such a dreary parade of sucked-dry, catatonicized, vitrified, sewn-up

bodies, when the BwO is also full of gaiety, ecstasy and dance?" (150). The bodies of the

lepers do not represent becoming a BwO in productive terms, or as any kind of useful

assemblage that might advance the evolution of humanity; they suggest decline and death

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[37] Deleuze and Guattari use the example of a horse-fetishizing maschochist "who did not undergo psychoanalysis" and is engaged in horse-play. They write, "PROGRAM…. At night, put on the bridle and attach my hands…. Put on the entire harness right away…. My penis should be in a metal sheath…. The master will never approach her horse without the crop, and without using it" (155). This is presented as an "exchange and circulation" in which an "inversion of signs" (155) allows for a transfer of forces between horse and masochist, to effect a Sanders-like becoming.

instead. The lepers are facing the end of their lives, not a new beginning, which is why

they seek the comfort of the crystallizing forest as an escape from their disintegrating

bodies.[38] Deleuze and Guattari caution about distinguishing "the BwO from its doubles:

empty vitreous bodies, cancerous bodies…" (165), which suggests the lepers are not yet

true Bodies without Organs at all until they enter the forest. Sanders watches a "tribe" of

lepers parading into the forest excitedly, dancing "like newly admitted entrants to

paradise" (197), a phrase which echoes the quasi-religious notion of the "second Eden" in

The Drowned World. Yet once again "paradise" is not a paradise in Biblical terms, but

rather an extension of the bodies of the lepers themselves, so that paradise becomes

indistinguishable from its inhabitants.[39]

The manner in which the lepers enter the forest as a group, or pack, is significant,

as Deleuze and Guattari assert that "becoming and multiplicity are the same thing"

because "a multiplicity is defined not by its elements," but rather by "the number of

dimensions it has" (249). Sanders appears to envy the lepers, who cavort into the forest

to begin their journey of "becoming." In fact, Sanders follows the procession for a while,

"hobbling along" (198) as if he wishes to become one of them. His relationship with the

lepers is one of identification; he even thinks, irrationally, that he is responsible for

infecting Suzanne with leprosy and tells her, "I carry those lesions as much as you do"

(169). Sanders essentially wishes to belong to the "pack," which is "constituted by a line

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[38] In fact the lepers seek to preserve their bodies within the stasis of the forest, although they will be
preserved as part of the larger entity of the crystal world (an ultimately universe-filling entity) instead of as
individual organic entities. The posthuman therefore encourages transformations that are not contingent
upon linear notions of evolution and devolution.

[39] Ballard references Christianity frequently, as he does Jung, Freud, and pagan mysticism, to suggest how
the radical environmental changes demand a new way of thinking and a new set of myths or archetypes, or
perhaps none at all. Clearly terms like "new Adam" and "paradise" must be assigned new meanings, or else
they become entirely outmoded when applied to the landscapes of Ballard's novels.

of flight or of deterritorialization that is a component part of it, and to which it accredits a high positive value" (Deleuze and Guattari 33).[40] The lepers move into the forest in a line of flight, for the purpose of creating new multiple assemblages and deconstructing traditional human boundaries. They are forerunners of what will inevitably happen to the rest of the human race in its transformation: an entering into the pack of those who are already "becoming-crystal."

If this process of becoming is to be the fate of the human race, in order to allow for the creation of new myths for a posthuman age, Ballard must deconstruct both the landscape-dependent mythologies of science and religion. Near the beginning of the novel, the captain tells Dr. Sanders that "there is a new kind of plant disease beginning in the forest," (24) and Sanders wonder if it's something like "tobacco mosaic" (24), suggesting the degree to which science is incapable of comprehending the process of crystallization. The crystal forest challenges and complicates notions of science, as well as "time and mortality" (148), in much the same way that human conceptions of time became meaningless for Kerans in *The Drowned World*. Dr. Sanders admits at the end of *The Crystal World*, "It seems to me… that the whole profession of medicine may have been superseded—I don't think the simple distinction between life and death has much meaning now" (208).

Religion is similarly deconstructed by Ballard, as he indicates that religion, which is positioned as humanist superstition in the novel, and its associated iconography cannot function within the new posthuman space of the crystallized forest. At first, however, it seems as though religion will be privileged in this space: the jewels in the cross of a

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[40] Deleuze and Guattari use "deterritorialization" as a term to suggest the breaking apart of assemblages: "The function of deterritorialization: D is the movement by which "one" leaves the territory. It is the operation of the line of flight" (508).

missionary, Father Balthus, provide temporary protection from the process of crystallization. Ballard writes that "by some optical or electromagnetic freak, the intense focus of light within the stones simultaneously produced a compression of time, so that the discharge of light from the surfaces reversed the process of crystallization" (176). Father Balthus interprets the events of the forest as "the final celebration of the Eucharist of Christ's body… everything is transfigured and illuminated, joined together in a last marriage of space and time" (194). Yet Balthus also admits that "the Church… may have outlived its function" if only because "the body of Christ is with us everywhere here… in each prism" (193). When Sanders uses a jeweled cross to traverse the forest, protecting himself from crystallization, the power of the jewels eventually fades, as they turn to "blunted nodes of carbon" (199), suggesting the inevitable dominance of the crystallizing process over religious mythology. Like Kerans, Sanders is described in terms of a second Adam, and Ballard writes that Sanders has a "premonition of hope and longing" in the forest, "as if he were some fugitive Adam chancing upon a forgotten gateway to the forbidden paradise" (89). But it will take not only a new kind of Adam, but a new kind of human, to penetrate and thrive in the depths of the crystal world.

Just as Hardman appears to Kerans in *The Drowned World* as an indication of what might soon happen to Kerans himself, Dr. Sanders encounters a deranged Army captain, Radek, who has run into the forest. Radek has been drastically altered by his exposure to the crystals:

> His chest and shoulders were covered by a huge cuirass of jeweled plates…. Refracted through the prisms that had effloresced from the man's face, his features seemed to overlay one another in a dozen different planes…. Part of the head and shoulder, and the entire length of the right arm, had annealed themselves to the crystal outgrowths at the base of the oak. (113)

Sanders makes the mistake of trying to help Radek by removing the crystals from him and placing his body in a stream to wash them away. Sanders does not yet understand that the crystals have created an assemblage between Radek and the natural world, and that disrupting this assemblage causes great harm—in Deleuzian terms it is a too-rapid destratification and results in an incomplete BwO. Indeed, when Sanders encounters Radek next, he is missing large chunks of flesh from his face and body, where the crystals were torn away. Rather than seek medical help from Sanders, Radek implores "Take me *back*!" (138) and shambles away into the crystal forest. Sanders slowly understands that Radek wants "to go back into the forest and be crystallized again" (144). The crystals have become part of the body, as the body becomes part of them. The resulting assemblages created from this process are what Ballard calls "brilliant chimeras" (199), the very hybrids that Fukuyama writes about in horror in *Our Posthuman Future*, except here they are potentially alluring rather than terrifying, suggesting the rearrangement of desire inherent in the posthuman.[41] Radek's desire is now to resume his journey toward becoming a BwO, rather than any desire to recover his displaced humanity. Near the end of *The Crystal World*, Sanders finally comes to understand this alteration of desire when he observes people fused to each other, to trees, and even to crocodiles, and discovers he is more intrigued and pleased by their unity than disturbed by the spectacle.

Ballard's specific use of the term "anneal" to describe Radek's assemblage with the oak tree is intended to indicate the level at which the body and tree have become joined. In addition to the word's common meaning, which suggests things strengthened

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[41] Ballard's chimeras carry great hope, and they suggest the celebratory element of the posthuman that Fukuyama refuses to acknowledge in *Our Posthuman Future*.

by being melted together, it also carries a medical definition that Ballard, as a former medical student, would no doubt be aware of. "Anneal" in molecular biology, refers to the process by which "complementary DNA or RNA sequences, via hydrogenbonding" are fused to "form a double-stranded molecule" (*Online Medical Dictionary*). The term "anneal" therefore deals with a specific kind of molecular bonding in which single probe-like strands of nucleic acids become joined to form double-helixes. Ballard's use of "anneal" suggests how the assemblages formed within the crystal forest function on a molecular level to create an entirely new entity. As Deleuze and Guattari point out, "all becomings are already molecular" (272), and Ballard's terminology suggests that he is aware of this aspect of posthuman fusion. Therefore when Radek becomes annealed to the tree, it is not merely a merging between the two, but a new kind of molecular assemblage that creates an entirely different entity. This explains Deleuze and Guattari's emphasis on assemblage as being more than the sum of its parts, and as something that relies on lines of flight to open onto "a land that is eccentric, immemorial, or yet to come" (505), a land precisely like that of the crystal world.

It is also significant that Radek's face is destroyed by Sanders' attempt to remove the crystals, leaving a "raw face… from which a single eye gazed" (137). In a compelling analysis of the body, Deleuze and Guattari position the face as a form of striation, an artificial order that has been imposed, or "overcoded" (170), onto the human body. They advocate the dismantling of the face in order to subvert its monolithic nature and reaccess the "multidimensional polyvocal corporeal code" (170) of the body:

> To the point that if human beings have a destiny, it is rather to escape the face, to dismantle the face and facializations, to become imperceptible… by quite spiritual and special becomings-animal… BwO. Yes, the face has a great future, but only if it is destroyed, dismantled." (171)

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Deleuze and Guattari suggest art as a means for achieving speed and lines of flight away from organic monoliths like the face, and the crystalline forest functions in a similar way for the characters in *The Crystal World*. The forest allows them to subvert their striated bodies and move "toward the realm of the asignifying, asubjective and faceless" (Deleuze and Guattari 187) preserved for eternity as part of an assemblage. Radek's face is disassembled, or deterritorialized, as a necessary consequence of his assemblage with the forest and a new "becoming."

This disassembling of the face is not limited to Radek. Deleuze and Guattari locate three different states of the face, all of which find their analogues in other aspects of *The Crystal World*: "primitive heads, Christ-face, and probe-heads" (191). The first two are essentially outmoded in the landscape of Ballard's novel: there is certainly no return to the actual "primitive," or even pre-colonial state for the Africans once colonial exploitation has begun.[42] In addition, the "Christ-face" of religion, represented by the jeweled crosses, fails to allow a break through the wall of striated identity to the other side.[43] Only "probe-heads," defined by Deleuze and Guattari as those that "dismantle the strata in their wake, break through the walls of significance… fell trees in favor of veritable rhizomes" (190) will allow a progression to the next phase of humanity: the posthuman. Sanders will soon follow Radek in becoming a "probe-head" that will map out new uncharted territory without striating it within the crystal forest.

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[42] Ballard's placement of the crystallizing process in Africa is significant in that he is locating the emergence of the posthuman in the same place that human civilization first developed, creating a new myth of origins. His African setting also suggests a parody, or an inversion, of *Heart of Darkness* in which the "heart of darkness" strikes back: the crystals emit light and deny exploitation.

[43] As it is in Deleuzian terms: Christ "botched the crossing, the jump, he *bounced* off the wall" (Deleuze and Guattari 187).

Despite the fact that the action of the novel is restricted to Africa, Ballard suggests that the entire universe will ultimately undergo a similar transformation. The spreading crystalline entity is a rhizome that will alter the planet through the creation of multiple new assemblages. Ballard writes that the process has begun in America, with the crystallization of southern Florida, and also in Russia, suggesting the two dominant superpowers at the time of Ballard's writing are inevitably to be consumed first by the phenomenon. Sanders writes to a colleague that "the sun itself has begun to effloresce. At sunset, when its disc is veiled by the crimson dust, it seems to be crossed by a distinctive latticework… that will one day spread outwards to the planets and the stars, halting them in their courses" (202). The Echo satellite in the sky has also become crystallized, "its luminosity increased by at least tenfold… a vast aerial lantern" (38). Sanders notes that "at this rate of progress at least a third of the earth's surface will be affected by the end of the next decade" (201).

Like Kerans in *The Drowned World*, Sanders embraces these transformations as a necessary step in the evolution of the universe. Sanders ultimately decides to return to the "enchanted world" (203) of the crystalline forest, because the "final resolution" (207) can only "be found within that crystal world" (203). Also like Kerans, Sanders recognizes the earth's changes as "part of the natural order of things, part of the inward pattern of the universe" (93). Gregory Stephenson points out in *Out of the Night and Into the Dream* that Sanders is feeling "a keen and immediate sense of dejection at the prospect of commonplace reality that now seems to him to be empty and dead" (59). Indeed, just as the flooded lagoon stirs ancient memories in Kerans, Sanders notes that the jeweled forest "reflects an earlier period of our lives, perhaps an archaic memory we

are born with of some ancestral paradise where the unity of time and space is the signature of every leaf and flower" (94). This suggests that for Ballard, once again, the posthuman is connected to the pre-human. Becoming a BwO via the mechanism of the forest is perhaps a way to recapture something close to this pre-human state. Deleuze and Guattari write that the BwO is "the opposite of a childhood memory…. It is not the child 'before' the adult, of the mother 'before' the child: it is the strict contemporaneousness of the adult, of the adult and the child, their map of comparative densities and intensities, all of the variations on that map" (164). Therefore, both the pre-human past and the posthuman future will exist at once for Sanders in the forest, if he allows himself the opportunity to become annealed within the crystallizing process.

It should be pointed out, however, that there is no true means of recapturing a pre-human state, as it is impossible to re-enter the innocent, primitive stage of human development before facial stratification. As Deleuze and Guattari put it, "We can't turn back" (189). In fact, they urge readers of *A Thousand Plateaus* to "make a map, not a tracing…. What distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real. The map does not reproduce an unconscious closed in upon itself; it constructs the unconscious" (12). Therefore, a return to the pre-human would constitute a mere "tracing," while a mapping out of new posthuman territory is demanded by the landscapes of Ballard's novel, which is something Ballard understands by having Sanders continue to move forward through unstriated territory.

Ballard also presents sexual and obsessional dynamics in the novel, linking them to a critique of colonialism, by introducing the character Serena, who inhabits a house in

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the crystal forest. Two crazed men, Thorensen and Ventress, fight over her, although she is near death from tuberculosis. Her decrepit appearance, "preternaturally aged" (124) with a face "vulpine with greed" and "craftiness" (125), positions her as a kind of colonialist monster, a female double for Strangman in *The Drowned World* and the inverse of the leprosy-infected Suzanne. Serena hungers only for gems and diamonds, representative of her role as an exploiter of the African landscape. Thorensen brings her these gems, which she seizes and presses all over her body in ecstasy. The gems, coupled with the fact that she lives in the crystallized zone and has acquired some degree of habituation, appear to slow the progress of her disease. Yet unlike Radek, Sanders, and the lepers, she is unwilling to surrender herself fully to the crystal process. Her ecstasy appears to have a sexual component; she is as unwilling to surrender her physical body, and her desires, to the crystals as much as she is unwilling to surrender her love for, and acquisition of, diamonds and other gems. Serena thus remains stranded between two worlds, the last gasp of the colonizing forces that have been swept away by the crystals, effecting Ballard's analysis of colonialism as a destructive, but spent, force.

The opposing, conquering force is, of course, the anti-colonialist crystallizing process itself, which appears as a kind of freezing gale, which could itself be termed a "haecceity," Deleuze and Guattari's word for a "mode of individuation very different from that of a person, subject, thing, or substance…. A season, a winter, a summer, an hour, a date have a perfect individuality lacking nothing" (261). The gale that brings the crystallizing process enables the process of "becoming" a BwO. Deleuze and Guattari discuss the way in which "life tears itself free from the organic by a permutating, stationary whirlwind" (499), a line of flight from the body that will enable new

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assemblages, ones that will be posthuman by definition. In *The Crystal World*, this stationary whirlwind finds it perfect literary representation in Ballard's freezing crystal gale, which is both static, and a radical, energizing force. To extrapolate from Deleuze and Guattari in the service of posthuman analysis: the crystallizing force—the haecceity—lacks nothing in its ultimate, impending control over the universe, and therefore extends infinite possibilities.

   The Drowned World and *The Crystal World* therefore both involve a study of posthuman spaces, and contain an examination of how one might become a posthuman body, or a BwO. Gregory Stephenson correctly asserts that these novels serve as "an indictment of the limitations placed upon consciousness by ego-mind, rationalism, materialism and linear time" (61) and suggest "a reconsideration of the nature of reality itself" (62). In Ballard's disaster series, the "true heroes are the men or women who follow the logic of the landscape" (Pringle 20), suggesting that posthuman landscapes inevitably create and inspire posthuman beings. It is in Ballard's next novel, *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970), which breaks from his "disaster" formula, that he takes up the challenge of envisioning what this reconceived posthuman reality might actually consist of. As a means of continuing to explore the issue of posthuman bodies and spaces, Ballard wrote *The Atrocity Exhibition*[44] as a nonnarrative, experimental text, in which the arrangement of words on the page constitutes what Deleuze and Guattari might term a "rhizomatic" construction. As one of Ballard's most challenging and fragmented works, *The Atrocity Exhibition* provides a fertile realm for the discussion of how a posthuman text can be created.

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[44] Published in 1972 in America, under the title *Love and Napalm: Export USA*.

"Make Rhizome Everywhere":
***The Atrocity Exhibition* and Ballard's Posthuman Language Machine**

While *The Atrocity Exhibition* is generally not considered part of the disaster

series, it invokes many of the same qualities; the first paragraph is even titled

"Apocalypse" (9) and Ballard himself has commented that the novel is comprised of

interlinked "disaster stories" (Goddard 26). Yet unlike *The Drowned World* and *The*

Crystal World, *The Atrocity Exhibition* is given a unique textual form by Ballard in order

to match its unusual content, and the novel often displays the same kind of heteroglossia

and hybridization that M.M. Bakhtin discusses in "Discourse in the Novel." Ballard

himself has commented that his novels are comprised of multiple voices, with

undercurrents of different discourses at play beneath the surface of the text, and Ballard

essentially discusses the power of his novels in rhizomatic terms:

> [They] are like ordinary novels with the unimportant pieces left out. But it's more
> than that—when you get the important pieces together, really together, not
> separated by great masses of 'he said, she said' and opening and shutting of
> doors… it achieves critical mass as it were, it begins to ignite and you get more
> things being generated. You're getting crossovers and linkages between
> unexpected and previously totally unrelated things, events, elements of the
> narration, ideas that in themselves begin to generate new matter. (Goddard 30)

The Atrocity Exhibition is the best example of this textual strategy, in which Ballard does

away with conventional narrative structures in favor of this "new matter." In the novel,

he recontextualizes a multiplicity of modes of language via a Deleuzian rhizomatic

assemblage to create a new form of text, one that pushes beyond mere postmodern

fragmentation and archetypes while also embodying the postmodern. *The Atrocity*

Exhibition invites being read out of sequence, as an "open system" (Deleuze 17), much as

A Thousand Plateaus, for example, is meant to be read.[45] In fact, Ballard's "novel" is actually comprised primarily of previously published short pieces along with additional stories, so that the text is merely an array of interlinked, paragraph-size "condensed novels," as Ballard terms them, rather than a cohesive linear narrative like *The Drowned World* or *The Crystal World*. It is in *The Atrocity Exhibition* that Ballard first pays as much attention to radicalizing elements of style as he does to radicalizing content; yet both form and substance function in tandem in the novel to create a text that moves toward the posthuman.

I categorize *The Atrocity Exhibition* as posthuman because it essentially advocates the complete deterritorialization of the human form, as well as the form of the novel. In the startling line of prose that provides the novel with its title, Ballard writes that "The human organism is an atrocity exhibition at which he is an unwilling spectator" (14), and Ballard attempts to (literally) illustrate this point via his heteroglossia, which consists not only of his hybridized prose, but also, in the 1990 edition, drawings by the medical illustrator and painter, Phoebe Gloeckner.[46] The text of *The Atrocity Exhibition* itself becomes concerned with forging and foregrounding the connections between the human body—as described by Ballard and illustrated by Gloeckner in fragmented form—and the inorganic, specifically the architecture of landscapes and buildings, through which Ballard illuminates the process by which the internal becomes external. Ballard writes in his annotations to the 1990 edition that "the nervous systems of the characters have been

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[45] Deleuze and Guattari's American translator, Brian Massumi, notes in his introduction, "When you buy a record there are always cuts that leave you cold. You skip them. You don't approach a record as a closed book that you have to take or leave. Other cuts you may listen to over and over again" (xiv). The sections of text comprising the *The Atrocity Exhibition* are perhaps best approached in this manner.

[46] The 1990 edition of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, published by RE/Search Publications, is currently the only edition in print in the United States, making Gloeckner's illustrations an integral, and perhaps permanent, aspect of the work.

externalized, as part of the reversal of the interior and exterior worlds" (44). Gloeckner's

illustrations reinforce Ballard's annotation, as they are anatomical paintings of the human

body stratified in sexual poses, displaying flesh as landscape. This central preoccupation

of the novel is further indicated by William Burroughs, who notes in his preface to the

edition that "the human body becomes landscape…. This magnification of image to the

point where it becomes unrecognizable is a key note of *The Atrocity Exhibition*. [Ballard

is] literally blowing up the image" (7). In addition, the editor and publisher of Ballard's

text, V. Vale, writes of Gloeckner's illustrations that

> Their realism dismantles "pornography" like Ballard's text: as a series of
> fragmentary, alienated, passionless responses to a set of stimuli. A penis inside a
> mouth takes on the detached distancing of a medical lecture, its eroticism
> excised…. Implied here is a critique of science as the ultimate pornography,
> capable of reducing the ineffable—unique personal relationships, the source of
> our greatest delight—to objectified, purely functional commodifications. (6)

Yet Vale's analysis suggests that the illustrations are entirely stripped of their erotic

content, and that *The Atrocity Exhibition* will refute the notion of science as savoir, in the

manner of *The Drowned World* and *The Crystal World*, or perhaps will even function to

criticize technological advances, like many postmodern works: yet this is not the case.

Instead, the images and text function as an assemblage to create an uneasy hybrid

containing simultaneous representations of both science and sexuality. Ballard's work

enables a transference between the external world, which becomes personified as human,

and the internal world of the human body, which is reconfigured in external terms as

inanimate landscape. In this manner, Ballard is making a posthuman statement, and

when he writes a superficially jarring line like "the spinal landscape, revealed at the level

of T-12, is that of the porous rock towers of Tenerife" (31), he is making explicit the

connection between the human body and landscape. Graeme Revell notes in "The Post-

Humanist Universe," that "for many, [Ballard's] collapse of the humanist universe

represents…. a disastrous descent into a nightmarish technocracy, a world without

feeling…. But it is Ballard's most valuable contribution… that he has given us an

alternative, a method for manipulating the new colonizers of our 'interior space' to our

own ends" (145). The "new colonizers" to which Revell refers are aspects of the external

environment which were once separate from the internal and organic, or in his precise

terms, they are the "signposts of the media-technological milieu" (145). And Ballard's

method for "manipulating" these "colonizers" stems from optimistically embracing the

notion that there are no longer meaningful boundaries between the internal and the

external—a move which allows for great freedom—and also allows the internal to

relocate itself into the spaces vacated by the inward migration of external, nonorganic

elements.

As the organic in Ballard is thus manipulated, and subject to infinite "becomings"

in the manner of Kerans in *The Drowned World* and Sanders *The Crystal World*, Ballard's

actual, physical text is also subject to, and an agent of, constant flux. Deleuze and

Guattari write that "contrary to a deeply rooted belief, the book is not an image of the

world. It forms a rhizome with the world… the book assures the deterritorialization of

the world, but the world effects a reterritorialization of the book, which in turn

deterrirotializes itself in the world" (11). I believe that Ballard is making this rhizomatic

tendency of books explicit in *The Atrocity Exhibition* by attempting to carve out a new

kind of form for the novel, the previously discussed "map and not a tracing" (Deleuze and

Guattari 12)[47]. Ballard's novel functions as a rhizome, allowing for forms of

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[47] To further his posthuman agenda, Ballard draws from traditional postmodern techniques, like pastiche and collage. During the 1950s Ballard produced a series of collages assembled from headlines taken from

experimentation and growth that "foster connections between fields" and present the

reader with "multiple entryways" (Deleuze and Guattari 12). The ever-shifting

protagonist of Ballard's novel "Travern" mirrors the tendency toward multiplicity and

hybridity suggested by the novel's prose. Travern is defined by Ballard as a

schizophrenic, yet his condition is presented within the text as the only logical response

to the barrage of media in the twentieth century, and is not necessarily a disability but

perhaps a social advantage.[48] Therefore to apply psychoanalysis to Travern would

neutralize the power of the novel, for, as in *The Drowned World* and *The Crystal World*,

the posthuman retains its anti-psychoanalytic bent. In fact, the protagonist's constant

name switching, to "Travis" and "Talbot" among others, does not simply reflect a

postmodern case of scattered identity but literally turns him into more than one person: a

true multiple. Ballard switches names to indicate that Travern possesses no monolithic

self, and in different situations, Travern literally becomes a different character, able to

enter into new kinds of assemblages. Travern's other selves are not metaphoric or

illusory: each one is a separate entity of its own. Travern is not "mimicking" other

characters—for as Deleuze and Guattari note, "Mimicry is a very bad concept, since it

relies on binary logic to describe phenomena of an entirely different nature" (11)—he is

engaged in the process of "becoming" other unique characters. Traven himself could

even be said to function as a rhizome, for Deleuze and Guattari write that "a rhizome has

no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing… the rhizome

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various magazines, and text from scientific articles. These collages serve as simplistic blueprints for the
more complex heteroglossia Ballard employs in *The Atrocity Exhibition*. In fact, Ballard himself wrote that
the early collages were intended as "sample pages of a new kind of novel" (Vale 38).

[48] Schizophrenia suggests a split from reality, which Travern certainly displays, but Travern also seems to
be suffering from multiple personality disorder in psychoanalytic terms, not that any "diagnosis" would be
fruitful or curative. The posthuman repudiates readings that are solely psychoanalytic.

is alliance, uniquely alliance" (25), which suggests a way to approach Travern's role in Ballard's text. Travern's multiple identities ultimately provide linkages between Ballard's disparate "condensed novels" in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, yoking heterogenic elements together for brief instants, and creating new lines of flight. Each time Travern becomes another character, the possibilities for new becomings and assemblages are multiplied.

This notion of multiplicities is suggestive of Bakhtin's notions of hybridity and heteroglossia; indeed, Bakhtin provides the best means by which to analyze the disparate voices present in *The Atrocity Exhibition.* Ballard's text itself functions as a Bakhtinian hybrid construction comprised of multiple textual voices. In "Discourse in the Novel," Bakhtin defines hybridization as "the mixing, within a single concrete utterance, of two or more different linguistic consciousnesses" (429). For him, hybridization is intentional and is not meant to resolve; in this way it is "the peculiar mark of prose" (429). The author shifts back and forth in relation to the different language he or she employs, causing a "rhythmic oscillation" (302), as Bakhtin terms it. Bakhtin applies his notions of heteroglossia and hybridization primarily to the British comic novel, but his devices serve to illuminate Ballard's novels, as Ballard's prose superficially conceals a wide array of different voices.[49]

In *The Atrocity Exhibition*, Ballard employs a multitude of voices, including a pseudo-scientific voice rife with medical terminology, evident even in the titles of the chapters of the Appendix, such as "Mae West's Reductive Mammoplasty" and "Queen Elizabeth's Rhinoplasty." In fact, Ballard writes in his annotations that in these cases, the

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[49] Ballard's novels are, of course, also British comic novels of a sort, although quite different from Charles Dickens, for example, to whom Bakhtin applies his analysis of heteroglossia in "Discourse in the Novel." Ballard's novella *Running Wild*, which employs multiple layers of language (including those of a police procedural, sensationalist journalism, and psychoanalysis) for overtly parodic effect, perhaps provides an even more effective example of Bakhtinian heteroglossia and hybridity than *The Atrocity Exhibition*.

chapters themselves were "taken directly from a text-book of plastic surgery" (106) and

his only contribution was to substitute "Mae West" or "Queen Elizabeth" in place of "The

Patient."[50] Ballard also employs the voices of psychoanalysis in *The Atrocity Exhibition*;

a chapter of the novel titled "Why I Want to Fuck Ronald Reagan" is written as a mock

"psychological position paper on Reagan's subliminal appeal" (Ballard 106). It utilizes

the language of psychological reports and research to parodic effect by listing patently

absurd data and analysis, such as "the slow-motion cine-films of Reagan's campaign

speeches exercised a marked erotic effect upon an audience of spastic children" (105).[51]

Ballard's own authorial intrusions, in the form of annotations in the margins, essentially

serve as the "compact masses of direct authorial discourse" (302) that Bakhtin delineates

in "Discourse in the Novel."[52]

Ballard also merges famous historical figures and events with various mundane

forms of language and deliberately absurdist plots. Hybridization takes place, hinging

upon the famous names Ballard scatters throughout the text. An example of this is

provided by Ballard's retelling of John F. Kennedy's assassination in the chapter "The

Assassination of John F. Kennedy Considered as a Downhill Motor Race." The banal

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[50] These replacements are reminiscent of Byron Gysin and William Burrough's language play and cut-up techniques, again suggesting a connection and degree of overlap between the techniques of the postmodern and the posthuman.

[51] This chapter was later reprinted by a prankster, according to Ballard, as an official looking document and circulated at the 1980 Republican National Convention. Despite its obvious parodic origins, it was accepted by many delegates as an actual study that had been commissioned by a "maverick think-tank" to determine how Reagan could improve his popularity. The fact that this information itself is now part of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, encapsulated in an annotation, adds a further layer of discourse to the text and additional levels of subversive implication.

[52] These authorial intrusions are "direct" in the sense that Ballard is directly addressing the reader, although their position in the margins of the text undermines any notion that they are central to the novel, and underscores their literal "marginality." Ballard's direct-yet-marginal commentary also suggests a sly parody of Bakhtinian discourse and critical analysis.

language of sports writing is employed to reconfigure one of the more significant events of the twentieth century. Ballard uses terms such as "pit stop" (108) and writes that "Kennedy got off to a bad start… he was disqualified at the hospital later after taking a turn for the worse" (108). At one point Ballard writes that "Oswald was the starter" (109), which is at once a parody of racing terminology and a comic demythologizing of the Kennedy assassination. While such devices are common in postmodern fiction, Ballard merely uses them as the starting point for his subversion of the postmodern novel, and the construction of a rhizomatic posthuman novel, as I will demonstrate.

Ballard first takes care to position his work as influenced by, but different from realism, modernism, and surrealism. In his introduction to the French edition of *Crash*, a novel published soon after *The Atrocity Exhibition*, Ballard writes that writers should not be satisfied with "the techniques and perspectives of the traditional 19th century novel, with its linear narrative, its measured chronology, its consular characters grandly inhabiting their domains within an ample time and space" (98). Ballard also states that he does not believe the writer still has "the moral authority to invent a self-sufficient and self-enclosed world, to preside over his characters… knowing all the questions in advance" (98). I believe that such statements against linear narratives and chronology stand as a refutation of the realist novel, and that Ballard's rebellion against "self-enclosed worlds" and "knowing all the questions" also indicate a rejection of the modernist novel, and its tendencies to mourn the notion of a divided self. In addition, Ballard separates himself from surrealism in *The Atrocity Exhibition* while still utilizing some of its tropes. For example, Ballard employs Andre Breton's style of automatic writing, that which is free from conscious control, but uses it for his parodic purposes.

Ballard writes that "the many lists in *The Atrocity Exhibition* were produced by free association, which accounts for the repetition" (*Atrocity* 9). Ballard also cites a number of Max Ernst and Dali paintings in the text, and notes:

> The paintings of mental patients, like those of the surrealists, show remarkable insights into our notions of conventional reality, a largely artificial construct which serves the limited ambitions of our central nervous systems. Huge arrays of dampers suppress those perceptions that confuse or unsettle the central nervous system, and if these are bypassed… startling revelations soon begin to occur. (40)

Ballard also comments, tongue only partially in cheek, that "*The Atrocity Exhibition*'s original dedication should have been 'To the Insane.' I owe them everything" (9). Yet as in *The Drowned World* and *The Crystal World*, Ballard is merely exploiting these aspects of surrealism in order to generate his rhizomatic novel. It perhaps remains more difficult to separate elements of *The Atrocity Exhibition* from postmodernism than any of these other modes of writing.

I believe that *The Atrocity Exhibition* points the way forward for posthuman texts by both employing a posthuman style and dealing with posthuman content, while masquerading as superficially postmodern. What appear to be elements of postmodern fragmentation are actually the components of hybridity from which Ballard encourages the growth of his rhizomatic, anti-hierarchical structure. While the novels comprising Ballard's disaster quartet remain moderately conservative in form while exploring their posthuman landscapes, *The Atrocity Exhibition* becomes the embodiment of the posthuman landscape itself, a textual landscape of ever-shifting words and hybrid voices. As previously noted, due to its form, *The Atrocity Exhibition* also becomes as much of a rhizome as *A Thousand Plateaus*—a result of the fact that both are texts composed of "plateaus that communicate with one another across microfissures, as in a brain"

(Deleuze and Guattari 22). Deleuze and Guattari define a "plateau" as "any multiplicity connected to other multiplicities by superficial underground stems in such a way as to form or extend a rhizome" (22), and they write of the "rhizome" that

> Unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature…. The rhizome is reducible neither to the One nor the multiple…. It is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion…. Unlike a structure, which is defined by a set of points and positions, with binary relations between the points… the rhizome is made only of lines…. A rhizome is made of plateaus… a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point or external end. (21)

It could be said that *The Atrocity Exhibition* functions rhizomatically in conjunction with Ballard's other work, as major characters from later novels, such as Vaughn from *Crash*, appear briefly in scenes in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, creating a pseudo-neural textual network across Ballard's novels, comprised of various multi-layered plateaus. "Human" characters are unimportant in *The Atrocity Exhibition*; the importance of the text ultimately becomes dependent upon its linkages with Ballard's preceding and subsequent novels.

Thus *The Atrocity Exhibition* is a Ballard-oriented rhizome, and I believe that through further exploration of Bakhtin's idea of heteroglossia, the plateaus that create *The Atrocity Exhibition's* rhizomatic nature can be decoded in greater detail. Bakhtin writes that in the English comic novel, there is a "comic-parodic re-processing of almost all the levels of literary language, both conversational and written, that were current at the time" (301). According to Bakhtin, these styles and forms of language are collected and reworked in the English comic novel into a structured system that expresses "the differentiated socio-ideological position of the author amid the heteroglossia of his epoch" (Bakhtin 300). Bakhtin's belief that the comic novel is structured by a

manipulation of "the common language" (301) of the time can be applied to *The Atrocity Exhibition*. Unlike the novels of the Disaster Series, which are remarkably humorless, much of *The Atrocity Exhibition* is parodic and overtly comic, (self-)aware that it is a different kind of text. Through the use of multiple voices and textual forms, Ballard suggests, in the manner of Warhol, that modernist and postmodernist language alone is not equipped to deal with posthuman notions.[53] The old forms are rendered antiquated by the rapid pace of change towards a posthuman society, in which humans will play a marginal role. As noted, *The Atrocity Exhibition* essentially functions as a parody of outmoded linguistic forms—even parodying emergent forms at that time, such as postmodernism—suggesting that language itself is only equipped to describe simulations of posthuman reality.[54] In a parody of Baudrillardian-style simulation, "reality" has become a meaningless parade of imitation; in the novel, film studios have restarted the Vietnam war, and "housewives practice the simulation of wounds… aided by the application of suitable colored resins" (11). In *The Atrocity Exhibition*, Ballard does not merely present and comment on a simulation of "reality," he parodies this very notion via presenting multiple simulations of unreality, such as the "restarted" Vietnam war (itself a

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[53] Also like Warhol, whose work I will address in more depth in the next chapter, Ballard utilizes the figure of Marilyn Monroe to introduce his ideas on the relationship between the individual and society, writing in the margin of *The Atrocity Exhibition* that "the world embraced Marilyn's flawed charm, loved by sporting idols, intellectuals, and, to cap it all, the US President. But she killed herself, slamming the door in the world's face" (39). Ballard's character Travern spends part of the novel trying to make sense of Marilyn's death in posthuman terms, by "recasting her disordered mind in the simplest terms possible, those of geometry" (39). Later Ballard expands this concept by explaining that "highways, office blocks, and street signs [can be] perceived as if they were elements in a malfunctioning central nervous system" (44), and uses copious examples to describe posthuman interactions with the inorganic, such as writing about two characters that "the inclined floors of the multi-storey car park contained an operating formula for their passage through consciousness" (42)—an indication that the interior organic world has exploded into inorganic architecture, and vice versa.

[54] Ballard's later novel *Rushing to Paradise* (1994) takes this parodic project even further by retelling *Robinson Crusoe* in reverse, via a feminist-ecological slant, with predictably bizarre and unpleasant results for his characters.

simulation of a previous human conflict) and the simulated tending to of simulated wounds.

Yet how do such parodies and recontextualizations affect the all-too-human reader? The novelist and critic Paul Theroux once denounced *The Atrocity Exhibition* as "a narrative that shoves the reader aside and shambles forward… horrible… boring… pointless…. It is the novel as a form of abuse, the dead-end of feeling" (qtd. in Vale, *Re/Search* 139). Yet I would argue that this is precisely the point; the reader should be made to feel inessential by Ballard's novel. *The Atrocity Exhibition* does indeed represent the "dead-end of feeling," as traditional humanist concepts of "feeling" are by necessity altered and potentially negated within a posthuman landscape, due to the emphasis on the inorganic and the trending away from the psychoanalytic, among other elements. Just as Ballard guides his protagonists in *The Drowned World* and *The Crystal World* towards an acceptance of their place within the strata of their new posthuman worlds, he leads readers of *The Atrocity Exhibition* towards an acknowledgment that they must relinquish their reliance upon certain accepted modes of reading and analysis, such as those of narrative pleasure or psychoanalysis. In fact, Ballard's point in writing the novel seems to be to suggest that old notions of humanity are themselves "boring" and "pointless" when applied to situations that require a new mode of thinking. For example, the first page of the novel opens with an illustration of disassembled body parts, including a penis and a spine, and a medical instrument. The body parts have been assigned letters, as if to suggest some kind of new assemblage is possible from human parts: a cyborgian assemblage that both incorporates the mechanical and rearranges the organic body into

new configurations.[55] Notions of self, both in terms of the body and the psyche, are

broken down in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, as in *The Crystal World*. When Travern's wife

Catherine asks at one point, "'Was my husband a doctor, or a patient?'" she is told "I'm

not sure if the question is valid any longer. These matters involve a relativity of a very

different kind" (12), an echo of Sanders' musings about the collapse of distinctions

between day and night.

The most compelling example of these collapsing distinctions is provided by the

character Dr. Nathan in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, who observes massive photographs

being put up on billboards, which he mistakes for images of exotic landscapes and sand

dunes.[56] He soon realizes instead that he is observing "magnified fragments" of the

human body, including an "immensely magnified portion of the skin over the iliac

crest… segments of a lower lip, a right nostril, a portion of female's perineum. Only an

anatomist would have identified these fragments, each represented as a formal geometric

pattern" (15). Here the human body has not only become landscape, but also the signifier

for the commodification of the body, and an advertisement for the disassemblage of the

body into texture. In Deleuzian terms, it is a deterritorialization that re-striates the human

body in new ways to enable it to flourish in a posthuman landscape; yet here it is also for

sale. In an annotation, Ballard writes, "We are lucky that the organic realm reached the

foot of the evolutionary ladder before the inorganic" (22), a statement heavy with irony

given his depiction in the text of how humans have subsequently been overpowered by

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[55] This kind of reassemblage is echoed by David Lynch's *Fish Kit*, a piece of art consisting of a sheet of
plywood with bits of a dead fish stuck on it, and instructions on how to "Make your very own fish" by
assembling the pieces. I discuss Lynch's posthuman tendencies in greater depth in chapter three.

[56] Sand dunes in relation to human bodies are covered in more depth in the Werner Herzog section of the
next chapter.

the inorganic. *The Atrocity Exhibition* presents a world defined solely by machinery, and not just those of science and technology, but also the capitalist machinery of pop culture and the media. Travern's name might change constantly in the novel, but the concept of "Elizabeth Taylor" or "Marilyn Monroe" as an untouchable icon never does. In fact, the pop culture machine both stabilizes and propagates the notion of celebrity so that representations of celebrities take on much more significance, and old-fashioned "stability," within the text than the lives of Ballard's invented characters. The only way for these characters to compete is to have their own bodies "blown up" so that they become, literally, larger than life. Therefore, the "text's melding of the private with the public makes it a rhizomatic map" (Gasiorek 67), just as the body becomes a set of coordinates rather than a monolithic organic identity.

To return to Ballard's presentation of sexuality and science, a posthuman reality, and body, also demands a different kind of sexuality, one that is "a conceptual act, an intellectualization" (54). Travern, under the name "Talbot," notes of Catherine that she has the "texture of a rubber mannequin fitted with explicit vents, an obscene masturbatory appliance" (19), and Travern and Catherine spend their time analyzing pornographic films, searching for "the key to a new sexuality" (51). But they note that "fossilized into the screen, the terraced images of breast and buttock had ceased to carry any meaning" (51). Detached from traditional meanings, the body is now free to signify new things, and is apparently best suited for adorning advertising billboards. Dr. Nathan even explains Talbert's misogynistic idea for a "sex kit" named "Karen Novotny," after one of the characters, which contains among many items, a "pad of pubic hair… a latex face mask… a pair of breasts… and dialogue samples of inane chatter" (54). This sexist,

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disassembled replica is what Talbert seeks, for as Dr. Nathan explains, "Our bodies, for example, are for [Talbert] monstrous extensions of puffy tissue he can barely tolerate" (56). Posthuman sexuality in *The Atrocity Exhibition* becomes primarily about moving away from physical sex toward abstract sexual gestures. For characters like Travern, sex with a cyborg-like mannequin, or an assemblage of advertising images, would not only be more satisfying than organic sex, but it would be the only kind of sex he is capable of having. The dismantling of the drive for organic sex is perhaps the final, but most critical, element of the genesis of a fully posthuman world as it negates organic desire and reproduction, and suggests that other, inorganic means of replication might come to prominence as the posthuman era progresses.[57]

The Atrocity Exhibition was a deliberate turning point for Ballard. His next group of novels, often referred to as his "steel and glass period," return to more conventional prose, although he continues to engage with posthuman landscapes and bodies. Still, the "steel and glass" novels, *Crash, High Rise,* and *Concrete Island,* are essentially anti-bourgeois novels of class rebellion, and involve some of the political issues I will address in the final section of this dissertation, but these novels do not advance Ballard's ideas about the posthuman in any new directions. Ballard's more recent novels, ranging from *Cocaine Nights* to *Kingdom Come* have been soft satirical social critiques that tend to recycle elements of his earlier, more original works. Few of them contain the powerful, complex elements of his disaster series or *The Atrocity Exhibition*. Yet even through

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[57] The following chapter on Warhol, Valerie Solanas, and Werner Herzog will address the issue of overcoming the desire for physical sex in greater detail, and position it as a crucial aspect of posthuman theory.

these novels, Ballard confined his explorations of the posthuman to the written page, remaining a novelist and critic. However, on the other side of the Atlantic, also in the mid 1960s, Andy Warhol—a true renaissance (post)human—was not only writing about posthuman landscapes, bodies and sexuality, but actually constructing physical posthuman spaces such as The Factory, inhabiting them, and most crucial of all, documenting them through silkscreen prints, audiotape and film. In the next chapter, I will move from Ballard's posthuman novels into a discussion of Warhol's posthuman films, fictions and worlds, as well as the works of Warhol's would-be assassin, Valerie Solanas, and the documentaries of Werner Herzog. Warhol, Solanas and Herzog extend Ballard's posthuman project by further exploring the ramifications of what it means to create and inhabit posthuman landscapes.

CHAPTER TWO

Ecstatic Untruths:
Posthuman Landscapes in the Works of Andy Warhol,
Valerie Solanas, and Werner Herzog

As Steven Shaviro points out in *The Cinematic Body,* Andy Warhol's main project

was actually "transforming himself into a machine…. reducing expression to its visible

inherence in the body" and exploring the "neutral positivity of 'what remains when you

take everything away,' which is how Deleuze and Guattari define the 'Body without

Organs'" (234). Warhol's early silent films[58], most notably *Sleep* (1963) and *Empire*

(1964), as well as his lone novel *a* (1968), provide the clearest representation of his

attempts to document his own self-constructed posthuman reality by recreating it on

screen as a posthuman landscape. *Sleep*, the first of Warhol's 16mm films, became

famous before it was even completed, when film critic and scholar Jonas Mekas wrote in

the *Village Voice* that Warhol was making "the longest and simplest movie ever made…

that shows nothing but a man sleeping" (17).[59] *Empire* attracted even more publicity for

its apparent "simplicity" in making the Empire State Building its sole "star," and also

having a grueling eight-hour running time.

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[58] Although Warhol was involved with film projects up to 1976, he lost interest in the medium after he was
shot and injured in 1968, and the increasingly generic films that bore his name (eg. *Andy Warhol's Dracula*
and *Andy Warhol's Frankenstein*) were directed by Paul Morrissey. This change in attitude towards film
prefigures Warhol's ultimate transformation from radical artist to bourgeois society portraitist in the 1970s
and 80s.

[59] Mekas also notes about *Sleep* that the "movie will push Andy Warhol—and has pushed me, and a few
others who saw it, some of it—further than we were before" (17).

I believe that *Empire* can be used as a model to begin an exploration of the building blocks of early posthuman cinema.[60] The film hinges on six prominent directorial decisions that account for the posthuman elements of the film. As with Michelangelo Antonioni's 1962 film *L'Eclisse*, which ends with a seven minute, 52-shot sequence of deserted buildings and landscapes, Warhol's *Empire* gives the landscape itself a leading role. In fact, according to Steven Koch in *Stargazer,* Warhol supposedly "exclaimed during shooting, 'The Empire State Building is a star!'" (60). And the critic Gregory Battock compares the building's emergence from fog at the start of the film to "the first appearance of Garbo in *Anna Karenina*" (44), suggesting that the human form has been successfully superceded by an inanimate object. Koch's analysis of *Empire* in *Stargazer*, the first book to seriously cover Warhol's films rather than his paintings, positions it as effective primarily as an idea, "so stupendously perverse it is almost awesome" (60), rather than as a film to be watched for enjoyment. Yet this reductive stance misses some of the significant aspects that make Warhol's *Empire* so unique in the presentation of posthuman landscape creation. While some of these elements are common to postmodernism, it is the deployment of these devices simultaneously, and in service of a notion that subverts human hierarchies and humanist cinema, that positions *Empire* as posthuman.

1. Silence: The absence of sound in *Empire* is crucially important, mainly because, ironically, the film was the first of Warhol's made with a sound camera, a 16mm Auricon. The perverse idea of purchasing an expensive sound camera, only to make an eight hour silent film is typical of the Warholian approach to creating landscapes and

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[60] At the end of Chapter Three I will consider some of these cinematic issues further, and explore what elements might comprise a posthuman film in the twenty-first century.

artworks, in that it is playful, subversive, and contains a nod to the origins of the artistic

form he is working in, in this case, silent cinema.[61] The silence suggests a denial of

viewer pleasure, of the sort Laura Mulvey discusses in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative

Cinema," and explores cinematically in her own film, *Riddles of the Sphinx*.[62] Like

Kubrick's implacable monolith in *2001*, the Empire State Building stands there immobile,

fixed by the image, dominating the screen and dwarfing the audience like the close-up of

a human face in a Sirkian melodrama. Except instead of a magnification of emotion, or

"amplification of identification" (McGilligan 83) to use Hitchcock's term, the audience is

confronted with an inorganic symbol, suggesting perhaps that this is what they now must

identify their own psyches and bodies with in a contemporary world. Warhol often

commented that he wanted the audience to provide the soundtrack to early films like

Empire: even if it was snoring. This attitude suggests he was depending on the viewer to

bring the "human" into the theater and enter into a dialogue with what was on the

screen—essentially the "posthuman"—and to be altered and perhaps transformed by it,

making the viewer who has sat through all eight hours a kind of potential Warholian

cyborg.[63]

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[61] Warhol's gesture of silence also indicates how the future (i.e. his posthuman films) always resonates with the past (early cinema), as with the quasi-prehistoric elements in *The Drowned World* which underpin Ballard's posthuman landscapes.

[62] Perhaps the only Warhol film that destroys notions of narrative pleasure to such a degree is the infamous *Poor Little Rich Girl* (1965), for which Warhol filmed Edie Sedgwick in her underwear, sitting on her bed, listening to pop records for seventy minutes: completely out of focus. In fact, the image is so unfocused at times that it is nearly impossible to distinguish any identifying features. It appears as though the camera, or projector, is undergoing some horrific malfunction. Sedgwick's form is barely recognizable as human—yet it doesn't matter. The film is Warhol's ultimate parody of the Hollywood studio system, reversing "the rigid control of the studio system in Edie's random actions, the out of focus shooting, off-screen sound, and the noise of the running camera motor" (A.L. Rees qtd. in Shaviro, *Cinematic* 223).

[63] Indeed, the film's length tests human audience endurance. It would be difficult to sit through the entire film without taking a break for human needs (bathroom, water, food, etc) or at least becoming cognizant

2. Secret Repetition: *Empire* does not, in fact, consist of eight solid hours of footage of the building, as is commonly assumed, but is instead assembled from various film loops spliced together in service of the illusion of continuity. The critic David James makes the mistake of assuming that *Empire* was actually filmed over eight hours, writing that it is "profligate in its expenditure of film stock" and that only Warhol, "of all the underground filmmakers, could have made it because only he could afford to do so" (47). This is not the case, as Warhol admitted later that some of the film consisted of duplicate footage to stretch out the running time. This sort of repetition, while inspired by the likes of John Cage and Erik Satie, pushes beyond the postmodern, because it is a secret repetition, one intended to conceal very human limitations of the filmmaker—that of money to buy film stock, and of time to execute the filming—in the same fashion that the editing of traditional narrative Hollywood film attempts not to call attention to itself and to obscure the mechanisms that create it. Warhol's hidden repetitions nudge his project towards the posthuman rather than the solely postmodern. Shaviro notes that Warhol "repeats images in order to drain them of pathos, meaning, and memory" (*Cinematic* 203), which are all crucial elements of traditional humanist discourse, an approach that suggests Warhol is draining the "human" from his images and films. Yet as the repetition is not foregrounded, as it is in the multiplicity of his silkscreened images of Monroe, Elvis, and the Campbell soup cans, attention is not drawn to it and it remains below the radar of most postmodern analysis and audiences.

3. Nonlinearity: This aspect also goes undetected in *Empire,* but is most evident in Warhol's short film *Eat* (1963), which shows a man eating a mushroom with the reels

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that such human desires exist, therefore foregrounding the "human-ness" of the audience, and the limits of the body. In such a manner, it could be said that the film diagnoses the human condition.

deliberately out of sequence, so that the mushroom appears to disappear and reappear at random. Partially due to the secret repetitions discussed above, time is complicated so much in films like *Eat* and *Empire* that it no longer matters. While temporal dislocation is a postmodern device, here it is also posthuman: time doesn't matter because humans don't "matter." As I have already discussed, an eight hour film with nothing in it but the Empire State Building both forces on the viewer a dislocation from the processes of cinematic identification, and places the spectator in a position of voyeurism that is inescapable. That the building resembles a giant phallus also seems designed as an inversion, and mockery, of notions of the straight male gaze and scopophilia that mainstream Hollywood films of the era forced upon their audiences.[64] Jean Luc Godard once remarked that films must have a beginning, a middle and an end—just not necessarily in that order, a statement which perfectly defines postmodern cinema. But for Warhol, films don't need any of those temporal-structural elements, or rather, the beginning, middle and end of a film might all be identical.

     4. Temporal Distortion: These distortions are undoubtedly one the most significant, and unexplored, aspects of Warhol's early silent films, which hinge on the subtle distortion achieved by filming at 24 frames per second, the regular speed of sound film, and projecting at 16 fps, a speed commonly used when projecting silent films. The films therefore disorient by unwinding "at a pace that is out of sync with the rhythms"—as well as the expectations—"of the viewer. This disjunction—between the body clock of the person as image and the body clock of the person watching—heightens the viewer's sense of alienation from the image" (Taubin 27). *Empire* is perhaps closest in

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[64] The building even gets its moment of orgasm when, at dusk, its lights suddenly and unexpectedly turn on—an event which prompted much laughter and applause in early screenings.

nature to Warhol's silent black and white screen tests, in which a static camera films an often stationary human subject, usually for the length of a short reel. Mary Lea Bandy, the chief curator of film and media at The Museum of Modern Art in New York, writes that the result of the 16fps projection in the screen tests is "an unusual fluidity of pace, a rhythm gently at odds with the starkness of the lighting and the boldness of the close-ups of face and hair [that] offer a kind of blank slate on a large and mesmerizing scale, allowing audiences to project their own thoughts and feelings through the still gaze of a beautiful face on the silver screen" (1). I believe this element of temporal distortion that Bandy discusses can be expanded to encompass *Empire* and the features of the building instead of a face: *Empire* is a screen test of a building destined for cinematic stardom, and its actual star turn, both at once. The "held pose, its particular stillness, and the slowed motion to sixteen frames per second make the portraits impossible to categorize: are they films in slow motion, or photographs that slowly move?" (Bandy 2). They are of course neither, but some hybrid form that engenders a viewership willing to relinquish preconceived notions of cinema.

  5. Questions of Authorship: Warhol's decision to leave the camera on and walk away during certain sections while filming *Empire* offers up questions of authorship. At the point he has abandoned the camera, Warhol is not even monitoring the recording device anymore, or the subject of the film. He has essentially ceded control of his film to the camera, making *Empire* a directorial collaboration with the camera: a true, explicitly cyborgian work. Warhol's technique and ideology on display here presages Lars von Trier and the radical Dogme 95 movement, which reaches its ultimate conclusion in von Trier's robotic "Automavision" process which serves in place of a human

cinematographer, a concept which I will discuss in more detail in chapter three when I cover the Dogme 95 manifesto.

6. Film Grain itself: Finally, the subject of *Empire* can be seen as "an investigation of the presence and character of film… and the terms established for this investigation are the black and white of film technology" (Battock 45). The pattern of the film grain is, of course, partially at the discretion of the machine, not the director. Warhol is not only making technical limitations an asset, but he is making them the subject of the film itself. The grain patterns become as much of a star as the Empire State Building itself, or perhaps they are the supporting actors. In either case, such distinctions have no meaning, or a different meaning, when nonhuman elements are given such an elevated status both onscreen and off.

It's worth briefly noting that if, via these six elements, *Empire* positions the external world in a role usually reserved for a human protagonist, then *Sleep* reverses the process and transforms the human body into a sprawling landscape itself, using the same set of Warholian devices. Instead of the Empire State Building, in *Sleep* the image of the poet John Giorno's body is enlarged to epic proportions. In his article "The Lover's Gaze," Fred Camper dissects the means by which the human body becomes cinematic landscape in *Sleep*.[65] Camper also points out that Warhol's framing of Giorno's body is unmistakably meant to suggest landscape, with Giorno's nose "standing out like a hill and his brightly lit brow seeming like a mountain ridge above his darkened eye sockets" (par. 15). More aptly, Shaviro writes of the "dehierarchization" in Warhol's early films like

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[65] Camper's primary thesis is a personal, humanist one: that Warhol, who was supposedly Giorno's lover at the time of filming, was attempting to get "closer" to him (and perhaps express frustrated desire) through fixing and repeating Giorno's slumbering image. Yet Warhol's film is far too clinical to be read (merely) as any kind of cinematic love letter.

Sleep, in which the "distances between living things and inert objects are reduced to a minimum… everything is on the same level" (*Cinematic* 214), suggesting a posthuman aesthetic at work, and not solely a postmodern one, because Warhol's work makes no critical judgment about this process. Shaviro also draws on Deleuze's observation that the camera's probing of the body in cinema means that "the body is no longer the obstacle that separates thought from itself…. The body… forces us to think, and forces us to think what is concealed from thought" (Deleuze qtd. in Shaviro, *Cinematic* 258), just as Warhol's films force us to view them from a different perspective that complicates stereotypical and traditional viewing habits.

Constructing Posthuman Reality:
Technology and Hybrid Voices in Andy Warhol's Novel *a*

Empire, much like *Sleep*, finds its literary analogue in Warhol's 1968 "novel" *a*. Although Warhol is famed for his paintings and films, his lone novel has largely avoided serious critical scrutiny. After its initial release, at which time it was both condemned as pornography and praised as genius, it quickly fell out of print in America until a 1998 paperback reissue. The concept of Warhol as a writer is problematic in general, as he has six published books attributed to his name, yet by all accounts did not "write" any of them, in the traditional sense of the word "write," i.e. via typing, longhand, dictation, etc., but merely paid Factory ghostwriters to either transcribe or fabricate the texts. The novel *a* is no exception to his methods, as it consists merely of transcriptions of taped conversations between Factory "superstar" Ondine and other members of Warhol's entourage. By hiring various people at the Factory to transcribe these tapes, Warhol

ceded monolithic authorial control, as he did in his direction of *Empire*. These typists

often had their own perspectives and agendas, not to mention peculiarities, which they

brought with them to the creation of the manuscript. Because of Warhol's abdication, *a*

can actually be seen as a posthuman hybrid hinging not only on the work of several

different authors, but also on the technology used to create the manuscript. Warhol's

novel creates a unique liminal, literary space via technology, best termed a posthuman

textual landscape. In this section, I will explore how the sense of confusion that the

hybrid voices of *a* engender serves to faithfully replicate the atmosphere of Warhol's

Factory in the mid 1960's, a time during which both the characters in *a* and the author(s)

of *a* were taking high doses of amphetamines as a way to avoid sleep, and to become

more like "machines," in Warhol's parlance. Thus Warhol created a novel which

documents and recreates a specific attempt at a posthuman reality, even more precisely

than Burroughs' *Naked Lunch* reconfigures Tangiers via a prism of drugs, automatic

writing, and Allen Ginsberg's playful, patchwork editing.[66] By utilizing recording

technology and multiple authors, Warhol explodes the traditional humanist notions of

what constitutes a "novel."[67]

Warhol's *a* follows the misadventures of the amphetamine crazed Ondine, also

known as "The Pope of Greenwich Village." It purports to be recordings of twenty four

hours in the life of Ondine, but this is a ruse like *Empire's* supposed eight hours of

footage; in actuality *a* consists of transcriptions from four different taping sessions: a

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[66] In "Andy Warhol the Writer," Victor Bockris writes that due to its inventive language-play, *a* stands "among the ten greatest books of the 60's, along with *Naked Lunch* and *A Clockwork Orange*" (20).

[67] While it is certainly true that modernist authors such as James Joyce and Virginia Woolf staked out the terrain in terms of disruptions of realist language, they did not do so with a posthuman agenda. As I will indicate in this chapter, Ballard utilizes modernist and postmodernist innovations to further his pro-"machine," post-organic stance.

twelve hour session in August 1965, three brief sessions in the summer of 1966, and a final one in May 1967 (Bockris, *Warhol* 453). Some recordings were made on location throughout New York City, while others consist of taped telephone conversations. As it appears on the page, the relentless tape recorder follows Ondine everywhere, even into the bathroom at one point—suggesting that some aspects of the human body are inescapable, even to those who wish to be machines[68]—as he cavorts with various Factory denizens, and converses with anyone who passes by. Warhol says that the genesis of *a* came about because of friendly competition with his peers, though his explanation might best be taken with a grain of salt: "A friend had written me a note saying that everyone we knew was writing a book, so that made me want to keep up and do one too. So I bought a tape recorder and I taped the most interesting person I knew at the time, Ondine, for a whole day" (*Philosophy* 95). Warhol therefore transforms the act of human creation into that of purchasing a machine that can do the work for him. Of course the above quote comes from *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, a book which bears Warhol's name, but was actually written by Bob Colacello, Bridget Berlin, and Pat Hackett—three of his employees at the time—so even his supposed thoughts on his own work are actually someone else's.

Writing a novel is time consuming work, and via transcription Warhol found a way to simplify things. His silkscreening methods had already greatly increased the number of paintings he could produce, and reduced—or elevated—the act of painting to a

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[68] Drawing on Foucault's discussion of Warhol and "stupidity" in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice,* Shaviro writes that "the body is 'stupid'… affected by everything but responsive to nothing, so plastically open to every force, every stress, and every stimulus that it is ultimately determined by none. This is why the body's stupidity is *seductive*: we are incited to keep on looking, again and again, precisely because our desire for comprehension and control is never satiated… we can only abandon ourselves to it" (209) or, as I would add, fight it by transforming the body to rewrite and subvert its "stupidity."

repetitive, mechanical process. By stripping artistic forms to their bare minimum,

Warhol not only made an important conceptual statement, but made art infinitely easier to

produce. Hence "The Factory," named because the space had once housed an actual

factory, became an apt name for his studio. According to Factory insider and *Interview*

magazine editor Bob Colacello, transcribing "seemed modern and real, two qualities he

consistently valued above all others" (7). While Colacello's use of the term "real"

mistakenly suggests that Warhol was concerned with documenting reality in conventional

forms, Warhol's idea of the "real" was to document what *he* saw as reality, and wanted

others to see—the increasing dominance and importance of machines in relation to

human life. Colacello continues to write that for Warhol, "modern meant mechanical—

silkscreen, movie camera, tape recorder, video, any machine that came between the

creator and his audience. Tape recording was the literary equivalent of cinema verite...

why couldn't writing be reduced to transcribing?" (7) Turning on a tape recorder was

much easier and faster than actually sitting down to compose a work of fiction, and for

Warhol, also more compelling.

Warhol's decisions led to the creation of a unique text that bears little resemblance

to a traditional realist, modernist, or postmodern novel. In fact, *a* has no coherent plot,

characters float in and out of the narrative at random, and dialogue is often

indecipherable. Like *Empire*, the book is not concerned with reader pleasure; Warhol

himself never read the whole thing, and professed not to care whether it would find

readers or not. Yet there is a method and a structure present in *a*, that lends a hybrid

consistency to the confusion. The novel is arranged by dual-numbered chapters

representing the number and side of the original recording tape; for example, Chapter

"1/1" is followed by Chapter "1/2" which in turn is followed by Chapter "2/1" and so on. This means that each chapter represents approximately half an hour of real-time, as one hour reel-to-reel tapes were employed. But there is a further level of organization present in the book, as a close textual analysis of *a* reveals strata of different typing and writing styles that reflect the multiple levels of authorship involved in "Warhol's" novel. I have isolated four major different styles of typography, with multiple variables forming subsets of each one. These styles are used interchangeably throughout the book. In fact, merely the first ten pages of *a* invoke all four different formats:

Format One: The first recurring typographical style of the book, and the manner in which the book opens, is as a page-filling passage, a jumble of text consisting of the intermingled conversations of characters. Sometimes when this style appears in the book, characters are clearly identified, but more often than not, there is no clear division between the speech of one character and another, creating a semi-permeable wall of words.

Format Two: The second format to appear, and the one that is used for the majority of the book, is a two column format, similar to a newspaper. Voices can either be identified or remain anonymous in this format. Either way, separate lines and/or paragraphs are given to separate speakers, so it is relatively easy to follow the "narrative" in this section.

Format Three: The third format is one in which dialogue appears as a single wide column, separated out by speaker. Usually the speaker is clearly identified in this style by name or spacing, which creates a somewhat more legible text.

Format Four: The final style is one that appears least frequently, taking up only the first section of one chapter: Chapter 6, Part 2. In involves a single column on the left side of the page, with a single additional voice in small print occasionally appearing on the right, like a wayward extra-textual commentator on the narrative, providing a gloss and creating another level of hybridization and heteroglossia. An example, from page 123, illustrates how this format appears on the page:

> O—Then we're gonna name people
>   and give them ratings.
> T—Real and nonsense put together
>   into a game.   M—Oh, I see...
>   We're doing a whole number
>   game and it's just too much.
>   We've got it all set.

The third voice on the right hand side is that of a minor character in the novel, Moxanne, known as "the Lady in Waiting" because she assisted the actress Edie Sedgwick. It is tempting to read thematic significance into this: that Moxanne, as a peripheral character, gets peripheral treatment, her words stranded in tiny print on the margins of the page. Yet the novel resists this reading, because as the chapter progresses, Ondine's voice is also given this treatment, suggesting it was merely a creative device employed by one of the typists independently of character development or plot to deal with multiple voices.

It is certainly not coincidence that there are four primary typists and four different styles of typing apparent in *a*. The typists, or machine operators, essentially determine the text, and their multiple styles of typography provide the key to deciphering the various layers of authorship. The best way to approach the significance of the multiple authors, as they are encoded in the strata of *a,* is to borrow some terms from Mikhail

Bakhtin, who defines "hybridization" in a text as "the mixing of two or more different linguistic consciousness, often widely separated in time and social space" (429). While Bakhtin, as I observed earlier, is concerned with the English comic novel, and how hybridization of language can be used consciously by an author for parodic effect, the term can be extrapolated to encompass and isolate the different levels of language in Warhol's novel.

The typists constitute the first primary level of authorship in the novel, after that of the typewriter itself; they were given control over language, word choice, and grammar. The typists consisted of the Velvet Underground's drummer Maureen "Moe" Tucker, a Barnard student named Susan Pile, and two unnamed "High School Girls"—to use Warhol's term for them—all of whom brought their own techniques to the process of transcription. First, they made numerous typographical errors that were retained in the final manuscript, a process that Warhol tacitly approved of. In addition, on certain occasions the tapes would be unclear and the typists would make educated guesses about the words. In some instances the tapes would be so noisy and unclear, the typists would leave a blank space or indicate that the tape at that point was indecipherable. The typos create the sensation of both haste and confusion. Words with typos cause a glitch in the reading process—one does not expect them to appear with such a degree of frequency in a published work. Sometimes the creative spacing of the text, combined with the typos, creates a completely impenetrable turn of phrase, such as, "D o e y par ry po obydin" (447) or "Ih si ghthguitar" (448). Language breaks down at the precise moment the typists try to document it, and it becomes reconstructed in a new form by the typewriter. In this way, the machine also becomes a recording device that documents human

weaknesses and mistakes, again foregrounding human limitations in the same manner as *Empire's* running time reminds viewers of their bodily needs.

The typist Maureen Tucker, who was only twenty years old at the time, seems to have had the most pivotal impact on the manuscript. Warhol soon put Tucker to work transcribing the tapes, because she often found herself sitting around the Factory with little to do. In her case, she refused to type any profanities. In an interview in 1980, she says, "I typed it up for him [Andy], but I wouldn't type any dirty words in it... it was unnecessary you know. Really, I just felt, 'Come on,' and I didn't want to be a part of it" (Zak 129). When asked if this was artistic censorship or prudery, Tucker replied:

> It was probably prudery. I left spaces where he could fill the words in, but I wouldn't type them. I'd be sitting there typing away, and have a tape recorder, and listen to some and type it. And he'd come over and sit on the desk and he'd say, "Oh Moe, but you have to put those words in," and I'd say, "No, no, no, I'll leave the room, and you can go back." (Zak 129)

Apparently, the profanities were not always added back in, meaning that she succeeded in tempering the outrageous, ultra-profane dialogues in the book. In an interview I conducted with Maureen Tucker in October of 1998 in New York City, she told me that she didn't take Warhol's work seriously. "I used to tease him about his paintings, and tell him, 'That's not art,'" Tucker told me. She said that rather than get offended, Warhol would laugh, amused by her attitude, which she says at that time was "uncultured." Tucker also admitted she wasn't particularly interested in typing Warhol's manuscript, but it was "something to do" to make some extra money, and pass the time while she was waiting for Lou Reed, Sterling Morrison, and John Cale, her fellow members in the Velvet Underground, to arrive at the Factory—a common situation. "Warhol liked

everyone to work for him," she said. "It made him happy to see us all working."[69]

Tucker downplayed any influence on *a*, and was reluctant to talk about the novel, despite her obvious contributions, telling me that the world of the Factory seemed a very long time ago, and she couldn't remember too much about her work for Warhol.

The other typists also brought their own perspectives to the work. Susan Pile, the Barnard student and part-time Factory typist, was given the task of transcribing brief sections of *a*. According to *Popism*, she and Warhol agreed on the price of ten dollars a week, even less than he paid Maureen Tucker, in return for her services as a typist. Warhol suggests he didn't pay Susan Pile more "because she was partly being subsidized by her parents" (*Popism* 207). She was apparently the most proficient of the typists, and made the fewest errors. Susan was also friendly with Ondine, and therefore perhaps most interested in ensuring that his words came out legibly, and intelligibly, on the page.

The "High School Girls," also played a significant role in shaping the novel; according to Bockris, in one instance the mother of one of the high school girls overheard what she was working on, confiscated the tapes, and threw them in the trash (*Warhol* 455). Pages of the manuscript were therefore lost forever, again suggestive of Burroughs' habit of losing pages of *Naked Lunch*, and although this specific missing section of *a* is not identified, analysis of the manuscript reveals gaps at several junctures which might prove to be the missing pages. Chapter 15/1 is greatly abbreviated, at barely two pages, and Chapter 15/2 is completely absent. Chapter 19/2 is also missing, as is Chapter 20/2. The missing sections disrupt the already tenuous coherence of the conversations, causing

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[69] Tucker's words inspire images of a sweatshop, and an array of humans yoked to machines, with the boss exploiting his (female) workers—yet the Factory was engaged in the production of texts and art that worked to destroy such arrangements and break down gender and culture boundaries: a self-critical, self-destructive mechanism that in some ways embodied colonialist, capitalist archetypes in order to critique and ultimately explode them, or to reinscribe them.

an already difficult narrative to become further obscured. Once again, as with the case of Maureen Tucker, Warhol's choice of typist allowed for a censoring of his own manuscript via hybridization.

If the typists constitute the first primary group of hybrid voices, pulling against the subject matter of the text, then Factory photographer Billy Name constitutes another. He was chosen by Warhol to shepherd the book into some sort of publishable form. The editorial choices involving format and structure that Billy Name made represent the manner in which he encoded himself and his own language in the manuscript. In addition to ensuring that the typographical errors of Maureen, Susan, and the High School typists were preserved, Name was also responsible for inventing runners at the top of each right-hand page. To skim through the runners is to get an abbreviated version of the book, as they serve as markers to the action. The runners are taken from oddly poetic phrases in the dialogue on the page, usually bizarre or profane lines, like "dick was bent the right way" (23) or "my ass is my mother in law" (87) that illuminate the text, or strive to create reader interest. Name's actions in creating these runners show an involvement with the book in a thematic and artistic sense, on a stratum of authorial control different from that of the typists.

In addition, Name brought a quasi-academic sensibility to the book, and shaped it in accordance with his theories on literature. He felt the novel was primarily an example of a surrealist text, bearing a close relation to the kind of "automatic writing" developed by Andre Breton. However, while there might be superficial stylistic similarities, *a* is quite different from the kind of surrealist writing that Breton envisioned. In one of his manifestoes on surrealism, Breton defines that term as "pure psychic automatism, by

which it is intended to express, verbally, in writing, or by other means, the real process of thought. It is thought's dictation, in the absence of all control exercised by the reason and outside all aesthetic or moral preoccupations" (6). He clarifies his definition by saying that surrealism attempts "to present interior reality and exterior reality as two elements in a process of unification, or finally becoming one" (2) and that he believes "in the future transmutation of those two seemingly contradictory states, dream and reality, into a sort of absolute reality, of surreality, so to speak" (8). While the terms "automatic writing" and "surreality" might in some way refer to Ondine's dialogues, or the content of the tapes in its raw form, they do not in any sense sum up the entire text. In its purest form, automatic writing would be free from any sort of conscious control which is a good description of Ondine's actions and language, but not of the words as they appear on the page. The opposite is true of *a*: it has multiple controlling authors, both machine and human. The novel is not a refinement of Breton's surrealist concerns, as the authorial decisions of the typists prevent the text from representing the kind of unfettered "thought's dictation" that Breton advocates.

After Name had compiled the transcriptions into a readable form, Warhol, the sole credited author of the book, served as a kind of secondary editor. He apparently skimmed over the galleys for *a* during a series of cacophonous performances by the Velvet Underground at a nightclub. According to Ondine, it was "a madhouse with a trampoline and the Velvets and people dancing off balconies and going absolutely be-zoo. Andy would sit way up in the back where some of the spotlights were... reading proof-sheets to the book in the dark with a flashlight... saying 'Oh! This is good! This is the best book ever!'" (qtd. in Veitch par. 2). It is unlikely that Warhol even reviewed the

entire manuscript; one critic joked that *a* was "the first book to have not been read by its author" (Gidal 152)[70].

Warhol's documented changes were very few, but fell into two distinct categories. First, he altered the names of most of the characters for legal reasons, so that Edie Sedgwick became "Taxine," or "Taxi," for example, and actor Paul America, already burdened with an inane nickname, became "Lucky L." Even Warhol himself went by the name "Drella," an amalgam of Dracula and Cinderella, the importance of which I will soon discuss. Second, by all accounts Warhol altered particular comments; if something in the dialogue displeased him, he had it removed or changed. This kind of conscious editing served to steer *a* even further away from the pure, subconscious automatic writing that Billy Name envisioned for the novel. The inevitable result of Warhol's alterations was to make the manuscript more confusing. His choice of editing environment superficially could be seen as an attempt to sabotage his own novel, yet it seems as though there was a more fundamental motivation at work. As paradoxical as it sounds, Warhol's text can be seen as an attempt to write a bizarrely "realistic" novel of his environs—a replication of the late 60's posthuman world of his Factory, a world that was supremely influential in American pop culture, giving *a* a prophetic feel in places, like a forecast of a culture yet to come. In a critical review of the novel after its re-release in 1998, Jonathan Veitch points out that reading *a* is like "putting your ear up to a radio and scanning the stations with the volume cranked up full blast. The confusion is compounded by misspellings, missing words, and mistaken attributions that make *a* nearly impossible to read" (par. 2). But Veitch sees *a* as ultimately working to distance

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[70] But not the last Warhol book to suffer this fate: according to Bob Colacello, Warhol didn't read portions of *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* and *Popism*.

the reader from "reality." He writes that "although the tape recorder's technology holds

out the promise that it will capture everything... the results, paradoxically enough, do not

enhance our access to reality; they cast that access into doubt. The cacophony of voices,

street noise, music, and jangling telephones on Warhol's tapes is so overwhelming that

the world we thought we knew becomes incomprehensible and, hence, unavailable to us"

(par. 5). Veitch's criticism ignores the notion that, like *Empire*, perhaps *a* merely requires

a new kind of reader, equipped to manage the barrage of heteroglossia.

It is also impossible to address *a* without discussing drugs, as both the subject of

the novel, and several of its creators, were engaged with amphetamine use. The

"overwhelming" stimuli that the book presents might in fact be a replication of reality

filtered through the sensory overload an amphetamine abuser might suffer from. In the

book *Amphetamines*, part of the Encyclopedia of Psychoactive Drugs series, Scott Lukas

discusses the effects that amphetamine has on a user's perception of reality.

Amphetamines act on the neurotransmitters noradrenalin and dopamine, causing an

excess of these chemicals to be released, which in turn causes a stronger response to

stimuli (Lukas 46). Therefore, amphetamine use "produces heightened sensitivity to

visual, auditory, olfactory, and tactile stimulation. The auditory threshold, for example,

may be so lowered that not only does the user hear sounds normally inaudible, but these

sounds may cause extreme discomfort" (Lukas 8). Because amphetamine use causes

pupil dilation, users become extremely sensitive to light, feeling as if their surroundings

are exceedingly bright, as if there is too much for them to take in (Lukas 47). The stimuli

that a sober brain processes easily are transformed into something incoherent, confusing,

and overwhelming. This condition causes a desire to dull the sensory inputs, which in

turn leads to the omnipresent use of sunglasses, indoors and outdoors, as evidenced by photographs of the Warhol crowd in the mid to late 1960s.

As *a* begins with Ondine taking a dose of speed, his actions clearly set the scene for the duration of the novel. In fact, on the second page of the book is the line: "Kid yelling: Ay, ay! That's too many to take!" as Ondine gobbles down six amphetamine pills at once. The behavioral effects of amphetamine are wide ranging, causing increased physical activity, restlessness, and increased energy: "Amphetamine causes users to talk more than usual, and they talk about many different and odd topics... the individual will talk so fast that it becomes difficult to understand him. He may jump from subject to subject in such a way that the discussion makes no sense at all and keep talking until he is interrupted." (Lukas 39) The use of extremely high amphetamines increases these symptoms, leading to compulsive behavior which can exhibit itself in speech. Lukas points out that during conversations, chronic high dosage amphetamine users tend to "analyze ideas in a stern but repetitious manner" (57). This kind of behavior is clearly borne out in Ondine's manic actions and rapid-fire patterns of speech. Warhol, like nearly every member of the Factory, used amphetamine daily himself. He writes in *Popism* that as early as 1963 he began taking "a fourth of a diet pill a day" (33) which quickly blossomed into much higher doses, admitting that Obetrol gives users a "wired, happy go-go feeling in your stomach that made you want to work-work-work" (33). In this way, the pills can be seen as part of a posthuman aesthetic, in which Warhol was striving for an escape from biological limits in favor of becoming a "work-work-work" machine via drugs that alter human capabilities.

By using multiple authors to generate hybrid voices that both created and obscured his own text, Warhol found a relatively easy way to reproduce the posthuman reality of his own world on the page. When Bakhtin applies his term "hybridization" to the novels of Dickens, he finds the different voices functioning to amplify and create the parodic elements in the novel. Warhol does not apply the voices in the same way, as he is not holding a mirror to the woes of society and suggesting social change through parody. In fact, in *a*, Warhol is completely unconcerned with society at large. His concern is rather that of the artist, that of documenting the "reality" of the Factory, and by inference the hypersensitive reality of amphetamine users. This desire appears to have led him to make his decisions about turning the novel over to the typists and Billy Name. The tension and overwhelming sense of confusion that the mistakes and different ideologies produce was not as accidental as it seemed, but the result of a canny choice which suggests that ceding control as an author in the Factory environment might result in a more "accurate" book.

Another point worth noting is that the authors involved in creating *a* as it appears in its printed version span all the social archetypes present at the Factory during the period it was written, subverting the traditional notion that a novel must be written by a single monolithic author. The typists were young and mostly uneducated, representative of a group Warhol called "the kids," the youths who hung around the Factory, drawn to it by the allure of Warhol's burgeoning star-power. Billy Name represents the pseudo-intellectual, slightly pretentious artistic individuals who flocked to Warhol, seeing him as a kindred spirit. Even Moe Tucker's puritanical attitude towards swearing represents a

faction at the Factory, as Warhol's right hand man and Factory film director, Paul

Morrissey, abstained from all drugs and alcohol, except, of course, amphetamines.[71]

There was also the openly queer aesthetic of Ondine and Billy Name pitted against the

staunchly heterosexual typists, a conflict which probably played a role in the censorship

of the manuscript by the prudish Tucker and the mother of one of the high school girls,

with Warhol claiming to be "asexual" and demarcating some kind of pretend middle zone

for himself between the other two. In this way, the microcosm of the Factory was

reproduced via multiple authors, and encoded in the text through the haze of an

amphetamine rush.

Warhol's own nickname, "Drella," best illustrates the multiple, warring sides of

Warhol's own personality, and by inference, the different halves of the Factory. The

Dracula half is the cynical, vampiric, drug abusing spirit of debauchery, the one

responsible for an atmosphere that encouraged others to use drugs. The Cinderella half

represents the naive spirit who in turn stands for mythologized purity and goodness. This

schism is seen in some of Warhol's art: the early, whimsical line drawings of shoes and

cats versus the stark 1960s silkscreens of car accident victims, for example. It makes

sense, then, that his novel should invoke and play against each other similar conflicting

hybrid elements. If the typists played the role of Cinderella in transcribing Ondine's

vampiric dialogues, one can easily see how someone like Billy Name would have

difficulty balancing the two, an act that seems to have come naturally to Warhol himself.

The nickname "Drella" neatly fuses the posthuman (the undead Dracula) with a capitalist

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[71] And Warhol's desire to "work-work-work" also suggests an oddly puritanical work ethic, indicating a
possible degree of allegiance with Tucker and Morrissey.

American myth (Cinderella) in a similar way to much of Warhol's art—perhaps in an attempt on his part to create an "undying" popular myth, or a new kind of myth, or both.

Warhol was also often referred to as "Frankenstein" (especially after the 1968 shooting that left his torso badly scarred) and as a "robot" by the factory denizens. In his own fashion, Warhol presents many of the signifiers of a cyborg, with his obvious silver wig and ultra-pale skin. Comments such as "I want to be a machine" seem to bear this out, especially when repeated and documented ad nauseum. In fact, in *The Postmodern Turn*, Ihab Hassan cites Warhol's proto-posthuman proclamation as symptomatic of one of the foundations of postmodern ideology, that of "dehumanization." Hassan points out that dehumanization signals the "end of the old Realism" and the advent of "illusionism" (41). Yet Hassan is mistaken to position this aesthetic as postmodern; it is instead posthuman, and it heralds the advent not of illusionism but, in Warhol's case, a new means by which to document his newly created posthuman reality: one which celebrates the breakdown of boundaries as liberating rather than dehumanizing, or perhaps as liberating in their dehumanization. While the use of a machine, the reel-to-reel tape recorder, to "write" *a* might seem to enhance the theory of postmodern dehumanization, Warhol was actually using such tactics to document the posthuman landscape of The Factory as precisely as he could. In this way, he subverts some of the traditional assumptions about technology and machines functioning in opposition to human voices, and suggests they can function in tandem, as cyborgian textual or filmic hybrids.

At one point in *a*, Ondine actually proclaims in reference to the book, "it's novel that it's being a novel" (100), and he is relatively correct in that assessment. The mid to late sixties represented a time when all of Warhol's artistic endeavors, his art, films, and

music, reached their zenith of "novel-ty" and coalesced in the atmosphere of the Factory.

Colacello writes that although nobody read *a*, "Andy had staked out the territory" (7), and

while a novel comprised of transcriptions wasn't a completely "novel" idea at the time,

using such a technique for documenting a posthuman reality such as the Factory certainly

was. Others might have utilized similar techniques, but always with artistic intent,

exercising more authorial control over the material, as with Burroughs and his "cut-up"

novels, and relatively unconcerned with representing any kind of actual "reality" that

surrounds them. A final quote from Warhol illustrates his concern with the real. He

writes, "I was determined to stay up all day and all night and tape Ondine... but

somewhere along the way I got tired, so I had to finish taping the rest of the twenty-four

hours on a couple of other days. So actually my novel was a fraud, since it was billed as

a consecutive twenty-four hour tape-recorded 'novel'" (*Philosophy* 95). This, if nothing

else, shows a concern for documenting reality. After all, for something to be considered

a "fraud," it has to have been represented, or advertised, or conceived of, as the genuine

article.

The novel *a* ends with the line "Out of the garbage, into The Book" a true

summation of Warhol's attitude towards the reclamation of pop detritus and the

transformative process of turning it into "art." Warhol himself says that he always liked

"to work on leftovers, doing the leftover thing. Things that were discarded, that

everybody knew were no good, I always thought had great potential to be funny"

(*Philosophy* 93). Was *a* then envisioned as merely a conceptual prank--an attempt at

humor? If so, then Bakhtin's theories of hybridization for comic-parodic purposes might

be even more crucial to an analysis of the novel than previously considered. But even the

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title provides a clue that the novel might have a different function: "a" is street slang for amphetamines, which suggests that reading the novel *a*, with its faithful replication of sensory overload, is in some subversive way intended as analogous to actually doing the drug. J.G. Ballard once wrote that "Warhol is the Walt Disney of the amphetamine age" (*User's Guide* 59), an accurate statement in the sense that Warhol was concerned with reconfiguring the myths of our culture (i.e. "Drella"), and specifically in *a* with recontextualizing the definition of the novel in order to depict his 1960s Factory through the sheen of an amphetamine rush. In a quote that could be applied to elements of *a*, Donald Barthelme writes, "The confusing signals, the impurity of the signal, gives you verisimilitude" (qtd. in Gates xvi). As Barthelme, through language, puts a postmodern spin on *Snow White*, for example, deconstructing that tale for a debased, fragmented world, Warhol does a similar thing to the concept of the realist novel, but in posthuman fashion. *Snow White* is one of the most familiar tales, a myth further propagated by the Disney film. In a similar way, modernist and postmodernist novels, with their sets of devices, could not provide entirely adequate forms to encompass the reality that Warhol saw at the Factory every single day. A new way of writing had to be developed and implemented, and through the use of recording technology and multiple authors in *a*, Warhol succeeded in creating a novel hinging on a hybridity of posthuman elements.

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"Complete Automation":
Valerie Solanas and the *SCUM Manifesto*

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Yet it is another Warhol-related text that perhaps pushes Warhol's own literary project even further in posthuman terms: Valerie Solanas' 1967 self-published screed, the

SCUM Manifesto[72]. Warhol was not the only artist interested in moving things out of the

garbage and into "the Book." As Avital Ronell points out in "Deviant Payback: The

Aims of Valerie Solanas," seemingly oblivious to any reference to *a*, the "garbage pile…

is the place from which Solanas was signaling, culturally rummaging, the impossible

place of irremissable *litterature*" (11)[73]. Most famous for shooting Warhol several times

in a failed 1968 assassination attempt, Solanas created a text that provides a fascinating

posthuman-feminist rebuttal to Warhol's works and his Factory. Discovered by Maurice

Girodias of Olympia Press, the publisher of *Lolita* among many other controversial

works, while selling copies of her manifesto on the street, Solanas turned her back on a

career as an academic[74], novelist, and underground actress, to essentially become a

political assassin. After Warhol lost the lone copy of a screenplay she had written, titled

Up Your Ass[75], and failed to pay her more than token sums for appearing in his films *I, A

Man* and *Bike Boy*, and "joked that she should work at the Factory as a typist" (Nickels

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[72] The titular "SCUM" is apparently an acronym for "Society for Cutting Up Men," although this acronym
is never mentioned in the actual text. According to many accounts, Solanas denied she had intended
"SCUM" to be an acronym, that it was "merely a belated interpretation" (Dexter 16). To the interviewer
Jane Caputi, Solanas insisted that "the acronym was the fabrication of her publisher, Maurice Girodias"
(Heller 168). While Avital Ronell makes some interesting connections between the idea of "cutting up
men" and notions of linguistic and genetic "splicing, suturing, mutation, sectioning, experimental
reconfiguring" (12), there is still no concrete evidence that Solanas ever intended "SCUM" to be an
acronym.

[73] Garbage pile, or "shitpile" (41) in Solanas's parlance.

[74] Despite the fact that she worked as a prostitute and suffered from drug addiction, she had graduated from
the University of Maryland, and completed a year of graduate studies in psychology at the University of
Minnesota, before dropping out and moving to New York City.

[75] Unbeknownst to Solanas, Warhol supposedly enjoyed her screenplay, but because it was so "dirty" he
became paranoid and thought she was a "lady cop" undercover, attempting to bust him for obscenity.
Ironically, in 2000, the play was staged in San Francisco by the George Coates Performance Works, "with
assistance from the Andy Warhol Museum Archives" (Heller 188). The play, which according to Jason
Cubert is a "satiric look at gender roles and sexual mores centered on a sharp-tongued character, Bongi
Perez, and her interactions" (51) was alternately titled, *Up from the Slime*, *The Big Suck*, and *From the
Cradle to the Boat*.

52) Solanas took a trip to the Factory, where she shot him three times.[76] Later that day,

she turned herself in to the police, saying that Warhol "had too much control over my

life" (Bear 56). According to some sources, at the police station, she supposedly began

handing out copies of her mimeographed manifesto to policemen and reporters alike,

telling them they needed to read it if they wanted to understand her motives (Maeder 45).

Later in court, she famously declared, "I was right in what I did! I have nothing to

regret!" and years after her release, when asked about the shooting by Howard Smith of

The Village Voice, told him, "I consider that a moral act. And I consider it immoral that I

missed. I should have done target practice" (58).[77]

The *SCUM Manifesto* is at once a radical feminist text, and a revelatory document

advocating the immediate establishment of an essentially posthuman society. It is only

one of three surviving works by Solanas: the other two are an article titled "A Young

Girl's Primer, or How to Attain the Leisure Class" from *Cavalier Magazine*, and the

rediscovered play, *Up Your Ass*, which was lost for many years until, according to Liz

Jobey, it turned up "at the bottom of a trunk of papers" (T12). Solanas wrote the 55-page

manifesto in 1967, "produced 2,000 mimeographed copies, and sold them on the streets

of Greenwich Village—charging men twice what she charged women" (Deem 522).[78]

Mary Harron, who documented Solanas's life in *I Shot Andy Warhol*, commented that the

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[76] Earlier that day she had visited Girodias's apartment, presumably to shoot him because she felt he had made her sign an unfair publishing contract. After Solanas had waited for three hours, Girodias didn't show up, so she left for the Factory. Of the shots she fired at Warhol, only one hit—but it managed to pass through his lungs, stomach, liver and spleen, leaving him physically and psychologically damaged for life.

[77] Warhol's "revenge" was to mock Solanas and SCUM in his 1971 film *Andy Warhol's Women in Revolt* (actually directed by Paul Morrissey), in which three deranged feminists, played by drag queens, form a group called PIG: Politically Involved Girls.

[78] Laura Winkiel notes that the discrepancy between the prices for men and women is a way for Solanas to insert "gender inequality into a money economy whose instrumental rationality overlooks qualitative differences" (62).

tone of *The SCUM Manifesto* is "deadpan, icily logical, elegantly comic; a strange

juxtaposition, as if Oscar Wilde had decided to become a terrorist" (Harron viii)[79]. The

witty, but nihilistic, manifesto makes the case for a complete overhaul of American

society, in favor of a boundary-breaking posthuman world. The posthuman elements of

the manifesto have thus far been overlooked in favor of its more superficially evident

feminist qualities.[80] For example, it has been well-documented that soon after the

shooting, Ti-Grace Atkinson, the president of the New York chapter of the National

Organization of Women, proclaimed that Solanas was "the first outstanding champion of

women's rights" (qtd. in Baer 56) and a "revolutionary heroine" (Maeder 46). In addition,

the feminist lawyer Florynce Kennedy declared that Solanas was "one of the most

important spokeswomen of the feminist movement," and lodged a complaint with the

state's Supreme Court, claiming they only jailed Solanas because she was a woman

(Maeder 46). The feminist critic B. Ruby Rich also called Solanas "feminism's Joan of

Arc" (16). In fact, many feminists of the era believed that Warhol had got what he

deserved, due to his reputation as someone who unfairly exploited drug addicts and

women, most notably Edie Sedgwick, in his films.[81] The manifesto also inspired other

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[79] Harron describes Solanas' article "A Young Girl's Primer," as "brutal yet elegant, like a lesbian Joe Orton" (xvi), and the *SCUM Manifesto* also shares a transgressive sensibility with some of Orton's work, albeit with a more violent streak. Indeed, the most recent 2002 edition of the manifesto, published in hardcover by Verso Press, features a box-cutter on the front, which as A.S. Hamrah points out in "She Shot Andy Warhol," seems intended as "a reference to Solanas's 'Society for Cutting up Men' doing double-duty as a post-9/11 dare to the Ashcroft Justice Department" (D5). Avital Ronell's lengthy introduction also namechecks Osama Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein. In addition, at a 2004 reading of the manifesto in New York City by Caremlita Tropicana, Karen Finley, and Gary Indiana, Verso handed out "box cutters imprinted with the words 'SCUM Manifesto' as souvenirs" (D5).

[80] The posthuman and feminist aspects of the *SCUM Manifesto* are not, of course, incompatible. Yet the feminist aspects are perhaps more overt, and/or potentially appealing, to readers and critics of the manifesto.

[81] Liz Jobey points out that by coincidence, Edie Sedgwick, "the society girl who in the early Sixties had been almost Warhol's alter-ego, was undergoing treatment for drug addiction and a breakdown after her

pseudo-terrorist feminist groups to form, just as Warhol's work inspired legions of imitators and acolytes: Roxanne Dunbar formed a group called "Cell 16" in Boston based on Solanas's ideas—and supposedly named after the cell number in which Valerie was incarcerated after the shooting (Cubert 87)—while Atkinson formed an "antisex political group called The Feminists" (Winkiel 67).[82] Yet the manifesto's playfully feminist, anarchistic bent, and its echoes of Jonathan Swift's ironic "A Modest Proposal," has masked one of Solanas's major points—that her vision of a future America rests on the implementation of posthuman archetypes, not just on the institution of radical feminist ideals. In fact, Liz Jobey writes that according to a later interview with Ti-Grace Atkinson, "Valerie loved to deny she was a feminist and held a particular dislike for the movement's leading figures, such as Betty Friedan" (T12); instead, Solanas claimed she was "a social propagandist" (T12). For Solanas, mainstream liberal feminism was never radical enough, and its "blind adherence to cultural codes of feminine politeness and decorum" (Heller 179) was grounds on which to reject it. In fact, Solanas makes it clear in the manifesto that these traits, and what she saw as the timidity of feminist thought, were elements that helped keep women enslaved to a patriarchal, capitalist system. Despite the quasi-satiric tone of her text, the fact that Solanas actually shot Warhol, and spent much of her life actively promoting her beliefs, suggests she meant these ideas

time with Warhol, at the same hospital in which Valerie Solanas was being assessed to see if she was fit to stand trial for shooting him" (T14). Solanas was therefore viewed by some as an avenging angel, a kind of anti-Sedgwick, or perhaps the symbolic revenge of Warhol's "oppressed" female workers—the typists of *a* demanding that their contributions be credited, *or else*.

[82] The list of feminists and radicals directly inspired by *The SCUM Manifesto* is seemingly endless: the radical group The Up-Against the Wall Motherfuckers used excerpts from her manifesto as their rallying cries, a Seattle women's group called The Order of the White Balloon began publishing a magazine called *Lilith* (the first issue featured a sketch of Solanas inside the front cover, and text reading "Valerie is ours"), Robin Morgan began an underground women's paper called *The Women's Rat* and founded a group called WITCH (Women Inspired to Commit Herstory), and Solanas helped inspire Diane DiMassa's lesbian avenger comic "Hothead Paisan: Homicidal Lesbian Terrorist," among many others cited in Cubert (81-84).

seriously, or at least more seriously than her tone suggests. As Mary Harron points out, "in *The Prisoner of Sex*, Norman Mailer calls Valerie the Robespierre of feminism, and if taken literally, her *Manifesto* does advocate male genocide" (viii).[83]

The *SCUM Manifesto* advocates a radical, postbiological agenda. Solanas points out that "it is now technically possible to reproduce without the aid of males (or, for that matter, females).... We must begin immediately to do so" (1). Her anti-male approach is based on skewed, and deliberately humorous, biological terms that read like a parody of scientific discourse: "The male is a biological accident: the Y (male) gene is an incomplete X (female) gene, that is, has an incomplete set of chromosomes. In other words, the male is an incomplete female, a walking abortion, aborted at the gene stage… maleness is a deficiency disease" (1). The male is both a subhuman animal, and a piece of machinery—and therefore one that is easily replaced by a machine. Solanas writes that "To call a man an animal is to flatter him; he's a machine, a walking dildo.... Although completely physical, the male is unfit even for stud service" (2). Males are begging to be replaced in Solanas's view; a male is a "half-dead, unresponsive lump… an inoffensive blob" (2). For Solanas, males are "psychically passive" (3) on a molecular level, possessing a "crudely constructed nervous system" (5).

Solanas reads "maleness" in a way similar to Bhabha's notion of the stereotype and fixity, that the stereotype is often asserted and repeated in a fruitless attempt to prove its "truth" through repetition. Solanas writes that when a man sets out to "prove he's a Man… his main means of attempting to prove it is screwing.... Since he's attempting to

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[83] Dana Heller points out that Solanas's anarchic agenda "is not a far cry from Mailer's call 'to encourage the psychopath within oneself, to explore that domain of experience where security is boredom and therefore sickness'" (188) in "The White Negro." Avital Ronell also suggests a connection between Solanas and Derrida, whose essay "The Ends of Man" came out in 1968, writing that "Both Derrida and Solanas are interested in the aims and finality of the concept 'man'" (1).

prove an error, he must 'prove' it again and again. Screwing then, is a desperate, compulsive attempt to prove he's not passive" (3). Solanas asserts that gender stereotypes in American society are backward, and that "men have pussy envy" (4), in her attempt to deconstruct the model of "'Man'-hood, the all-American ideal—the well behaved heterosexual dullard" (10). Solanas advocates a complete destruction of gender boundaries, and cross-dressing and sex changes are proposed as solutions: "When the male accepts his passivity, defines himself as a transvestite… and gets his cock chopped off… [he] then achieves a continuous diffuse sexual feeling from 'being a woman.' Screwing is, for a man, a defense against his desire to be female" (4). In Deleuzian terms, a process of "Becoming-woman" is the only solution to the condition—or disease—of maleness. Solanas doesn't stop there, however. She asserts that men should, "by means of operations on the brain and nervous system" become "transformed in psyche, as well as body, into women" (36). The human race will therefore continue in altered form, solely reproducing through the "laboratory production of babies" (37).

Often lost by critics and readers in Solanas' miasma of misandry is the point that her proposed solution hinges upon the mechanization of society. In "From Bobbitt to SCUM," Melissa Deem surveys the different critical lenses through which the manifesto has been examined, ranging from 1970s radical feminists, to the psychoanalytic approach taken by Leah Hackleman in the 1990s—which is concerned with representations of "out of control" women—to those critics, including Deem herself, who grapple with how to situate the manifesto in political and historical terms. Yet Solanas was attempting to subvert these very terms; so when Deem writes, "I situate the *SCUM Manifesto*, a minor polemic, within the genre of scatological rhetoric" (524), her analysis seems to be a way

of containing the document's radicalism rather than engaging with it, and an attempt to lessen reader anxiety by situating it in the realm of political discourse.[84] In the first paragraph of her manifesto, Solanas writes that "there remains to civic-minded, responsible, thrill-seeking females only to overthrow the government, eliminate the money system, institute complete automation, and destroy the male sex" (1). It is this question of "automation" that seems to lie at the heart of her argument. Solanas asserts, with a demented optimism, that "there is no human reason... for anyone to work more than two or three hours a week at the very most. All non-creative jobs (practically all jobs now being done) could have been automated long ago" (6). She writes that the only event that will liberate women "is the total elimination of the money-work system, not the attainment of economic equality with men within it" (7), an event that will pave the way for a new kind of society.

Solanas advocates the mechanization of everything, not just work, but human sexual relationships. "Sex is the refuge of the mindless" (28), she declares in the manifesto, and later tells Howard Smith and Brian Van der Horst that at the time she wrote the manifesto, "I wasn't sexual, I was into all kinds of other things" (58). In a 1968 interview she also states, "'I'm no lesbian. I haven't got time for sex of any kind'" (Smith, "The Shot" 1). Her claims, of course, deliberately echo Warhol's perpetual statements that he was completely asexual, and uninterested in physical sex. Solanas herself was living in a place that catered to patrons who were exploring gender issues, the Hotel

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[84] Deem's work becomes more compelling when she briefly invokes Deleuze and Guattari, writing that "the rhetoric of scatology can form a line of escape which cuts across established borders of feminist thought and political action, thereby creating new political possibilities" (525). Yet Deem becomes tangled in a close reading of the linguistic-rhetorical construction of the manifesto in terms of scatology for most of her piece—her sole revelation of interest being that scatology, specifically feces, serves to make the body more visible: a curious critical approach to a piece that is primarily about escaping the body (and Solanas' "scatology" seems more like joking asides than the crux of her argument).

Earle, apparently a building for those who rebelled against societal repressions of the day, with "separate wings for lesbians and drag queens" (Harron xv). Yet by claiming to separate themselves not only from typical gender roles, but from human sexuality altogether, both Warhol and Solanas move further away from what typically constitutes a crucial element of the human experience. Laura Winkiel writes in "The 'Sweet Assassin' and the Performative Politics of *SCUM Manifeso*" that by denigrating sex and advocating mechanization, Solanas "uncritically assumed a political position that leaves the body behind… SCUM females are liberated from their bodies and their material condition as women by imagining themselves freed from biological constraints" (64).[85]

Thus the *SCUM Manifesto* becomes less about hating men and more about hating the boundaries of the human condition, and human society. Solanas makes a case against religion as something that merely exists to "provide men with a goal (Heaven) and helps keep women tied to men, but offers rituals through which he can try to expiate… that guilt and shame he feels at being a male" (20). Once she has dispensed with religion, like Ballard, Solanas turns to disease and death, writing that "all diseases are curable, and the aging process and death are due to disease; it is possible, therefore, never to age and to live forever" (33). An advocate of eternal life, a decidedly posthuman condition, she cites the "lack of automation" as preventing this crucial anti-aging research from taking place: "There now exists a wealth of data which… would reveal the cure for cancer and several other diseases and possibly the key to life itself. But the data is so massive it requires high speed computers to correlate it all. The institution of computers will be delayed interminably under the male control system, since the male has a horror of being

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[85] Winkiel notes that Solanas "employs the radical Marxist-feminist tenet that holds that women, as an oppressed class, must seize the means of reproduction" (75).

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replaced by machines" (34), a notion that explicitly connects feminist theory and the posthuman. When reading Solanas, one can't help but think of the United States President, George W. Bush, and his resistance to stem-cell research—on religious grounds, of course—that would help researchers unlock the cure to many currently fatal diseases.[86] As subsequent critics and reviewers have pointed out, Solanas's "prediction about how science will change humanity… has proven to be true" (Nickels 52). And Mary Harron notes with apparent sincerity that the situation "where one person's view of the world is utterly at variance with the society around them is one definition of madness, but it is also what was once called prophecy" (ix).

The *SCUM Manifesto* reaches its posthuman apotheosis when Solanas declares that eventually the production of female babies in a laboratory will be unnecessary. "Why produce even females?" she asks. "Why should there be future generations? What is their purpose? When aging and death are eliminated, why continue to reproduce? Why should we care what happens when we're dead? Why should we care that there is no younger generation to succeed us?" (37) These are rhetorical questions—according to Solanas, we should not care. In fact, the end goal of her societal vision is a community of beings who live forever, free from all boundaries: "Eventually the natural course of events… will lead to total female control of the world and, subsequently, to the cessation of the production of males and, ultimately, to the cessation of the production of females" (38).[87] Rather than steer society toward an apocalypse, Solanas wants to freeze time, like

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[86] No friend of the patriarchal system of American government, Solanas writes at one point that "If SCUM ever marches, it will be over the President's stupid, sickening face; if SCUM ever strikes, it will be in the dark with a six-inch blade" (66).

[87] In her article for *The Guardian,* "Solanas and Son," the writer Liz Jobey makes the unexpected discovery that Solanas had a son who she gave up for adoption prior to writing the manifesto.

those who willingly enter the zones of petrification in *The Crystal World*, or as Ronell puts it, Solanas wants to "kill time and establish a *uchronia*… one of the limits that Solanas rails against is man's temporal predicament, clocked and quickened by the masculinist abuses of technoscience" (14). Solanas's manifesto is an inversion of Marinetti's "Futurist Manifesto," in which he declares that each young generation should destroy the older one, advocating that those over forty should be thrown "in the waste paper basket like useless manuscripts" (249). It is also an inversion in terms of gender, as Ronell notes, for the Futurists proclaimed that they would "glorify war… and scorn for woman…. We will destroy… feminism" (qtd. in Ronell 5). Yet both Solanas and Marinetti end up advocating the same ideological position, and promoting an amusing, yet creepily fascistic, future society. Ronell addresses the Nietzschean implications, writing that Solanas is a "mutant Nietzschean" who "does not go in the direction specifically of the Nietzchean transhuman, the *Ubermensch*… [but] leaves the field of becoming wide open to a feminine implant" (18). Solanas essentially substitutes "technological innovations for the productive and reproductive functions of sexed bodies" (Winkiel 75). Winkiel takes these propositions as pure satire, writing that she mocks "scientific discourse… [and] parodies sexological discourse in order to expose its position within a network of authorizing institutions" (76). However, Solanas seems urgent and sincere in these technological sections; a feminist utopia really is only achievable through technology for her, and a reading that can accept (and/or dismiss) her writing only as satire ignores the truly radical element of her manifesto.

Until they are replaced by machines, Solanas imagines an unpleasant end for the last surviving men: "The few remaining men can exist out their puny days dropped out on

drugs or strutting around in drag or passively watching the high-powered female in action, fulfilling themselves as spectators… or they can go off to the nearest friendly suicide center where they will be quietly, quickly, and painlessly gassed to death" (49). Solanas also advocates a prescient Philip K. Dick-style voyeurism in her future envisionings. She writes that some men will exist as what she terms "vicarious livers," explaining that "it will be electronically possible for [a man] to tune in to any specific female he wants to and follow in detail her every movement. The females will kindly, obligingly consent… it is a marvelously kind and humane way to treat their unfortunate handicapped fellow beings" (49). Laura Winkiel points out that Solanas is mocking the discourse of male power through her language, causing a "disruption…. by parodying positions of power to reveal their performative—contingent—basis" (68). Solanas is turning voyeurism and the male gaze on its head, as surely as Warhol subverts it in *Empire*, by having men cede control of the gaze to women, who allow them to continue gazing, but now as a form of charity for a dying breed.

Ultimately, Solanas proposes "SCUM" as a mentality, or "state of mind" (58), that women should adopt in order to affect these changes. She advocates those who believe in SCUM becoming members "of the unwork force, the fuck-up force" (40) who will sabotage the capitalist machine by deliberately sabotaging their work.[88] She also advocates the destruction of "all useless and harmful objects—cars, store windows, 'Great Art,' etc" (41) and the violent dissolution of all male-female couples, among many other radical, terroristic actions. Yet all of these are to achieve the two primary goals on which "SCUM" is founded, especially that of automation, which Solanas returns to near the end

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[88] In a clever aside, Solanas points out that for women of the 1960s, "Dropping out is not the answer; fucking-up is. Most women are already dropped out; they were never in" (44).

of her manifesto, as though to underline its importance. She writes that "the elimination of money and the complete institution of automation are basic to all other SCUM reforms; without these two the other can't take place; with them the others will take place very rapidly. The government will automatically collapse. With complete automation it will be possible for every woman to vote directly on every issue by means of an electronic voting machine in her house" (47). Mary Harron takes Solanas's anarchic, technophilic utopianism as deriving from an "almost naïve fifties faith in the power of science and technology" (xiii), yet the opposite is true. Solanas is merely sabotaging the established 1950s American archetype of faith in science as a panacea by using it to turn inwards and destroy itself. Her idea of technological utopia is one in which technology is used to dismantle every existent element of American culture.

In her article "Shooting Solanas: Radical Feminist History and the Technology of Failure," Dana Heller suggests, via a reading of *I Shot Andy Warhol*, a possible rationale for Solanas's emphasis on automation. Heller writes that the conflict between Solanas and Warhol was "less the result of gender politics," but rather stemmed from "the demise of writing and the ascending order of the image" (170), and she suggests that:

> the passing traditions of… revolutionary progress narratives, such as the *SCUM Manifesto* represents, are succeeded by the rise of postmodern heterogeneity and mechanical performativity…. Solanas and Warhol were indirect casualties of shifts in the modes of production, shifts that signaled the rise of nonwriting media and the inevitable decline of print and radical feminism in the United States. (172)

Avital Ronell seems to agree, writing, "who in the Factory needed a scriptwriter and editor when Andy Warhol was improvising and producing no edit, uncut, no budget filmage? Valerie… was seeing her dramatic investments obsolesced by the technologies under Warhol's control" (10). Indeed, as Heller points out later in "Shooting Solanas,"

Solanas corrected the headline that ran in *The New York Times* after the shooting: "Warhol Gravely Wounded in Studio; Actress is Held," telling the reporter, "I'm really a writer," which in Heller's terms was a way of "rejecting the subordinate, mass-produced, mechanized social identity that had come to be associated with Warhol's female entourage" (180). Yet I believe that this is not entirely the case; Solanas's comment to the reporter was also a way for her to remind the public that she has a written work to sell and promote—the *SCUM Manifesto*—one that she was more than happy to see replicated, whether by homemade mimeograph, or via Girodias's Olympia Press. There is no evidence Solanas was opposed to methods of mass reproduction, especially if it was her work and theories being propagated. In fact, Warhol was probably more of an inspiration when it came to the promotion and replication of information than an antagonist. While Heller writes that as depicted in *I Shot Andy Warhol*, "Solanas's fate is determined by her lack of control over the forces of reproduction" (181), I would argue that by shooting Warhol, Solanas essentially found an excellent way to ensure the mass reproduction of her ideas. The news of her attack on Warhol was carried by almost every major paper of the day, as well as via radio and television; correspondingly, the title and controversial content of her manifesto were replicated and discussed endlessly. By shooting Warhol, Solanas effectively hijacked his fame, and like a true terrorist, managed to insert her own manifesto, as a virus, into the DNA of his (hi)story, and therefore into history itself.

As to why Solanas shot Warhol, several theories abound. As stated earlier, she was angry at him for losing her script, and not paying her much money for her work in his films. In addition, the manifesto in general takes the notion of 'Great Art' to task as a

phallocentric fabrication designed to "prove" that men are superior to women, merely because male critics have decided that all 'Great Art' is produced by men. Solanas claims that "'Daddy knows best' is translated into adult language as 'Critic knows best,' 'Writer knows best,' 'Ph.D. knows best'" (26). Critics set up the male artist as one who possesses "superior feelings, perceptions, insights, and judgments, thereby undermining the faith of insecure women in the value and validity of their own feelings, perceptions, insights and judgments" (27). There have also been a number of simplistic interpretations of Solanas's motives, such as Peter Wollen's assertion that Warhol had created a pseudo-Renaissance court, with "a ritualized pecking order" (13) where Valerie Solanas was "a product of… this pathology, a disappointed courtier who attempted to kill her patron, as though she were in a Jacobean revenge play" (14). Amy Taubin sees it much the same way, writing that Warhol created an "alternative family" in which an attention-starved Solanas "pumped the master himself full of lead" (28) to get his attention. Ralph Rugoff, taking a slightly different approach, writes that Solanas's assassination attempt, which fell between the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy, seems like "another Warholian parody of a fashion trend—his would-be assassin, Valerie Solanas, was a left-over… and so predictably botched the job" (103).

Yet I believe that Solanas's real motivations for attacking Warhol hinge on the posthuman elements of her manifesto, especially those dealing with mechanization. Who but Warhol best exemplifies her ideas about automation? Warhol would fit perfectly into Solanas's future world—as a cyborg he has already replaced elements of himself with machines, and openly longed to be a machine. In terms of sex, he was not only asexual but also a self-proclaimed virgin, who expressed no interest in procreation. Perhaps

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Solanas was enraged that it was a man—and not even one suffering from "pussy envy,"

who could be easily savaged and dismissed—who embodied her ideals for a new society

so well. And although ultimately a creator of 'Great Art,' Warhol had not yet been

completely embraced by the artistic establishment at the time of the shooting. In fact, he

was more preoccupied with his films, which he found difficult to book even in porno

theaters, and which were viewed generally as unwatchable trash by most established film

critics. Perhaps Warhol was too close to being a proto-member of SCUM himself, and

Solanas shot him because he was more a disturbing mirror of her own desires and ideals

than an opposite—a male mirror, who had achieved the success that she sought.[89] Mary

Harron writes that Solanas was "attracted by his power and influence, the reflective glow

of his celebrity" (xviii),[90] yet in the studied blankness of Warhol's mirror, it is more likely

that Solanas saw a reflection of herself. This notion is supported by the fact that,

according to Harron, Paul Morrissey told her that "Warhol had seen something of himself

in Valerie… she was so offbeat" (xix).[91] Heller proposes that Solanas's "assassination

attempt on Warhol serves to recall him to the live body, wrestling him out of the

virtual… that helped define the Warhol image… unmasking the pseudo-reluctant bigwig"

(173). Solanas's violent project could be seen in these terms as a means of re-humanizing

Warhol in order to disempower him. If she felt that he "had too much control" over her

life, perhaps it was because he was closer to reaching her own SCUM ideals than she

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[89] Indeed, in her manifesto, Solanas establishes room for a "Men's Auxiliary of SCUM," which notably includes all queer men, "who by their shimmering, flaming example, encourage other men to de-man themselves" (41).

[90] Harron also posits that Solanas saw Warhol as a father figure, a notion which seems too psychologically shallow in a Freudian sense for characters as complex as Solanas and Warhol.

[91] Mary Harron and Dana Heller note some other obvious similarities between Solanas and Warhol: both came from poor Catholic families, and both often discussed being teased in school, due to the fact they were marked as different by their peers.

was; the shooting could be seen as a means to reduce Warhol from proto-SCUM back to the merely human, in order to retrieve some "control" of her revolutionary ideas for herself.[92] According to Winkiel, a group of feminists in Greenwich Village organized after the shooting to distribute a broadside that read "Plastic Man Vs. The Sweet Assassin…. Non-Man Shot By the Reality of His Dream…. A Tough Chick with A Bop Cap and a .38…. Valerie is Ours" (72). Indeed, Solanas could be seen as the posthuman representation of Warhol's dreams—his notions about sex and automation come to life in an unexpectedly nightmarish form.

In "Deviant Payback," which serves as the introduction to the Verso edition of the *SCUM Manifesto*—and is nearly as long as the manifesto itself—Avital Ronell examines Solanas's writing almost entirely in terms of linguistic feminisms. She writes that "scouring the hetero-rhetorical unconscious of the social mileux… Valerie Solanas found herself disabled by the very fact of language, by its phallic lures and political usages, by its disturbing record in the human sciences and liberal arts" (4); yet Solanas also found "pleasure in the injurious effects of language and, with Lacanian precision, understood that words are bodies that can be hurled at the other, they can land in the psyche or explode in the soma" (4). While this feminist-linguistic approach reveals merely one element of the manifesto's aims, it is true that Ronell makes a convincing argument for the Bakhtinian heteroglossia of language within Solanas's text. In addition to the "androphobic noise" there is "evidence of other sound tracks that run interference with the dominant tones and semantic registers of the text's purported meaning… orchestral slippages, unstoppable flipsides, countermanding orders, measured contradictions,

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[92] I dispute the theory advanced by Ronell that Warhol was merely "a stand-in, part of a serialized chain linking back to primal indignities" (27).

internal freakouts, and logical insurrections" (Ronell 7). Yet despite the fact that Ronell

even uses the metaphor of music, describing the manifesto in purely audio terms as a

"pernicious soundtrack" (7), she fails to connect this hybridity to Warhol's "writing" in *a*,

either in terms of the heteroglossia that different levels of discourse create, or with

regards to the fact that examining Solanas's text as an aural document echoes the manner

in which *a* is comprised of audio recordings. Caught up in documenting superficial

language games of her own—that "manifesto" contains the word "man," that Valerie

Solanas's initials are "V.S." which suggests "versus," that Warhol's name signifies "War-

hole," etc.—Ronell fails to recognize one of the fundamental similarities between the

construction of Solanas's and Warhol's texts. However, Ronell does correctly point out

that Solanas essentially "entered a struggle for recognition… with a ghost" (23) because

when she shot him, Warhol was on the telephone—"part of a machine that refused her

calls" (27)—present, perhaps, only in body, his mind in that interstitial space (another

form of posthuman landscape) one enters when one talks on the phone or communicates

over the internet. Yet I would posit that Solanas was as much of a ghost as Warhol:

disenfranchised in every sense, and deemed too strange even for the "deviant" Factory.

As previously discussed, her attempt at murder was an effort to re-ground both of them.

Supposedly, Solanas left a paper bag on Warhol's desk after the shooting, with a second

gun in it, along with a sanitary napkin. If the gun is taken as a phallus, then both items

are signifiers of gender, but ones which might cancel each other out, or perhaps suggest a

third gender altogether—one which displays evidence of both male and female sex

organs.

Solanas's shooting of Warhol marked the end—and in a sense, the beginning—of her career as a published writer, as it marked the end of Warhol's career as a filmmaker and groundbreaking artist.[93] Solanas was diagnosed with schizophrenia, imprisoned, and when released, she battled drug addiction, living in various welfare hotels and serving additional prison time until she was found dead on April 25, 1988, roughly a year after Warhol's death. She had had little contact with him since the shooting, although she had supposedly called him once and demanded $25,000 in cash, publication of the *SCUM Manifesto*, and an appearance on the Johnny Carson show. When asked in one of her final interviews what she had been doing since the shooting, she answered "I've been on strike… doing nothing" (Smith, "Valerie" 32). When asked, "Have your views changed since the manifesto was published?" Valerie answered simply: "No" (Smith, "Valerie" 32).[94] Harron, whose *I Shot Andy Warhol* was a clear attempt to rehabilitate Solanas, if not her manifesto, on a mainstream scale, notes that if Solanas "had been born just a few years later, her incendiary writing might have found its audience…. Now a Valerie Solanas would have a book contract; her case would be debated on talk radio and daytime television talk shows" (x). Harron also adds that if Solanas had entered college in the more radical 1960s instead of in 1954, she "might have stayed in academia… might have

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[93] Reduced to a well-paid society portraitist, Warhol produced few artistically significant works after the shooting, and ceded all film production and direction duties to Paul Morrissey and later, Jed Johnson.

[94] Solanas also told *The Village Voice* she was about to receive a "hundred million-dollar advance" for a book titled *Valerie Solanas*, a statement which has been used to discredit her as a lunatic. However, reading the actual interview with Howard Smith makes it patently clear she isn't serious—in fact, she's mocking her clueless interviewer. When asked who would give her such an impossibly huge advance, she says, "'Who' is the wrong question. The question is 'Why'," and when asked if a major publisher is releasing it, she says, "Maybe it's General Motors…. I figure this thing's going to sell internationally, right?" ("Valerie" 32).

survived to become a more apocalyptic Camille Paglia" (xiii).[95] Indeed, according to

Solanas's psychologist Dr. Ruth Cooper, Solanas was "'challenging and stimulating'," and

"obsessed with gender" (Harron xxvi). Solanas even pitched a meta-text of her shooting

spree to Girodias from prison, telling him the title would be "Why I Shot Andy Warhol &

Other Chit Chat" (Harron xxviii), the title a parody of social gossip, as well as a parody

of the content of *a*; unfortunately, she never wrote the manuscript. Other than *Up Your*

Ass, her only lengthy piece that remains is the manifesto, which Heller correctly points

out should not be canonized as a feminist, or cult-feminist, "classic," because the book

itself rejects such a position in an imaginary hierarchy:[96]

> *The SCUM Manifesto* is the undoing of the logic of canonization, a radical
> document that should recall us to feminism's unacknowledged debt to the margins
> of the representable and the representative, or in Solanas's own words, to the
> 'dominant, secure, self-confident, nasty, arrogant females, who consider
> themselves fit to rule the universe, who have free-wheeled to the limits of this
> 'society' and are ready to wheel on to something far beyond what it has to offer'
> (187).

It is not coincidental that Solanas herself references the "beyond" near the end of her

manifesto. The SCUM members she describes at the end as "fit to rule the universe" are

those who are straining not only against the boundaries that constitute society and gender,

but against the notions of what it means to be human. The questions that Ronell poses in

"Deviant Payback," such as "Where do we locate Solanas?" and "Why is she rebounding

and returning now?" find their answer in the fact that we are now entering, or have

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[95] Writing in 1993, B. Ruby Rich commented on the contemporary nature of the manifesto: "The 90's is the
decade of the Riot Grrrls, the Lesbian Avengers, Thelma and Louise, the Aileen Wournos case, and Lorena
Bobbit" (17).

[96] Of course the *SCUM Manifesto* has indeed become a cult classic, most recently discussed at length in
Trina Robbins's exploitative book *Tender Murderers: Women Who Kill*, which dismisses Solanas as "gaunt
and ragged… a nobody who lived hand-to-mouth and was often homeless" (157) while praising the
manifesto as an "angry and funny declaration of extremely radical second-wave feminism" (157). Yet the
book's lurid 1950's noir-style, pin-up illustrations, its garish cover art, and derisive tone work to contain the
manifesto within the realm of camp.

already entered, the posthuman era—an era in which Solanas's voice can find a receptive audience and, via the internet, endless distribution and replication, in a way that Warhol's repetitive, silkscreened images of the 1960s only hinted at. And in addition to replication, the internet allows for rhizomatic growth and mutation of Solanas's ideas, so that others might be influenced by her radical notions on automation and society.

Solanas herself did manage to attain a final, additional level of hybridity in her manifesto, Joe Orton-style; Winkiel documents the manner in which Solanas went to the New York Public Library in 1970 and checked out the Olympia Press edition of her manifesto. Apparently incensed by what she found, including the insertion of periods so that SCUM became "S.C.U.M.," as well as an introduction by Vivian Gornick situating her as a feminist, Solanas went to work on the text.[97] She altered the line "A new preface by Vivian Gornick serves as a brilliant commentary" by crossing out the word "brilliant" and replacing it with "would-be," and added the word "flea" after Gornick's name (Winkiel 74). She also scribbled over portions of the back cover, which referenced the Warhol shooting, and blacked out her name as the author on the cover, replacing it with the publisher's name, among other changes.[98] This effort appears to be Solanas's attempt not only to regain control of her work from the male establishment, represented here by Girodias's Olympia Press, but also to refuse categorization as a feminist and a member of the Women's Liberation Movement, forcing readers to acknowledge that she stands outside such movements, as well as outside the academic establishment. In addition, her annotations to the published version of the manifesto suggest a desire to keep the

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[97] The Rare Books and Manuscripts Collection at the New York Public Library currently houses this altered copy.

[98] As I will demonstrate in the next chapter, this move to abdicate authorship is suggestive of the Dogme 95 manifesto, which maintains that the director of a Dogme film must not be credited.

manifesto growing via an ongoing dialogue between herself, her publisher, and her

readers. Solanas and Warhol are pivotal, radical figures of the 1960s, and their work is

continued into the 1970s by an unexpected artist. In the next section of this chapter, I

will move from Solanas to another controversial figure who deals with notions of the

posthuman in its various forms: the German film director Werner Herzog.

The Apocalyptic-Posthuman:
Werner Herzog's *Fata Morgana, Lessons of Darkness,* and *Of Walking in Ice*

The avowedly "humanist" director Werner Herzog might at first seem like an

extremely unlikely candidate to continue the project of Warhol and Solanas's posthuman

textual landscapes.[99] Most famous for his five collaborations with Klaus Kinski, three of

which (*Aguirre: The Wrath of God, Fitzcarraldo,* and *Cobra Verde*) primarily engage

with issues of postcoloniality, Herzog is also the director of the lesser known

experimental documentaries *Fata Morgana* (1969), the title of which means "mirage,"

and *Lessons of Darkness* (1992).[100] Both of these documentaries provide excellent

examples of how the posthuman can coexist with the apocalyptic, without one canceling

out, or dominating, the other. I have also chosen Herzog's films for analysis because they

present two of the best filmic examples of early, yet post-Warholian, posthuman

landscapes. *Fata Morgana* was shot in an African desert transformed by Herzog's

camera and the film's narration into a nameless, timeless, interstitial zone, while *Lessons*

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[99] However, Solanas might have made a great actor or character in a Herzog film, following in the footsteps of the near-psychopathic Klaus Kinski, and the mentally ill street performer Bruno S.

[100] Although *Fata Morgana* and *Lessons of Darkness* are usually classified as "documentaries," Herzog deliberately complicates and subverts that term by fictionalizing large elements of the narrative, and providing misleading, ironic voiceovers. As James Bell points out, *Fata Morgana* is "poetic science fiction… otherworldly… [It attains] the 'ecstatic truth' of poetry rather than the 'accountant's truth' of cinema verite" (92).

of Darkness presents images of the burning oil wells of Kuwait after the first Gulf War,

restyled as aesthetically beautiful images stripped of their historical and political content

by Herzog's refusal to name the countries involved, the date, or the fact that there had

even been a war. I will also analyze Herzog's memoir, *Of Walking In Ice*, at the end of

this chapter—as a work of fiction that is both posthuman and apocalyptic—and one that

provides an excellent transition from posthuman landscapes to the posthuman bodies of

Lynch, Carter, and Banks that I will discuss in the second section of this dissertation.

Herzog, famed as a "director of landscapes" (Hoberman, "Have Camera" 39),

states that *Fata Morgana* was not intended as a documentary, although from the start it

was avowedly posthuman in scope:

> My plan was to go out to the southern Sahara to shoot a kind of science
> fiction story about aliens from the planet Andromeda, a star outside of our
> own galaxy, who arrive on a very strange planet. It is not Earth, rather
> some newly discovered place where the people live waiting for some
> imminent catastrophe…. The idea was that after they film a report about the
> place, we human filmmakers discover their footage and edit it into a kind of
> investigative film akin to a very first awakening. (*Herzog on Herzog* 47)

Yet Herzog discarded this concept when he arrived in Africa. He traveled through

Nigeria and Kenya, apparently overwhelmed by the hallucinatory mirages and the

"visionary aspects of the desert landscape" (47) which he found "primordial, mysterious,

and sensuous" (*Herzog on Herzog* 50). Herzog turned to filming essentially random

images that interested him, including mirages, and endless takes of the African landscape.

Later when he was editing the film, he returned to his notion of an alien journey as a

structuring device for the footage, and he fused this concept with ancient creation myths

to create an apocalyptic-posthuman vision in the form of a "docu-poem" (Bingham 50).

[101] For Herzog, the film is about "ruined people in ruined places" (*Herzog on Herzog* 53); but rather than serving as a political commentary about the economic deprivation of the region—or as Adam Bingham sees it in his *CineAction* piece about Herzog "Apocalypse Then," as a film that simplistically captures "the fallout of Western colonialism" (50)—Herzog frankly admits that he merely "likes the desolation and remains of civilization" (DVD commentary). *Fata Morgana* therefore becomes a loosely-conceived road trip through an un-Earthly landscape, seemingly defined and structured primarily around Herzog's search for "new" and "desolate" images. It is revealing of Herzog's priorities that on his official website he lists the film as "Starring: The Sahara Desert, and its people," in that order.[102] Indeed, in the series of images that open the film, "The human presence is initially absent" (Rayns 6). *Fata Morgana* therefore takes Warhol's project of turning the landscape into a "star"—which Warhol did so well in *Empire*—one step further, by creating a film in which the varying landscapes serve as multiple "stars" set in a disjointed, prismatic celluloid array. The introduction of filmed mirages is especially worthy of consideration with regards to Herzog's desire to complicate and invert notions of cinematic reality, and Herzog suggests that mirages might be a way to mediate the organic and inorganic, rendering both illusory.

Herzog explains that he was drawn to the concept of the mirage because he wanted to film something "not really palpable, not clearly defined" and "to do things that are not completely real" (DVD commentary). He also notes that mirages take humans "beyond their normal realities," which suggests that he views *Fata Morgana* as an

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[101] Herzog maintains in his website promotion for *Fata Morgana* and on his DVD commentary that the aliens are from a planet named Uxmal—although this assertion does not appear in the film.

[102] Herzog's website can be accessed at www.wernerherzog.com.

attempt to transcend normal limitations of film.[103] Herzog describes himself as "on the

hunt for new imagery" and "tired of worn-out images that aren't adequate anymore"

(DVD commentary), which in turn suggests that films only starring humans might well

fall into that category of inadequate, as they did for Warhol. Modified humans and

landscapes thus become the locus of Herzog's cinematic desires. Alkan Chipperfield

points out in "Murmurs from a Shadowless Land" that Herzog's cinema "works always to

isolate and dissolve humanity" (par. 2) an observation that echoes Amos Vogel's study of

the film, "On Seeing a Mirage," in which Vogel concludes that the film is a "comment on

mankind's shaky position in the universe" (18). Both analyses are true, but neither

Chipperfield nor Vogel provide a close reading of *Fata Morgana* to ascertain why

Herzog made these choices in presenting his apocalyptic landscapes, which are filled

with ephemeral mirages and the few Ballardian inhabitants who have adapted in

posthuman ways to their new environment.[104]

    Fata Morgana opens with a split-second red glow, that of the aperture opening,

which gives the images that follow a nearly subliminal, hellish quality. The first part of

the film, titled "Creation," begins with four minutes of a series of planes landing on a

runway in the heat, like great predatorial birds, or UFOs. Given that the title "Fata

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[103] As with Warhol, the idea of pushing beyond established artistic limitations, defines much of Herzog's work. The notion of filming mirages is followed in later films by using an all-dwarf cast (*Even Dwarfs Started Small*), a deranged homeless man as the star (*The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser*), and using a cast in which most of the actors have been hypnotized prior to filming (*Hearts of Glass*).

[104] Other critics have attempted to isolate the film's main features as a means to uncover Herzog's apocalyptic aesthetics. Paul Arthur writes in *Film Comment* that *Fata Morgana* is an "unclassifiable hybrid [that] rehearses the (malign) march of civilization in a desert setting… an extended fictionalized myth of origins embodying the Herzogian axiom of creation through despoliation" (44). And Bingham writes that the film "offers an increasingly despairing and disillusioned view of mankind as corruptor and polluter of an almost primeval landscape, set in poignant and marked relief only by the native people who wander… amid the technological flotsam and jetsam that has turned their (our) land into a graveyard" (50). Yet there is nothing "poignant" about *Fata Morgana*, as Herzog's vision is as cold and unflinching as the distanced perspective of the "alien" narrator that structured his initial vision of the film.

Morgana: Mirage" comes after the first image, it calls into question the cinematic reality of the shots, encouraging the viewer to question whether these landing planes are "real" or mirages, and to consider what the significance of such a distinction might be. The desert heat gives the images a blurry, obscure quality which further suggests that these might be mirages, even though close scrutiny reveals they are, surprisingly, "real." Like the Empire State Building in *Empire*, these multiple airplanes become the undisputed "stars" of the first section of Herzog's film. Even the haze through which they are shot suggests the gauze used by American cameramen to film aging female Hollywood stars in the 1940s and 1950s. From these planes, Herzog cuts to a sequence of glimmering mirages of water and cars in the desert, and sand dunes, with the camera jerkily scanning the Earth's surface as though from a lunar or Martian rover on an alien landscape. Lotte Eisner's narration begins at this point, and she intones, "This is the first testimony, the first word. There was no man nor beast…. only the heavens were there." [105] Yet the heavens on display are merely an endless, unstriated panorama of sand dunes.

These sensual-looking sand dunes are shot to resemble the contours of the human body—a cinematic inversion of Giorno's flesh-as-landscape in Warhol's *Sleep*. The curved, flesh-toned shapes of the dunes, consisting of peaks, valleys and mounds, are framed and shot to look like the massive naked bodies of giants. The tiny rivulets that run down the face of each dune are even suggestive of skin cells and hair follicles, like a natural billboard representing the explosion of the human face and body, as in *The Atrocity Exhibition*. Like Ballard, Herzog collapses the boundaries between the human form and the inorganic, indicating a lessening of restrictive limits. For Herzog, the sand

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[105] As well as being a renowned German film critic and historian, Eisner was the author of *The Haunted Screen*, and Herzog's filmic mentor.

dunes provide a landscape that is "primordial… like a foreign planet" defined by "how the camera moves" (DVD commentary); the use of the word "primordial" is again suggestive of Ballard's indication that the posthuman is often closer to the prehuman than to the human. And the fact that this "primordial" landscape is isolated through the movement of a motion picture camera suggests a Warholian and Solanas-esque element of mechanization and reproduction of images.[106] Most critics avoid these implications and consider the film in terms of strict surrealism: Amos Vogel notes the surreal bent to Herzog's landscapes, writing that the "elusive, hallucinatory images coalesce into devastating dream tableaux" (18), while Peter Lloyd writes that the images are merely beautiful "by a kind of awe-inspiring default" (8). Nick Yanni's befuddled, reductive 1971 review of the film in *The Hollywood Reporter* takes it as a "beautiful piece of surrealism" (3) that makes Herzog's "point about the contrast between nature and man rather abstract, if not downright absurd" (3). Yet Herzog is anti-abstract: he is forcing the viewer to engage directly with the questions raised by the convincing arrangement of the inorganic into human form, as I will soon discuss.

Paradoxically, as the landscapes become more human in appearance, the living structures of the film's actual humans become more alien. The homes and buildings of the few dispossessed African inhabitants shown in the film are shot to suggest the interplanetary dwellings of some otherworldly race of beings. Herzog films a mosque partially buried by sand, so that in his own words, it deliberately "resembles an alien city" (DVD commentary). This mosque, which is not even recognizable as such, instead resembles some kind of curious bio-dome or hive. Via such an image, I would argue that

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[106] In a curious paradox, Herzog and his crew spent days smoothing a path across the dunes, striating them in Deleuzian terms, so that they could film them smoothly, and capture the very curves their camera tracks were eradicating.

Herzog is suggesting that religion is literally being discarded and buried—by the sand itself, as the landscape devours it—and also by Herzog's camera which documents the burial. Religion has no agency here, and remains only as an impotent relic, as in *The Crystal World*; humanity itself has no agency either. When Herzog films the shanty towns and boxes where the villagers live, there is only a jumble of colors and shapes on the screen that is, at times, as difficult to resolve as Edie Sedgwick's blurred body in *Poor Little Rich Girl*. Herzog points out in his DVD commentary that the homes aesthetically resemble "cemeteries" to him, an apt analysis. If Herzog denies these villagers any kind of life, then he also denies them a voice: they are either silent, or their words go untranslated into English for the majority of the film. For Herzog, their words do not appear to matter, because they do not matter here—all that counts is the landscape, and even that is not "real," but potentially a mirage. Even the "reality" of the soundtrack is complicated by Herzog. The images of villages are sometimes accompanied by what sounds unmistakably like the electrical buzzing of power cables, but is actually the sound of insects, recorded in another location, and overdubbed to potentially fool the viewer.[107] This sort of aural blurring between organic and inorganic elements further serves to complicate ideas of nature versus civilization, to force the spectator into a position of evaluating how neatly the boundaries can be subverted.

    Fata Morgana is resolutely post-organic, as shown by the manner in which Herzog chooses to display both animals and humans. When the camera passes a huge gathering of flamingoes in one instance, it turns them into a massive pink blur, so that

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[107] The film is also frequently interspersed with music, ranging from popular rock/folk acts of the 1960s and 1970s like Blind Faith and Leonard Cohen, to Mozart and Handel. The music is applied in such a jarring way, that rather than fitting the bleak landscapes, it merely adds another level of distraction and ironic distance.

they become another aspect of the color palette of the inorganic landscape rather than living creatures.[108] The first close-up in the film, of a mute boy holding a desert fox while a fly crawls across his face, is held so long that the human subject loses its meaning as a human entity discrete from the landscape. Herzog also makes it impossible to tell if the fox in the boy's hand is dead or alive, which points out the futility of such distinctions in this landscape. It doesn't matter if the fox is still alive or dead, because the image remains unchanged either way. In related fashion, Mark Wickum notes that at a certain point in the film, "the decaying carcass of a cow is given the same significance as a burnt out jeep" (DVD production notes). Indeed, Herzog repeatedly returns to images of discarded industrial objects in the desert, displaying close-ups of abandoned digging machinery, broken power cables, and a crashed airplane. He points out the absurdity of a vast, unfinished factory, that has been partially constructed and then abandoned, hundreds of miles from any civilization. When he finally shows working machinery from a distance, it is an oil refinery, with its fires burning in an apocalyptic glow, mirroring the red glow that opens the film. The "hellish," apocalyptic connotation is strengthened by the mythological elements of the narrative, which apparently draws on the sacred Mayan text of the "Quiche Indians, the *Popol Vuh*," (*Herzog on Herzog* 54) and describes the creators of the world: "Cucumatz" and "Huracan." As a lone, bedraggled figure wanders across the horizon, Eisner's narration adds that "there is no glory is this work… unless man be created," suggesting man is present merely as a witness to the creation of the Earth, and more essentially, to his own apocalypse.

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[108] In his director's commentary, Herzog goes so far as to dogmatically instruct the viewer about the flamingoes: "One shouldn't recognize them."

Herzog states that what partially drew him to the *Popol Vuh* was that "the episodes dealing with the Creation explain that it was such a failure the God started again—I think it was four times—and by the end they had entirely wiped out the people they themselves had created" (*Herzog on Herzog* 54). This legend is one in which humanity is extraneous and expendable: an essentially posthuman myth. And it is this myth that both drives and structures Herzog's film. As *Fata Morgana* progresses, Herzog's camera presents a series of images of a flattened, barren desert landscape. Although not explicitly mentioned in the film, this area of the desert is a location in the southern Sahara where the French tested nuclear weapons in the 1950s, and Herzog and his crew are driving through ground zero for an atomic bomb blast. The rapid cut from these images to that of a ravaged-looking volcanic landscape indicates that Herzog is suggesting the apocalypse can come in either human or natural form, but that the result might be the same in its implications for human life. Tony Rayns, who originally reviewed the film for *Monthly Film Bulletin* in 1974, writes that the entirety of *Fata Morgana* appears to provide "visual evidence to the aftermath of some previous action" (6); I would posit that this "previous action" is an apocalypse with mythic origins, and that Herzog, like Ballard, once again connects the prehuman and posthuman by juxtaposing the Mayan origin myths with the aftermath of nuclear testing.

Herzog extends this notion by having the increasingly deranged mythological narration of *Fata Morgana* begin to stray from the *Popol Vuh* to become Herzog's own pseudo-mythological text, a true hybrid of pre-human creation tales and the Herzogian posthuman. Herzog asserts that "the flesh of man was made of titze-wood… the flesh of woman was made from reed-grass marrow… They were killed by their creatures…

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extinguished." This mythological description of human genesis and apocalypse again suggests that the pre-human is the posthuman, that men and women come from the same stratum (the inorganic) as the landscape does. The "titze-wood" and the "reed-grass" are the true creators of the human race—an un-human Adam and Eve—and both reflect and contain those inanimate elements within them, just as the sand dunes express "human" qualities of shape and form. Herzog also posits Africa, from where the human race evolved, as the final dying bastion and liminal zone of lingering humanity that remains after the apocalypse, with its inhabitants on a journey to become something different from human in a process not so distant from Ballard's crystallizations. Just as Sanders voyages to Africa to explore the transformative stasis of the forest in *The Crystal World*, Herzog, like Ballard's protagonist, locates himself in the very region in which humanity appears to be undergoing a revelatory transformation as a result of a potential apocalypse.

In the second section of *Fata Morgana*, "Paradise," Herzog begins to make his posthuman project even more explicit as he moves into depictions of these transformed humans. A seemingly insane man wearing space-age goggles and stroking a lizard, helpfully explains that "you hardly find any life here," before clarifying that few species can survive the 120 to 140 degree desert temperatures. The narration, which has now switched to a male voice, explains repeatedly that "In Paradise you cross the sand without seeing your shadow," instantly bringing to mind images of Herzog' later remake of Murnau's *Nosferatu*, in which the Count's lack of shadow plays a crucial role in marking him as both an "other" and as "undead." The narrator continues, intoning "bizarre, nihilistic axioms" (Rayns 6) over images of abandoned ruins, shanty towns, and the dispossessed African villagers: "In Paradise ruins mean happiness… in Paradise plane-

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wrecks have been distributed in the desert in advance… In Paradise man is born dead."

The final sequence of this section shows a crowd of people getting on a bus, but the shimmering nature of the image makes it clear that this is a mirage—and that what we are watching is not literally "there." Is it Paradise? The images of people floating their way onto the flickering bus suggest that a mirage might be one way to transcend human limits of physicality. Like ghosts, the people both exist and do not exist, and are present in two places at once. And the fact they are getting onto a bus, a transitional zone and also a mode of transit, is perhaps suggestive of the manner in which humans are departing traditional concepts of bodily form.

Herzog himself on his website has called *Fata Morgana* a "science-fiction elegy of dead or demented colonialism in the Sahara," although an elegy for all humanity, or human attributes in general, might be an even more apt analysis.[109] Chipperfield writes that the film displays "the aching thirst for perishing images, the ungraspable and shimmering nature of mirages, and the search for lost time" (par. 8)—again echoing *The Crystal World's* petrifying process. Yet through the mirages, it seems as though Herzog has captured this lost time, and documented a very posthuman trait: the ability to be in two locations simultaneously. It is perhaps a kind of doubling of the Deleuzian concept of voyaging in place; the mirage allows for these desert nomads to transform themselves into dual probe-heads, who will delineate new postcolonial, and posthuman, pathways. Thus notions of place, as well as time, are complicated, and the mirages serve as

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[109] While it is true the film provides a critique of colonialism, that aspects works in conjunction with Herzog's broader posthuman aesthetic. I would argue that the film is an indictment of colonialism as an aspect of an outmoded way of thinking, and by inference, an indictment of those humans who cannot, or decide not to, change and adapt to new ways of thinking and living. The few survivors on display in *Fata Morgana*, whether they are African or Western, are radically altered in their actions, mindsets, and frequently in their physical appearances as well. Colonialism must become a necessary casualty of the fluidity of the human body and mind in a posthuman age (or film).

foreshadowing of the multiple place-time identities possible in the digital age.[110] Tony

Rayns posits that this doubling is exemplified by the "visual juxtaposition of elements

from both Western and indigenous cultures (huge aircraft touching down and cadavers of

animals decaying where they dropped; distant oil flares and decrepit shanty housing)

[that] yields frequent surrealist shocks in line with Andre Breton's most polemic

requirements" (6). In fact, like Ballard, Herzog draws on surrealist tropes in his creation

of posthuman images.

At times, *Fata Morgana* begins to seem like a parallel film to the surrealist Luis

Bunuel's *Las Hurdes* a/k/a *Land Without Bread* (1932), a purported documentary about a

poverty-stricken landscape which is actually a subtle parody of the documentary form.

Herzog's blurring of documentary conventions suggests both Bunuel's surrealist and

parodic logic. As the narrator of *Fata Morgana* intones in one instance, "the stages and

fowl become alive," we are shown heaps of dead, desiccated animal corpses, which

undercuts any authorial "truth" that the narrator might be supplying, and provides a heavy

dose of irony. This scene also provides a link to Bunuel's image of a long-dead horse

carcass being tossed over the side of the cliff as the narrator speciously informs the

viewer it has just been shot before our eyes. In addition, as noted, people are framed and

filmed in the same style as the animals in *Fata Morgana*, as though the camera does not

distinguish between the two. The camera fixes them with the identical gaze, refusing to

cut away, and implacably observes and records as the humans and animals awkwardly try

to negotiate the cinematic space. In one scene, a group of children warily watches the

camera, and Herzog points out in his commentary that the children were clearly

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[110] The final chapter of this dissertation will focus on how virtual communities like Second Life allow for a manipulateable digital mirage, or mirror, and multiplicities of identity.

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frightened by the device, but also attracted to it, as though it were some kind of alien artifact. I believe that Herzog's surrealism functions in the same way his critique of colonialism does, as the skillful use of existent tropes to ground his posthuman agenda. It is true that *Fata Morgana* contains surreal elements, in the manner of *The Drowned World* and *The Crystal World*, but these elements are always utilized to undercut notions of humanity and further Herzog's apocalyptic-posthuman explorations.

The final section of the film abandons any attempt at imposed logic, and gleefully collapses into a bizarre sequence of images relating to postcolonialism. White tourists hide and leap up and down in giant holes in the ground which resemble bomb craters, playing and "acting crazy"—which according to Herzog, was what he instructed them to do.[111] A white man swims with giant turtles in a manmade pool, clearly intended as some bizarre oasis in the desert, and an apparent parody of Western—and Hollywood—notions of an oasis. That the white man has this luxury that the black villagers do not seems to superficially serve as a commentary on race and colonialism, yet Herzog denies an explicit exploration of these issues in *Fata Morgana*. He disingenuously states that "I have never been into using the medium of film as a political tool… nightmares and dreams do not follow the rules of political correctness" (*Herzog on Herzog* 56). Yet his statements are a further attempt at irony, as his films are always deeply political, if not "politically correct." In the final section of *Fata Morgana*, the postcolonial collides with the posthuman in such a way as to suggest that the postcolonial might ultimately be voided by the posthuman in Herzog's film—that this landscape could be the end of all human society, and the ultimate interzone in which all boundaries are permanently in

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[111] Or as Herzog explains on the DVD commentary, he told them, "Be as crazy as these guys behind the camera!"

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flux, at all times. Herzog's filmic version of Africa is, in the end, very close to Ballard's

textual one; instead of a crystallizing haecceity, however, I would argue that it is

Herzog's camera that ultimately fixes the images of landscape and humans into a

permanent living, voyaging stasis via celluloid. In this manner, as with his filming of

mirages, Herzog extends Warhol's experiments in *Empire* (and his screen tests) of

temporal distortions as constituting an integral aspect of the construction of posthuman

landscapes.

Unfortunately, Herzog's apocalyptic-posthuman project becomes somewhat

muddied in the concluding sections of the film, which were actually filmed later in the

Canary Islands and appended to *Fata Morgana*, because Herzog contracted malaria and

was forced to leave mainland Africa. These final sections essentially stand outside the

body of the film. However, they are worth briefly considering, as they introduce another

term frequently applied to Herzog, that of the "grotesque." In the final scenes, Herzog

films another goggle-wearing white madman, this one playing drums, as an old woman

plays along on an upright piano, a bizarre event that the camera "witnesses," in Herzog's

words. The drummer and the pianist, who perform on a festively decorated stage that

contrasts with their frowning faces and stern demeanor, look like they are enacting a

scene from a Pinter or Beckett play. Tony Rayns writes of these "outcasts" that "the

desert becomes a terminal beach, littered with civilization's debris, its vestigial signs of

life rapidly fading. The few survivors are those who were always outcasts, left clinging

to the debris…" (6) [112]. As Wolfgang Kayser suggests, in the most general terms, "the

grotesque is the estranged world" (184), which indicates that *Fata Morgana* could also be

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[112] *The Terminal Beach* is also the title of a JG Ballard story about a man who moves onto a desolate island
which was once the site of atomic bomb testing.

seen as an examination of the grotesque, while still under the larger umbrella of Herzog's

posthuman project. In "Three Films of Werner Herzog: Seen in Light of the Grotesque,"

Elizabeth Cleere points out that "the abyss is not Herzog's destination but rather his

starting point" (14). [113] Cleere also notes that as the man and woman continue to play

their instruments, "by virtue of sheer persistence and repetition the scene bleeds itself of

its depressive quality and infects the spectator with laughter" (16). In fact, Cleere's use of

Bakhtinian notions of the grotesque approaches Deleuzian concepts of the posthuman

body:

> the grotesque body is not separated from the rest of the world. It is not a closed,
> completed unit; it is unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits. The
> stress is laid on those parts of the body that are open to the outside world, that is,
> the parts through which the world enters the body or emerges from it, or through
> which the body goes out to meet the world. (Bakhtin qtd. in Cleere 17)

In addition, Cleere's discussion of Bakhtin's comments on "plant, animal, and human

forms" as displayed in the Roman grotesca, in which the "borderlines that divide the

kingdoms of nature in the usual picture of the world were boldly infringed" (Bakhtin qtd.

in Cleere 17), leads to the analysis that, as I have already discussed with regards to

Herzog's films, "the boundaries between people, animals, and objects are consistently

undermined" (Cleere 17). As a sort of ultimate summation of *Fata Morgana*, Peter Lloyd

writes that Herzog "teaches us that the art of the documentary is not the recording of an

existing world, but the revelation, within that existing framework, of other worlds" (9).

Thus it could be said that in his exploration of the posthuman, Herzog journeys through

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[113] Cleere also examines Herzog through Bakhtin's notions of the grotesque, and Bakhtin's examination of
its origins in the medieval carnival—a concept that certain Herzogian comments seem to bear out: "The
appropriate time for me would be the late Middle Ages. I feel close to the music and the painting of that
time. It would also fit the concept of my work" (Herzog qtd. in Cott 54). Again, this links the past and the
present, the prehuman and the posthuman.

surrealism, postcolonialism, and the grotesque, among other movements and tropes in order to create the framework for his depiction of posthuman landscapes.

Herzog returns to his study of such landscapes in the documentary *Lessons of Darkness, Fata Morgana's* unofficial companion piece, filmed twenty-two years later and released to great controversy in 1992. *Lessons of Darkness* opens with a quote attributed onscreen to Blaise Pascal: "The collapse of the stellar universe will occur—like creation—in grandiose splendor," suggesting the manner in which Herzog will isolate beauty and wonder in a universal apocalypse. Yet the quote is a fake, invented by Herzog himself, who claimed as a defense when challenged about it, "Pascal himself could not have written it better!" (*Herzog on Herzog* 243). The quote merely becomes a way in which to give Herzog's posthuman-apocalyptic images a faux historical grounding, and to indicate that the film will not be a typical documentary, but a fusion of hybrids, encompassing both truth and deliberate fictions. Like *Fata Morgana*, *Lessons of Darkness* is a film about the consequences of colonialism—and the consequences of war as well—and it also marks Herzog's entry into the Eco-Disaster genre, a documentary mode existent since the beginnings of cinema.

If Herzog's pseudo-Pascalian quote that opens *Lessons of Darkness* is a move to ground his posthuman notions, his use of the Eco-Disaster genre marks the same kind of positioning, as the genre is being utilized by Herzog as a source for raw material. As Robin L. Murray and Joseph K. Heumann point out in "The First Eco-Disaster Film?", the Lumiere Brothers made "Oil Wells of Baku: Close View" in 1896, which consists of 36 seconds of footage of flaming and smoking oil wells in Azerbaijan, and which Bertrand Tavernier, among others, claims as "the first ecological film ever made" (qtd. in

Murray 45). Murray and Heumann attempt to discern whether this film shows an actual

"eco-disaster… or business as usual" (45), due to the fact that despite the flames and

smoke, a nonchalant human figure appears on screen, moving around near the derricks,

"as if nothing unusual was happening" (45). Murray and Heumann try to determine what

it means "when we view these things as spectacle" (45), writing that when ecological

disasters are filmed, as in *Lessons of Darkness*, "they provide audiences with a re-

creation of the event, yet the possible disastrous effects of that event are obscured by the

spectacular screen moments" (45). They ask, "When does disaster become a spectacular

image?" and comment that the very "notion of spectacle obscures or even erases

ecological readings" (45). Yet despite these provocative questions, Murray and Heumann

never fully engage with what Herzog's film is stating about the relationship between

humanity, nature, and the inorganic; they also misread crucial signposts—incorrectly

believing that the epigraph at the start of the film was actually written by Pascal, and

therefore missing Herzog's signifying gesture that *Lessons of Darkness* is in no way a

conventional eco-disaster film. Perhaps the truest statement found in their article is a

quote from Rahman Badalov, that "blazing oil gushers make marvelous cinematographic

material" (qtd. in Murray 45).[114] Yet as with *Fata Morgana,* this complicated beauty

comes at a cost to the human.

The controversy surrounding the premiere of *Lessons of Darkness* must be

addressed; Herzog recounts that when *Lessons of Darkness* was screened at the Berlin

Film Festival, "with one voice, nearly two thousand people rose up in an angry roar

against me. They accused me of 'aestheticizing' the horror and hated the film so much

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[114] Badalov's statement has been proven correct once again by Paul Thomas Anderson's recent film *There Will Be Blood* (2007), a revisionist take on the first 150 pages of Upton Sinclair's novel *Oil!*, and a film which features images of a cinematically "spectacular" oil well explosion and fire.

that when I walked down the aisle of the cinema I was spat at" (*Herzog on Herzog* 245).

Herzog was essentially vilified for "rendering ambiguous the divide between the beauty

and the horror of the destructive conflagration" (Bozak 22). Of course this superficial

aestheticization is a deliberate strategy that Herzog deployed to assault the audience's

expectations about respecting boundaries and cinematic conventions in documentary

film. As Nadia Bozak points out, "Iraqi soldiers retreating from Kuwait used fire to wage

ecological warfare… but also as a spectacle, a visual weapon with which to batter the

psyches of the opposition.... According to Paul Virilio, 'War can never break free from

the magical spectacle because its very purpose is to reproduce that spectacle'" (19).

Bozak continues, pointing out that in the film Herzog internalizes "the war's point of

view, merging with his subject, but only on behalf of betraying it. *Lessons of Darkness*

makes extensive use of helicopter traveling shots, thus ingesting the mechanics and

mechanisms of war" (23) to forge a filmic critique: "The idea is not to engage with the

enemy or the object of critique, but to consume it, become it, alter it, and then invert it"

(23). Yet these gestures are missed by many, and Herzog has been lambasted for

refusing to mention in his narration that the images were of a post-war Kuwait, and

wrongly accused of trying to de-politicize the film. Herzog himself claims that due to his

refusal to locate the film in a discrete time and place, *Lessons of Darkness* therefore

"transcends the topical and the particular" (*Herzog on Herzog* 246), which was his

apparent goal.

     Herzog also maintains that *Lessons of Darkness* contains "not a single frame that

can be recognized as our planet, and yet we know it must have been shot here" (*Herzog

on Herzog* 248). Indeed, the opening shots reveals strange mushroom-like towers in front

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of a dark orange sky, the buildings reminiscent of those in a science fiction film, or

Antonioni's *L'Eclisse*.[115] Herzog, who narrates the film, explains that we are watching "a

planet in our solar system" and continues to describe the images with mock "alien"

detachment as they shift into desolate landscapes. As Nadia Bozak points out, the film is

extraterrestrial, and not only in the "literal science-fiction sense," but

> also in the militaristic sense, as the Gulf War saw the transition to a groundless,
> extra-terrestrial war. In a formal sense, too, Herzog's cine-essay is extra-
> terrestrial as it transgresses established cinematic borders and territories. And it is
> literally extraterrestrial: *Lessons of Darkness* was "no man's-land" filmmaking, for
> not only was Herzog expelled by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Information, the film
> stock and crew were in constant danger of being disabled by the raging fires. The
> earth, then, literally repulses the film crew, while the territory of the country
> likewise pushes the film away from its soil. (21)

 In terms of earth and territory, the mushroom-cloud towers give way to images of what

we are told by the narrator are "wide mountain ranges, the valleys enshrouded in mist."

These images are superficially convincing, but somewhat odd upon close examination, or

repeated viewings; Herzog revealed in later interviews that they are actually not

mountains, but "little heaps of dust and soil created by the tires of trucks. These

'mountain ranges' were no more than a foot high" (*Herzog on Herzog* 243). As with the

"Pascal" quote, authenticity has already been made suspect by illusion, foregrounding the

manner in which the filmmaking process can distort notions of reality, and subtly parody

the humanist documentary form. From the miniature "mountains," the film cuts to a man

in a fireproof suit and mask, attempting to put out an oil fire, and when he waves at the

camera, Herzog intones, "The first creature we encountered tried to communicate

something with us," as though he is narrating a nature documentary. Indeed, the fireman

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[115] Although outside the scope of this study, Antonioni's films (notably *L'Avventura, La Notte, L'Eclisse, Red Desert,* and *Blow Up*) could all be considered in terms of their posthuman landscapes, and Antonioni could be claimed as a posthuman filmmaker in the manner of Warhol and Herzog.

looks barely human, and he and the others are often faceless behind white fireproof masks, with only a slit for their sunglass-covered eyes, or wearing plastic storm-trooper-style headgear that completely obscures their human features. Andy Pawelcak correctly notes that throughout the film the firemen, dressed in their "heavy fire-retardant uniforms and helmets and masks… look like sadomasochistic underworldlings gleefully stoking the fires" (63). For Adam Bingham, who represents the armada of critics who refuse to consider Herzog from perspectives other than the political or the humanist, Herzog is interested in "putting a human and an ecological face on loss and desolation, death and destruction" (53), but of course the opposite is true. Herzog is pointing out how the posthuman landscape—in this case, a landscape not made for human life—creates and functions within these apocalyptic landscapes, and he both disputes and displaces the clichéd notion of putting a "human face" on inherently inhuman situations.

    Lessons of Darkness, like *Fata Morgana*, is comprised of discrete sections, with each section functioning to further an element of Herzog's depiction of ravaged, apocalyptic-posthuman landscapes. In the first part, "A Capital City," images of a flourishing Kuwait months after the war are shown, but Herzog's narration purports that these images are from before the war, depicting "the invasion of Kuwait in the future tense, as a wound about to burst rather than one already healed up and scarred over" (Bozak 19). Herzog's decision to present the landscape in this way appears to suggest that future Kuwait-style scenarios are inevitable rather than located safely in the past—a prediction that came true with the subsequent invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq by America and other coalition forces in 2001 and 2003, respectively. The second brief section, "The War," consists of slow-motion green, night-vision footage of missiles

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exploding like floating UFO's, which leads to the third section, "After the Battle,"

consisting of images of animal bones in oil and mud, and rising smoke in the distance.

As the images shift to those of burnt-out vehicles, destroyed bunkers and runways, ruined

oil pipelines, the exoskeletons of massive broken radars, and endless mud and rubble,

Herzog's voiceover informs the viewer, "all we could find were traces that humans beings

ever lived here, that there had been a city… the battle had raged so ferociously that grass

would never grow here again." There is nothing to separate the inanimate from the

organic in this rubble field, which has transformed "fire-fighting machinery into

dinosaurs, abandoned weaponry into ancient bones" (Bozak 24), literally "muddying" the

boundaries between past and present, living and dead.

Herzog's decision to film the aftermath of the war in terms of its environmental

effects makes sense as an exploration of posthuman landscapes; even the name of the

American offensive, Operation Desert Storm, "situates itself as a component of the

environment" (Bozak 22). And Herzog's deliberately misleading suggestion that we are

watching what remains of the "capital city," instead of the detritus of war in the desert, is

intended to suggest the same kind of alien detachment he deployed in *Fata Morgana*,

with Herzog himself playing the role of "nonhuman" editor assembling the footage into

semi-coherence. There is a kind of Kubrickian grandeur to the helicopter shots of

Lessons of Darkness, reminiscent of the opening sequences of *The Shining*, an homage

made more explicit by the use of Verdi and Schubert on the soundtrack.[116] Bozak writes

that only once does the shadow of the helicopter doing the filming enter the frame: "The

helicopter is Herzog's cinematic weapon, inserting him—and the viewer in turn—into the

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[116] Adam Bingham also suggests that Herzog's inclusion of Wagner on the soundtrack is meant to reference both Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* and the Vietnam war, as well as "the most aberrant and abject horror of the twentieth century: Nazism" (53).

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landscape, and thus minimizing the differentiation between cinematographer and soldier" (24), as Herzog also minimizes the discrepancies between human and landscape, documentary and fiction, and war versus natural disaster.[117] Bozak also points out that Herzog's reliance on aerial photography and flying shots conflates "flight and sight, automatic weaponry and photographic capabilities, cinematographic mechanisms and militaristically derived aerial observation" (23), a blurring of boundaries which intentionally complicates both how war and images of war are constructed.

The fourth section of the film, "Torture Chamber," consists of a long camera pan across an array of torture devices within a stone building. The camera lingers on neatly arranged rows of hammers, knives, pliers, cattle prods, many of which appear to be stained with blood. Occasionally it also catches photos of bloody corpses on the walls. Herzog's images suggest that perhaps it is best that there are no more humans in this environment. Without humans, the torture devices are robbed of their negative potential and returned to their state as mere objects. A lack of human victims reaestheticizes the implements, with Herzog's film turning them back into art objects subject to the voyeuristic gaze of the viewer. I would argue that these implements depend on organic bodies to function as torture devices, both in terms of perpetrators and victims. In a human landscape the tools become abhorrent elements in a cycle of pain, violence and control; in a posthuman one, they are at worst "faintly sinister artifacts" (Pawelczak 63), and at best, the very tools that might construct a new society on this wasteland—not a mimicry or tracing of the previous one (which has been obliterated, suggesting the

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[117] The suspicion that the famed helicopter shots that open *The Shining*—another modern horror story— were an inspiration to Herzog is furthered by the fact that at one point, near the end of Kubrick's sequence, the helicopter blades become visible at the top of the frame, complicating notions of spectatorship and cinematography in precisely the same way Herzog does in *Lessons of Darkness*.

necessity of the apocalyptic vision in Herzog's pursuit of the posthuman), but something

entirely different that allows for posthuman bodies, spaces, and communities.

Also, as in *Fata Morgana*, Herzog denies the humans he films in *Lessons of*

Darkness a voice, either speaking for them, or occasionally over them. Often, according

to Herzog, the film's subjects do not even possess a voice any more. An old woman who

watched her sons tortured to death has, apparently, "lost the power of speech." What

little she can say goes untranslated, the only decipherable word to a Westerner being

"Allah." Because of the previous distortions of "reality" in the documentary—which

Herzog terms his "stylizations"—it is impossible to know whether this story is true.

Either way, Herzog's point is not that he wishes to deny the woman a voice, or speak over

her in a colonialist way, but that she has lost her voice symbolically, just as the earth is

losing its humanity. Mankind is regressing, as the surface of the planet is losing its

striation of civilization in favor of rubble and decay. When Herzog later shows another

woman and her young child, this time the loss of speech is reversed. The woman

describes how her son's tears ran black from oil and smoke, and explains that a soldier

stepped heavily on her child's head, rendering him brain damaged and permanently mute.

Yet Herzog appears to add a layer of artifice to this horrific account of violence by

speaking over the woman and adding that the boy only spoke once since the attack, and

that was to say, "Mama, I don't ever want to learn how to talk." Taken as a realistic

claim, in light of all of Herzog's other "stylizations," this well-phrased lone sentence

seems suspect coming from such an injured child.[118] But taken as a statement about the

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[118] Adam Bingham notes that during this scene the camera "reaches a sympathetic stillness… in contrast to
its almost constant mobility elsewhere" (53); yet the stillness appears more cold and clinical—a pinning
down of the subject, like an animal in a nature documentary—than sympathetic, especially in light of
Herzog's refusal to let the subjects speak for themselves.

regression, destruction, and ultimate obsolescence of humanity, it is resolutely

posthuman. This lack of inter-human communication, and relationships, is a theme

present throughout *Lessons of Darkness.* Bingham notes that these speechless victims are

"trapped within themselves with little means of escape. In the fullest, most chilling sense

of the word, they are prisoners of war" (53), while Bozak writes that as "war made the

landscape disappear into oil floods and conflagration, so too has language evaporated…

speech is… garbled, mutated, or else it is muted" (21). Like the distorted voices in

Warhol's novel *a*, human language collapses when faced with experiences, or calamities,

that it cannot encompass. Even Herzog's voiceover ultimately becomes sporadic, so that

reams of images pass without any explanation or context, creating a hallucinatory

imagistic film of pure cinema that denies the expectations of the documentary form. As

Ronald Holloway's review in *Kino* points out, no doubt echoing Herzog's own

sentiments, "words are superfluous when images tell everything" (20).

Perhaps Herzog is suggesting that no human words are needed, because the

surface of the earth is so clearly ruined for humanity in this region. Section Five, titled

"Satan's National Park" shows a landscape that appears to be covered in water, until the

narrator explains—and the camera reveals—that it is oil. Herzog's camera languorously

floats and drifts above seemingly endless pools and lakes of oil, which reflect the distant

fires from the burning oil wells. The fires frequently look almost volcanic, as though

Herzog is again documenting a pre-human world, as in *Fata Morgana*. It is an

"aestheticization" of horror, but in the same way that nature documentaries frequently

aestheticize the wild—not to glamorize it, but to document it in a way that demonstrates

the simultaneous beauty and horror. The critic Tom Bissell writes that Herzog is "clearly

more interested in beautiful images of flaming oil wells than in testaments of human suffering" (70), as though the two interests can never intersect, or are mutually exclusive; yet they coexist as a hybrid throughout *Lessons of Darkness,* like the heteroglossic voices in *a.* Just as the film is both posthuman and apocalyptic, simultaneously, the aestheticized images in no way negate the human suffering which lingers as a ghost in sections like "Torture Chamber," and is foregrounded in the scenes of the mother and her injured child. Herzog's presentation of postwar Kuwait as a posthuman landscape could be seen a gesture of true liberation from the human: a means by which to advocate an escape from the tortures that human bodies face merely by being human.

In fact, in the same manner as the torture implements return to a previous state as utilitarian or art objects when their victims are removed, the entire impressionistic strata of Herzog's filmic landscape becomes completely converted into aesthetically appealing elements. Pawelczak notes that "the textures of oil, ash and burned metal recall… Josef Beuys' fetishized honey and felt, and the rough, pebbly surfaces of Dubuffet's primitive canvasses" (63). These references to Beuys and Dubuffet suggest means by which critics and viewers have attempted to contextualize Herzog's images, as though searching for a way in which to locate and striate his cinematic liminal zones. More crucially, Pawelczak also references Benjamin's comment that Marinetti and the fascists will inevitably "make the destruction of humanity into an aesthetic object for our contemplation" (63). Yet Pawelczak does this without realizing that the process of the destruction of humanity, like a flaming oil well, will be inherently aestheticized if it is documented in any way, simply by the fact that any medium used to document destruction transforms it on some level into an artistic object of scrutiny.

Aestheticization is a necessary, and inherent, element of Herzog's approach to exploring the construction of posthuman landscapes cinematically.

Herzog also introduces an unexpected sexual aspect into the interactions between humans and their new landscape in *Lessons of Darkness*, indicating a degree of potentially fertile annealing between the organic firemen and the natural world via the firemen's interaction with the flames. This relationship echoes *The Crystal World's* vision of Radek joining into an assemblage with the forest via the crystallizing process: a bonding at the molecular level. Although no criticism to date has dealt with the sexual implications of *Lessons of Darkness*, in the eighth section of the film, "Pilgrimage," Herzog shoots the firemen with their water-spraying hoses positioned overtly at crotch level, presenting the hoses as giant, mechanized phalluses, inseminating the ruined landscape. The images resemble some kind of bizarre fertility rite, ritualized by Herzog's camera which slows down the action and distorts time, à la Warhol. There are numerous slow motion shots of the bodies of firemen writhing in an unmistakably sexually suggestive manner as they hose each other down. To make it even more explicit, Herzog shows one fireman inserting a water-spewing hose into the crotch and up the shirt of another fireman, like a gigantic pulsing dildo entering a new orifice. And just as the fire hoses become phallic extensions of the human body, so do the massive earth-moving machines that the firemen use. The machines dig into fiery pits, their human drivers barely visible, as their phallic extensions plunge in and out of the ground repetitively. All of these heavily sexualized scenes are played out in front of an apocalyptic backdrop of walls of fire, rivers of oil, plumes of smoke, and ash covered landscapes.

This merger between the organic and inorganic culminates in the eleventh section of the film, in which firemen struggle to cap an oil well. The scene, which is also shot in slow motion and scored to romantic classical music, culminates with a close-up of one of the firemen's orgiastic faces after the spewing well is successfully capped. He is gazing rapturously at a phallic piece of metal pipe, in seeming ecstasy and triumph. Soon after in the film, after successfully dealing with another oil well, a group of firemen are shown smiling and lighting a round of "post-coital" cigarettes. These scenes might superficially appear to complicate notions that humanity is receding into the background as nature becomes foregrounded, due to their emphasis on human sexual desires. However, the firemen have already been established through their outlandish costumes as otherworldly, and their relationship with the natural world is one of direct insemination between their mechanized phalluses and the earth. Perhaps these scenes in fact indicate that the future of humanity, in Herzogian terms, is to be mediated by the mechanical, as in the *SCUM Manifesto*, while human to human relationships will be allowed to sink into obsolescence. As the presence of helicopters, fire equipment, and earth-moving machinery suggest, human interaction must now take into account mechanization as a pivotal aspect of the construction of posthuman landscapes, in the manner of Ballard, Warhol and Solanas.

At the end of *Lessons of Darkness* when, apparently inexplicably, a group of firemen relight one of the wells, Herzog reappears as a narrator, and asks, "Has life without fire become unbearable for them? Others, seized by madness, follow suit. Now they are content. Now there is something to extinguish again." This cyclical, repetitive element moves the film back to its origins, and seems to be a metaphor for the war itself: "a battle fought to ensure there is enough fuel to continue to fight for nothing less than

more fuel, and thus, more fighting rights" (Bozak 22). This scene of "madness" is framed

as one of "sheer decadence… a show of conspicuous consumption" (Bozak 21) that

points out that the Westerners responsible for capping and reclaiming the wells, are also

responsible for the necessity of reclaiming them for economic purposes due to America's

over-dependence on oil. The oil-rich landscape itself is therefore both "the cause of the

combat and its most overlooked victim" (Bozak 19).

Without ever reaching the term "posthuman," Bozak grapples with typically

posthuman issues when attempting to dissect Herzog's film. Using some of Theodor

Adorno's theories about the essay form, she writes that *Lessons of Darkness* is essentially

a film-essay of "hybridized ambiguity… [and] a meditation on the collapse of binary

distinctions… and the dissolution of cinematic conventions" (20). While these aspects

are also used in certain postmodern texts, it is Herzog's avid promotion of them—a

"celebration" rather than a "meditation," perhaps—that leads him in the direction of the

posthuman. Indeed, Herzog's entire film is rife with the deconstruction of confining

boundaries. In a close reading of the scene in which lakes of oil reflect the sky, Bozak

points out the constant reversal and subversion of binaries:

> sky, reflected in the oil-water, disappears into its liquefied representation. What
> we see on the screen is not what it appears. Thinking we are looking at the sky,
> Herzog tell us it is in fact reflection. The camera then pulls back, and the viewer
> is oriented—or disoriented—as the world is inverted: sky for the earth, earth for
> the sky. Again, distinctions are fleeting, fluid, as Herzog makes disappearance
> visible. Sky disappears into the water, which disappears into oil. (25)

Bozak points out that the substance of the film is inherent in its form, and that *Lessons of*

Darkness is a critique of the conventions of cinematic genre, as much as it is of the Gulf

War. She also correctly notes that the film "transgresses the idea of audience: this film

was made for the future—for an audience now in 2005, not one in 1991" (22), suggesting the manner in which Herzog's documentary transcends the time of its origins. I believe it is true that Herzog is deliberately exploding the restrictive limitations of genre, specifically those "between fiction and documentary" (Bingham 52), and in search of his "ecstatic truths", Herzog has freed himself from the "straight" boundaries of traditional war documentaries.

Lessons of Darkness ends with a brief coda titled "I am so weary of sighing, O Lord, I grant that the night cometh," which consists of grainy night footage of the ruined landscapes. These night vision shots, along with earlier images of bombs exploding, are shots that "anyone who has ever watched any television during wartime will have seen to the point of total saturation and de-sensitization" (Bingham 52). Herzog's supposed attempts to "aestheticize" the horror through "beautiful" images, could equally be read as a way to challenge and undercut such conventional war footage, and provide the audience with a different sort of stimulus that might prompt a reawakening of desensitized emotion, not in a bathetic way, but via an educated response that might allow for a reevaluation of war and humanity. After all, "a visual, televised war is best dismantled on its own terms" (Bozak 20), and Herzog's images "present and interrogate different viewpoints and perspectives almost diagrammatically opposed to the same ones we are repeatedly fed" (Bingham 52). Ultimately, Lessons of Darkness deconstructs and critiques notions of cinema itself, calling for a post-cinema: "If cinema is derived from war, and war is dependent on the shrinking oil resources that it fights for, the futurism of Herzog's vision implies a reevaluation of cinema" (Bozak 25). This notion of post-cinema, and the idea of a cinema for the posthuman age, will be discussed in the next

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section of this dissertation, dealing with posthuman bodies in the films of David Lynch

and the Dogme 95 collective.

However, it is first briefly worth considering Werner Herzog's little-read memoir

Of Walking In Ice: Munich—Paris, 23 November—14 December 1974 in relation to his

posthuman aesthetics as discussed with regards to his documentaries.[119] Herzog once

told an interviewer, when asked about his obscure book: "I actually like the book more

than my films; it is closer to my heart than all my films together… I might be a better

writer than a filmmaker" (*Herzog on Herzog* 282). Herzog's manuscript details his three

week journey on foot in the winter of 1974 from Munich to Paris, to see his dying mentor

Lotte Eisner. In the preface, Herzog writes that when he was informed that Eisner was

near death, he declared "this must not be, not at this time, German cinema could not do

without her now, we would not permit her death" (i). Herzog then gathers some bare

essentials in a duffel bag, and decides that if he travels on foot to meet her in Paris, "she

would stay alive" (i). As Michael Hofmann points out, "in some deeply primitive,

magical way, Herzog was walking to prevent her death" (18), suggesting Herzog's desire

to thwart one of the most essential human boundaries: that between life and death.[120]

Without informing Eisner of his decision, Herzog begins his arduous journey, scribbling

his manuscript in a notebook as he walks.

Herzog's manuscript, which he published four years after his expedition, is

essentially written as a stream of consciousness: a document of sensory input filtered

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[119] *Of Walking in Ice* was out of print in America for several decades until the summer of 2007, when Free Association press published it in a limited edition of 2,000 copies.

[120] Indeed, Eisner did live until years after Herzog had completed his grueling odyssey. Herzog's journey also inspired others: in 2007, two separate filmmakers made semi-ironic movies about taking long journeys on foot: *Walking to Werner* by Linas Phillips, in which Phillips travels 1,200 miles from Seattle to Herzog's home in Los Angeles, and an as-yet-untitled documentary by Lee Kazimir about a journey from Madrid to Kiev.

through Herzog's tortured, fractured mind.[121] In many ways, the text is reminiscent of

Warhol's Sony transcriptions in *a*, as though Herzog has become a sort of broken

recording device himself, his grief rendering him unable to filter or sort the data he is

receiving. Herzog virtually echoes Warhol's comments about the nature of reality when

he writes of his experiences on the journey, "Only if this were a film would I consider it

real" (2), and "people seem unreal to me" (9). In fact, like Warhol's films, Herzog's

manuscript contains some insights into his thought process as it relates to the position of

humankind in relation to the universe. On the first page, Herzog writes:

> Eisner mustn't die, she will not die, I won't permit it. She is not dying now
> because she isn't dying. Not now, no, she is not allowed to. My steps are firm.
> And now the earth trembles. When I move, a buffalo moves. When I rest, a
> mountain reposes. She wouldn't dare! She mustn't. She won't. When I'm in
> Paris she will be alive. She must not die. Later, perhaps, when we allow it. (1)

This passage introduces two of the critical themes of the book: Herzog's fanatical

assertion that his actions control whether Eisner lives or dies[122], and the inflation and

projection of human action onto a massive, global scale, eg. "When I rest, a mountain

reposes." Herzog's desire is to attempt to transcend human boundaries by pushing his

own body to its physical limits and beyond. During the long journey, he goes without

food and water for much of the time, exposes himself to freezing temperatures for which

he is deliberately unprepared, and travels almost exclusively on foot, through snow and

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[121] Some reviewers found fault with the prose: Michael Hofmann's review in *The London Times Literary Supplement* ends with the judgment: "The purpose behind Herzog's walk was magical, his writing unfortunately isn't" (18). Indeed, I would argue that while the content of *Of Walking In Ice* is posthuman, the form is reliant upon the pre-posthuman styles of romantic, modernist, and beat authors. These styles coexist with the posthuman content, in the manner that postmodernism and the posthuman exist simultaneously in the works of Ballard and Warhol.

[122] Herzog tells Paul Cronin in *Herzog on Herzog* that "Lotte lived until the age of ninety or thereabouts, and years after the walk, when she was nearly blind, could not walk or read or go out to see films, she said to me, 'Werner, there is still this spell cast over me that I am not allowed to die. I am tired of life. It would be a good time for me now.' Jokingly I said, 'OK, Lotte, I hereby take the spell away.' Three weeks later she died" (282). This is both the megalomania of a film director taken to parodic extremes, and a clear indication of Herzog's belief in the extension of human abilities beyond the rational and accepted realm.

ice. By testing his own physical human boundaries, he also tests mental and psychic ones—his journey, which is an expression of his will power, is literally going to help keep Eisner alive, and thwart death. Herzog's literal line of flight takes on metaphoric posthuman resonance; Herzog is trying to assert, or perhaps discern, the strength of his own thought-power. In one instance, he writes that "the fire-thought of ice creates the ice as swiftly as thought" (36), which suggests that the mind conjures up the world, and might therefore have created it, in the manner that Ballard's protagonists psychically merge with their landscapes and influence their surroundings.

There are other unmistakable echoes of Ballard in Herzog's text, both in the brutal physical and psychological journey through a "ruined" landscape, and in terms of the prose, most notably *The Atrocity Exhibition* and *Crash*. At one point, Herzog wonders, like *Crash's* demented antagonist Vaughn, "What is going on in people's minds? Mobile homes? Smashed-up cars bought wholesale? The car wash?" (1), and a few pages later Herzog conjures the spirit of *The Atrocity Exhibition* when he writes the crypto-abstract line: "The teenagers on their mopeds are moving towards death in synchronized motion" (4), indicative of the apocalyptic prism that Herzog views the world through as his psyche is challenged by the endurance required by his journey. Surrealism also makes its presence apparent in *Of Walking In Ice*, as it does as an element of Ballard's work—and so many of the other posthuman texts I have already discussed—indicating the way in which posthuman texts frequently utilize and recontextualize surrealist notions of boundary breaking and liberation. In one instance of such an example, apropos of nothing other than the urge to document his bizarre behavior, Herzog writes that "while eating my sandwich, I ate one end of my scarf as well" (48).

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Like Travern in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, Herzog begins to relinquish the qualities

that make him "Herzog," or even human, a process he is aware of, and seems to relish

documenting. Herzog's text functions as a benign example of Benjamin's comment about

the complete annihilation of humanity becoming an "aesthetic object," except here it is

the destruction, or reconstruction, of one human identity: Herzog himself. When seeking

a place to sleep on the first night, Herzog enthuses that he "could do with a dog kennel"

(5) and writes that his every movement is "wary like an animal… I think I possess the

thoughts of animals as well" (7). Indeed, when he finds an ownerless dog, he writes, "I

said woof to him" (55). Herzog sees other humans also losing elements of their humanity

as his own decays: "I could see an old woman on all fours; she wanted to get up but

couldn't…. On all fours she worked her way to the corner of the house" (9).[123] The

organic and inorganic enters a state of flux. Herzog cannot distinguish between what is

human, animal, and landscape, or real and mirage:

> Suddenly, near the crest of a hill, I thought, there is a horseman, but when I
> moved closer it was a tree; then I saw a sheep and was uncertain as to whether or
> not it would turn out to be a bush, but it was a sheep, on the verge of dying. It
> died still and pathetically… (60)

Herzog writes that the only people he sees are "tired humans in neglected villages who no

longer expect anything more for themselves" (19), linking the postcolonial-posthuman

Africans of *Fata Morgana* to what he observes in rural Europe, and suggesting that such

disenfranchisement is a potentially universal condition. In one instance, Herzog—who

now views himself as one of these disenfranchised "others"—writes that a "man at the

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[123] The image of the woman on all fours, bent into an animalistic posture, suggests the human-animal
merging in Herzog's later documentary, 2004's *Grizzly Man*, in which the self-styled "naturalist" Timothy
Treadwell lives with a community of bears, and in Herzog's words attempts, "to leave the confines of his
human-ness and bond with the bears" (DVD commentary). Treadwell is ultimately killed and eaten by a
bear, who rejects his Deleuzian attempt at "becoming-Bear," in favor of turning him into a meal, and
literally having him "become bear."

petrol station gave me such an unreal look that I rushed to the john to convince myself in front of the mirror that I was still looking human. So what…" (14) and notes later, "out of sheer loneliness, my voice wouldn't work" (41), foreshadowing the speechless Kuwaitis in *Lessons of Darkness*. Eventually, near the end of his journey, Herzog writes, "I'm totally disfigured" (59) and again runs to a bathroom mirror to make sure that he still looks "fairly human" (61), as though he is now reliant on the mirror to confirm his own condition of existence, like a reverse *Nosferatu*.

Yet Herzog discovers that his face isn't "altogether known to [him] anymore" (62). He finally loses his ability to correctly imagine the human form, and as with the Novotny's sex kits in *The Atrocity Exhibition* (or David Lynch's fish kits, as we will see in the next chapter), he tries to reassemble the human body in a new fashion:

> Along the way I'd picked up some scraps of paper from the ground, the middle section of a pornographic magazine which someone had torn to shreds. I try to recreate how the pictures might have looked, where an arm goes, for instance, or where the tangled limbs go… One woman is a blonde, one man has bad fingernails, the rest is just snippets of genitalia. (26)

As the weather gets colder, Herzog writes that he has to keep walking to stop from freezing, and must "keep the machine running" (19), the word "machine" referring to his own body, which is the only way he can now conceive of his own physicality and identity. As Herzog slides towards the realm of the animal and/or mechanical, nonhuman devices take on human qualities for him. Upon spying a large radar on top of a mountain, Herzog writes that it looks "mysterious and forever taciturn, like a huge eavesdropping ear, yet also emitting shrieks that no one can hear" (12). Airplanes become "big flying reptiles soundlessly leaving their vapor trails above me" (38). The binary notion of organic and mechanical collapses as Herzog's notion of what constitutes his identity also

undergoes a seismic shift, like Ballard's protagonists—or Warhol and Solanas

themselves—leading the text inherently toward issues of the posthuman.

Herzog's prose also starts to transition, or erupt, into such poetic strangeness, that

it is frequently difficult to decipher what Herzog is writing about, in narrative terms. He

begins to drift into old memories and dreams, and describes a nightmarish, post-

Burroughsian vision of a scene purportedly from Vietnam:

> A column of wounded people is carried by on stretchers, but they are so fearfully
> disfigured that the population is forbidden to look at them. Nurses accompany
> them, holding up bags filled with intravenous fluids, and all of the wounded are
> joined to one another systematically forming a chain. The fluid flows from one
> body to the next one, and so on. One man in the middle of the procession dies…
> the fluid cannot pass from the dead person to the next wounded one, so the whole
> row after him is drying out. (24)

With such thoughts and images flooding his mind, Herzog moves through a "bleak and

frozen" (9) landscape that he describes in postapocalyptic terms: "A cornfield in winter,

unharvested, ashen, bristling, and yet there is no wind. It is a field called Death" (5). As

Herzog's odyssey continues, things become progressively bleaker: "There's fire from a tin

oil drum. A deserted bus stop… Part of a wall made of corrugated plastic is banging in

the wind. A sticker here notifies us that the power will be turned off tomorrow" (10).

Words like "forsaken" (14) and "dreary" (14) are repeated throughout the manuscript, and

even when morning comes, it "spreads itself over the fields like a pestilence, as only after

a Great Calamity" (18).

Herzog, just as he does in Les Blank's controversial documentary about the

filming of *Fitzcarraldo*, *Burden of Dreams*, eventually decrees: "I curse Creation" (25).

He begins to envisage the end of the world with a sort of rapturous tone that suggests he

would welcome an apocalypse to put him, and those he sees, out of their (human) misery.

As he walks, he imagines that "stellar catastrophes take place, entire worlds collapse into a single point…. The universe is filled with Nothing, it is the Yawning Black Void. Systems of Milky Ways have collapsed into Un-stars" (31). He begins to descend into a mental abyss, writing, "I had no more consciousness left" (66), and "we were close to what they call the breath of danger" (67). As Herzog later commented in an interview, "When you travel on foot with this intensity, it is not a matter of covering actual ground, rather it is a question of moving through your own inner landscapes" (*Herzog on Herzog* 282). And reviewers such as Michael Hofmann suggest that the purpose of the journey was at least in part "to be alone and perhaps to undergo some of the derangement experienced by the characters in his vagrant films" (18). Herzog's voyage on foot could, in these terms, therefore be seen as an attempt to enter into a "becoming-Kinski," for example, or a becoming "Bruno S."

With this journey, Herzog has essentially transformed himself a nomad, creating a line of flight—albeit one on foot—from Munich to Paris, across the smooth, relatively unstriated, planes of the countryside. He brings a compass with him, which he quickly loses, and he starts off without a map, getting lost numerous times. He writes, "I've probably made several wrong decisions in a row concerning my route… But I'm following a direct imaginary line" (31), echoing Deleuzian notions of voyaging, and making one's own map. With nowhere to sleep at night, Herzog breaks into other people's empty homes and seeks refuge there. He also sleeps in abandoned, decrepit buildings, including a fascinating non-house, with "no roof, no windows, no door" (50). During his days, he roams through a mountain of garbage, wrecked cars, and filth, in which the only living things are mice; Herzog writes "Friendship is possible with mice"

(36) suggesting that it is not, perhaps, with humans. Indeed, when he interacts with one of the few humans on his journey—a shop owner who refuses to sell him film for his camera—they end up "gesticulating with… ghastly gestures… to show what we thought of each other" (45), reduced to a pair of nonhuman grotesques straight out of the final sections of *Fata Morgana*.

 After much misery, Herzog's journey culminates in a bizarre encounter with Lotte Eisner in Paris, who is still alive, and has been notified that Herzog has made the journey on foot. Herzog writes:

> A thought passed through my head and, since the situation was strange anyway, I told it to her. Together, I said, we shall boil fire and stop fish. Then she looked at me and smiled very delicately, and since she knew that I was someone on foot and therefore unprotected, she understood me…. I said to her, "Open the window. From these last days onward I can fly." (68)

Not only has Herzog managed to keep Eisner alive, via his journey through a posthuman landscape, he has also reached a realm of physical transcendence of his own body and mind, a signifier of his ability—or at the least, his belief in his ability—to harness his new, potentially posthuman, attributes. Thus, in the manner that Warhol attempted to fashion himself into a cyborgian entity and create his posthuman Factory, Herzog has transformed himself into his own posthuman literary character—one to rival the fictional nomads of Ballard's novels. Herzog's body and mind are altered through the punishing regime of his journey; it could be said that his is an experiment at becoming a body without organs, by taking away crucial elements of human identity piece by piece for a transcendent purpose. In fact, the misery of his journey might be a result of the pain and discipline needed to become a "BwO." In this way, Herzog and his text provide an excellent segue into the second section of my dissertation, which will deal with similarly

explicit, and even more extreme, creation stories of posthuman bodies—most notably those found in the films of David Lynch and the Dogme 95 collective, and in the writings of Iain Banks and Angela Carter. Through an analysis of their works, I will determine what constitutes a posthuman body, and the ramifications of such bodies for literature and film.

PART TWO:

POSTHUMAN BODIES & COMMUNITIES

CHAPTER THREE:

Projecting the Future: David Lynch, Lars von Trier,
Harmony Korine and a Manifesto for Posthuman Cinema

In David Lynch's *Eraserhead*, the 1976 film that remains a cult classic, the

ambiguities presented by posthuman bodies are dissected to reveal both fascination and

anxiety. Much posthuman study that engages with film concentrates on what has become

a kind of canonical holy trinity: *Alien* (1979), *Blade Runner* (1982) and *The Terminator*

(1984)*.* Yet *Eraserhead* anticipates the concerns of these three films by several years,

while displaying the influences of Ballard, Warhol, and Herzog. In the years since

Eraserhead, Lynch has become one of the best known American cult film directors.

Although trained as a painter, he began making films in 1968, when he felt a desire to

create a "painting that moved" (Rodley 38). His first film was a mixed-media affair, a

one-minute animated loop projected on sculpture, titled *Six Men Getting Sick*. Lynch

followed it with two other shorts, *The Alphabet* in 1968, and *The Grandmother* in 1970,

for which he received a grant from the American Film Institute. It took Lynch five years

of intermittent work to complete *Eraserhead*, his feature film debut. [124] In the years

since, Lynch has directed nine films, as well as created the television show *Twin Peaks*,

and his work still inspires a great deal of commentary from both the public at large as

well as academic critics. Even a one-minute commercial he directed for Sony's

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[124] The success of *Eraserhead* as a "midnight movie" allowed Lynch the opportunity, via Mel Brooks'
production company, to direct *The Elephant Man* in 1980 as his second feature-length film, another work
dealing with posthuman bodies.

Playstation Two video game system in 2001 has been subjected to analysis by French theorists. While many of Lynch's films, including *The Elephant Man* and *Lost Highway*, explore posthuman bodies, *Eraserhead* negotiates the implications of the posthuman most successfully. *Eraserhead* functions outside the realm of traditional narrative cinema, as well as postmodern art cinema, and is constructed to deflect easy psychoanalytic and sociological readings. *Eraserhead*, with its central figure of a "monstrous" infant, presents a discourse on how the human body might be redefined for a posthuman era, and gain a new set of attributes as it grows.

As a way by which to move from posthuman landscapes to posthuman bodies in *Eraserhead*, it is first worth briefly considering another famed posthuman body existent within popular culture with connections to Lynch that challenges human assumptions and boundaries: Michael Jackson. Jackson's ever-mutating face provides a striking visual representation of a posthuman crisis, and serves as a bridge between human and posthuman bodies, as well as a transition from elements of the posthuman in "real life" (such as Herzog's journey in *Of Walking In Ice*, Solanas's assassination attempt, and Warhol's Factory world) to the fictional posthuman bodies in Lynch's work. Lynch has also crossed paths with Jackson on several occasions; it was Lynch's film *The Elephant Man* which inspired Jackson's fixation with John Merrick, the real life "elephant man," culminating in Jackson's failed attempt to purchase Merrick's skeleton from The British Museum. Lynch was also hired by Jackson to direct several promotional films for his 1991 *Dangerous* tour. The shape-shifting Jackson is a tragic but excellent example of someone attempting to extricate himself from binaries he presumably views as confining. Like Merrick in *The Elephant Man*, Jackson is also a perfect subject for Lynch's camera

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and for his obsession with, and creation of, posthuman archetypes. In the following brief

section I will address the complex emotions Michael Jackson's face engenders to explore

how we can approach and negotiate the issue of posthuman bodies, before turning to a

discussion of the "monstrous" *Eraserhead* baby.

Magic & Loss:
Michael Jackson's Face and Posthuman Anxiety[125]

Michael Jackson's face provides the locus for the convergence of the anxieties

that surround the posthuman. If the posthuman is to be embraced as a celebration of

boundary-breaking, then Jackson's face should inspire hope for a future in which such

limitations as race, gender and age are subverted. Yet Jackson's face is admittedly more

likely to provoke feelings of discomfort and dread. For years Jackson's behavior and

unusual physical features have been the subject of commentary in the national media.

Jackson is not the only celebrity to have undergone extensive plastic surgery, but few

have taken it to such proactive and provocative extremes. The auto-erasure of Jackson's

human qualities is unsettling, rather than inspiring, a sensation that stems from a number

of factors.[126] In the section below I isolate four interconnected ways in which Jackson's

face provokes anxiety, or perhaps unease mediated by fascination:

1. The erasure of human qualities by which we define ourselves: Michael

Jackson's face has ceased to be a mirror in which his audience can see themselves and

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[125] In 2002, Channel 5 in the UK aired a documentary titled *Michael Jackson's Face*, directed by Liam Humphreys, which consisted of interviews with Jackson family members and friends who attempt to discern the factors leading to his dramatic transformation, and make sense of his facial fluidity.

[126] Jocelyn Wildenstein, the wealthy New Yorker who had plastic surgery to deliberately make her face look like a cat's face, is an interesting female analogue to Michael Jackson, and also well worth analysis in terms of the uncanny body and posthuman forms.

therefore identity with him (or project their desires onto him), as they presumably did during his pre-surgery reign as a sex symbol. Instead, it has become mere spectacle. Viewer "enjoyment" of his face is voyeuristic, but lacking in the degree of identification it once engendered. Jackson has transformed himself so extensively he could potentially "pass" for a young white woman, rather than an African American man in his fifties. His high-pitched voice and his quasi-anorexic body also deny easy gender categorization, and subvert gender stereotypes and expectations. If his surgeries continue, Michael Jackson at sixty might potentially look and sound "younger"—by erasing signs of age and adding signifiers of youth—than he did at thirty. In 2002, the tabloid magazine *Weekly World News* printed a picture of Jackson as he looks now, next to a computer enhanced, artificially-aged projection of what Jackson would have looked like without the surgery—in terms of stereotypical gender facial-feature signifiers, the surgically modified Jackson appears to be the computer-enhanced, yet supposedly "natural," Jackson's daughter.

      2. The threat of cultural domination via new posthuman attributes: Jackson has been naked in his ambition to be the world's most famous star, the self-proclaimed "King of Pop," by which I believe he has always meant pop culture itself, not just pop music. Jackson's global reach suggests a threat of domination and proliferation. His declining record sales and waning cultural influence, a direct result of both child-abuse allegations and lack of musical direction, have only increased his frenzy to maintain and increase his presence in the global marketplace. Even a disappointment for Jackson is on a much different scale from other recording artists; his last album of new material *Invincible* (2001) "only" sold two million copies in the U.S., but was a disappointment

because it cost over thirty million dollars to make. Jackson as a mega-celebrity is a self-created cyborg, an autocommodification, a walking dollar sign. He is also a perfectionist out of control, who according to one of Jackson's video directors, Stan Winston, speaking on VH-1, "won't stop working on something till it's perfect…. He wants to do what no one has done before." To many Americans, these words might sound like a promise, a prophecy, and a threat, all in one.

3. The uncanny: Yet Jackson has not succeeded in altering himself so completely that he is unrecognizable. Jackson's face is both alien[127] and disturbingly familiar. Should they be so inclined, viewers can still trace the remnants of his human form, before the brow, nose, cheek, chin, eye, and scalp surgeries, among others. This provokes both dread and fascination, the hallmark of "the unheimlich," in Freudian terms. The public have been made voyeurs to Jackson's transformation over the past three decades; his inexorable mutation is well-documented. Progressive images reveal that he is shedding more human facial features with every surgery. He is even rumored to possess a prosthetic nose, a supposition supported by photographs taken in 2005 and 2007 which show that the tip of his nose seems to be missing, replaced with a flat band-aid. Where will such a cyborgian process of self-modification end, if it ever ends at all?[128] It is this question that can inspire both fascination and repulsion; Jackson has entered the realm which scientists commonly term the "uncanny valley," in which a being

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[127] In a bit of fortuitous casting, Michael Jackson has a cameo role as a space alien in Barry Sonnenfeld's film *Men In Black II* (2002).

[128] Unlike such self-aware body modification performance artists such as the carnivalesque "Lizard Man," also known as Erik Sprague, who is transforming himself into a giant human-lizard through plastic surgery, implantation, and tattooing, Jackson encourages us to overlook his dramatic facial appearance by insisting he has only undergone a few surgeries and does not look abnormal.

is so close to looking human—without looking *exactly* human—that it actually causes unease on a biological level.[129]

    4. Guilt: Michael Jackson's face interrogates our society, and asks whether we are instructed to share the blame, or take the credit, for his transformation and our reactions to it. Most Jackson biographies, such as J. Randy Taraborrelli's aptly titled *Michael Jackson: The Magic and the Madness,* will explain that Jackson feels "robbed" of a childhood, and that the trauma of stardom, resulting from demands the public placed on him, caused permanent psychic harm. The guilt we are invited to feel about Jackson's plight, based on our enjoyment of the music and performances that supplanted his childhood, can be extrapolated to encompass our society as a whole. He is the sacred monster of American pop culture, and at some future point, might our celebrity-and-technology obsessed culture produce a whole generation of young men and women who are eager to remake themselves as Michael Jackson has done, if in different ways, or to different degrees?

    Jackson is admittedly ahead of the curve in his decision to modify himself in such a dramatic way. According to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, cosmetic surgery for both men and women has increased more than 400% since 1992, and not all of these procedures are normative ones. While Jackson denies extensive work, admitting only to three nose jobs, his own comments reveal his attitude towards identity and culture. "Today's cutting edge is tomorrow's classic," Jackson proclaims in a 2001 music documentary airing on VH-1, blissfully ignorant of the irony inherent in his use of the

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[129] The term "uncanny valley" was first introduced by the roboticist Masahiro Mori in 1970 in an article titled "The Uncanny Valley."

word "cutting."[130] By examining Lynch's *Eraserhead,* I will demonstrate how the

pervasive anxieties that circulate around Jackson's face function when applied to the

posthuman figure of the baby upon which the film is centered. Both Jackson and the

Eraserhead baby can be viewed as literal and metaphoric cyborgs, representing a

particular stratum of posthuman identity. In the following section, issues of identity, pop

culture, and cinematic representation will be explored to suggest both a new reading of

Eraserhead in terms of posthuman theory and a clarification of what it means to possess

a "posthuman" body.

Henry's Dream:[131]
Redefining Humanity in David Lynch's *Eraserhead*

Eraserhead was not initially successful upon its release; according to lore, only

twenty-five people showed up on the night of the film's premiere. However, the film ran

as a midnight attraction for over a year in New York City, and by 1982 there were over

thirty prints in circulation. *Eraserhead* is now regarded as an influential underground

classic—a peculiar and unique cinematic vision of posthuman bodies stranded in a

liminal zone—and it has been hailed as "one of the major technical achievements of its

decade… a one-man, shoestring, nightmare version of *Citizen Kane*" (French 102). *USA*

Today Magazine noted in 1997, albeit twenty years after the film was released, that

Lynch is a "true visionary" and *Eraserhead* a "meditation of post-industrial civilization"

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[130] In the same documentary, Jackson also asserts perversely he has always believed that "if the whole world says no, you must say yes!'"

[131] I take the title for this section from Australian musician, actor and writer Nick Cave. The lyrics to his 1992 song "Henry's Dream" are a litany of promises from a father to a son that he will not abandon him. Yet the father's choice of words and tone reveals to the listener that he is, in fact, heading out the door never to return, a relationship that resonates with, and is apparently a reference to, Henry's treatment of the baby in *Eraserhead.*

ignored by a Hollywood "too busy swooning over George Lucas and Steven Spielberg" (Sharrett 73). In fact, in his Oct. 24, 1977 review of the film in the *Village Voice*, J. Hoberman wrote, "I would consider it a revolutionary act if someone dropped a reel of *Eraserhead* into the middle of *Star Wars*" (84). However, many mainstream critics at the time were far less kind and refused to engage with the film's radical potential. *Variety* published a negative review which reduced Lynch's inventiveness to merely "a sickening bad-taste exercise… [that] consists mostly of a man sitting in a room figuring out what to do with his horribly mutated child…. Lynch seems bent on emulating Herschell Gordon Lewis, the king of low-budget gore" (Chion 39). Of course with his carefully constructed painterly images and attention to detail, Lynch could not be further from Lewis' gory exploitation B-pictures. Fortunately Lynch's fellow filmmakers were more aware than many critics and concluded that Lynch was an original talent. Stanley Kubrick proclaimed *Eraserhead* the best film of the year, and according to a rumor perpetuated by Lynch, the only film other than his own that "he would have liked to have made" (Chion 41). In addition, *Eraserhead* was championed by both the subversive *Pink Flamingoes* director John Waters, who called it his favorite film, and the maverick Hollywood producer Mel Brooks who gave Lynch his first studio job directing *The Elephant Man*.

Eraserhead is not a movie that depends on narrative drive, as it is marked by lengthy periods of stasis and inaction. The plot, so to speak, concerns Henry Spencer, who inhabits a one-room apartment with a bricked-up window in a desolate industrial landscape. He is accused by the mother of his girlfriend, Mary X, of having fathered a baby with Mary. The "baby" turns out to be a monstrous creature that Henry is obligated to take care of when Mary abandons him; with its demanding cries, the baby prevents

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Henry from leaving his apartment and making sexual advances to his neighbor. Henry eventually stabs the baby which releases a torrent of blood and foam before expanding menacingly. Henry is then transported in a flash of light into the arms of the Lady in the Radiator, a fantasy woman/projection who has been performing for him on a miniature stage inside his radiator over the course of the film.

Eraserhead denies viewers the assumption that the characters in the film are human, although superficially all of them except Henry's baby resemble human beings. Even the food they eat is modified in unusual ways; in one scene the characters eat miniature "man-made chickens" that still move and bleed after being cooked. The sound design consists of a melange of industrial noises which never cease and fill Henry's head, "literally turning him into a kind of mechanical zombie" (Bromwell 57). Henry himself is presented as an automaton: his face is pale, and his hair stands permanently on end, as though he has received a sudden jolt of electricity. His shambling movements and hunched appearance suggest a post-industrial Frankenstein monster or, when coupled with the shabby suit he wears, a narcotized Charlie Chaplin. One of the first images the viewer sees is of Henry stranded in a vast industrial space, made miniscule in comparison to a towering building. A brief prologue to the main action of the film also shows us a man inside a head-shaped planet pulling levers, as though controlling Henry's actions or thoughts, and throughout the film there is a suggestion the characters are all meant to be inanimate puppets. Mary X's grandmother, for example, sits immobile in a chair, possibly a preserved corpse; the cuckoo clock on the wall behind her is markedly more animate than she is.[132]

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[132] In "The Essential Evil in/of *Eraserhead*," Steven Jay Schneider notes that "surrealistic set-pieces" (9), such as this one, join "apparently unmotivated behavior and hyperbolic gross-out shots" (9) in creating the

There are suggestions that the other characters understand that they are inhabiting a posthuman netherworld. Mary X's father proclaims "I've seen this neighborhood change from pastures to the hell it is now," before his voice is comically drowned out by industrial noise and the clatter of a passing train. His words don't matter in the landscape of the film, as they, and he, have been superceded by industrial-technological "progress." Significantly, he reveals that his arm is permanently numb following an operation, and while it still moves, he has lost the ability to feel anything. This loss of feeling is essential to all the primary characters in the film. While they remain mobile, they have become automatons, lacking both emotions and a sense of agency. The disconnect between Henry and Mary, for example, is represented by their lack of physical intimacy and the stilted, theatre of the absurd, quality of their conversations. In one scene, when Henry tells Mary, " You never come around any more," her response is to mutter incongruously "Dinner's almost ready." Conversation frequently breaks down into nonsequiturs, or collapses into silence, or sometimes comes to an end when a character suffers an inexplicable seizure.

Yet no character problematizes viewer assumptions about the humanity of these characters as much as Henry's baby does. The other characters at least present signifiers to identify themselves as human, but the baby is very different. With an oddly shaped head, thin neck, and swaddled lump of a body, the baby does not resemble a human infant at all.[133] Its eyes are located on the sides of its head, like a lizard, and its nostrils

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structure of the film. Yet Schneider is primarily concerned with isolating and explaining how Lynch creates his uncanny effects, rather than examining the ramifications of Lynch's posthuman bodies and landscapes, and ends up essentially dismissing the film in the manner of the negative *Variety* review.

[133] Lynch has never revealed how he created Henry's baby. He has repeatedly asserted that it was something he found rather than made. There is a great deal of current speculation on the internet as of 2007

are two holes in its face above a slit mouth. The baby simultaneously resembles an

animal fetus and something profoundly alien. It also emits a series of noises that sounds

suspiciously like the cries and whimpers of a human infant, although, according to

Lynch, while the sounds are organic they are not those of a human baby. Like Michael

Jackson's face, Henry's offspring transcends all questions of race, gender and age, for

viewers are told that the baby was born prematurely, and the doctors aren't sure if it is a

baby at all. The bandages wrapped around its body suggest an inherent mystery, one that

literally explodes at the end of the film.[134]

Prior to discussing this explosion, an exploration of *Eraserhead's* origins might

aid in an analysis of Lynch in terms of the posthuman. The film has its genesis in both

Lynch's short film *The Grandmother,* and an undeveloped Lynch script from the early

1970's titled *Gardenback*. *The Grandmother*, a story about "a boy who responds to his

parents' hostility by growing a loving grandmother in the attic" (Stevens par. 3), functions

as a precursor to *Eraserhead* by introducing several posthuman characters. The title

character of *The Grandmother* bursts from a plant-like pod that the little boy has been

secretly tending. Like the baby in *Eraserhead*, she is clearly not human, and when she

dies the boy himself turns into a plant, suggesting that these are not characters bound by

conventional human restrictions. *Gardenback* also seems to serve as a pivotal influence

with regards to the baby in *Eraserhead*. Lynch explains, "When you look at a girl,

something crosses from her to you. And in this story [*Gardenback*], that something is an

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that the baby is a calf fetus attached to a battery, although this has not been confirmed. Lynch and the crew
referred to the baby as "Spike."

[134] Michael Jackson's frequent deployment of fake casts and bandages on his arms, and a surgical mask
across his face, is similar in that it presents a manufactured mystery designed to stimulate viewer
fascination. As with the baby in *Eraserhead*, these bandages suggest a secret that is forbidden and
potentially "Dangerous": like the title of Jackson's album.

insect" (Rodley 58). The "monster" in *Gardenback* is conceptually similar to the baby in

Eraserhead, in that both grow without any indication of human contact, and both

represent a thought, or abstraction, transmuted (temporarily) into matter. In the surreal

opening sequence of *Eraserhead*, we see a sperm-like creature emerge from Henry's

mouth, suggesting that he is the sole creator. If we accept this scene as a representative

of the genesis of the baby, it becomes clear the baby is created by Henry's thought-power

rather than merely his semen, in the manner that Herzog imagines his thought-power

creating and influencing the world in *Of Walking in Ice*.

       In his book *David Lynch*, Michel Chion notes that *Eraserhead* deals with "organic

and cosmic matters according to an 'electro-magical' type of logic… Everything occurs

by abstract transmission. Bodies are not in themselves whole entities made from

perishable matter… but rather wires, transducers, conductors of an inexplicable, abstract

energy" (22). Electricity becomes a mysterious force linked kinesthetically to the

emotions of the characters. For example, a light flares and then dims seconds before

Mary X's mother reveals to Henry that he is a father. Near the end of the film, when

Henry stabs his baby, sparks fly from the electrical sockets in the room and lamps flash

like strobe-lights. In Lynch's original conception of *Eraserhead* it seems likely he

intended the connection between organic matter and electricity to be even more

prominent. When interviewed in 1997, Lynch described a sequence that was filmed but

ultimately deleted from the final print:

> Henry sees into a room [next door] and there's two women tied to a bed, and a
> man with an electrical box. It was a beautiful thing. It had two terminals coming
> off the top and these big cables, and the man is just sort of testing them, and big
> sparks are leaping off these things, and he's moving towards the women…. The
> reason I took that out was it was too disturbing to the film. I didn't want anyone
> even to think about what was next door…" (Rodley 84)

Perhaps this scene also would have made too explicit what is only hinted at in the final version of the film, that the characters are connected to, and possibly vivified by, electric current. An image from this deleted scene printed in Chris Rodley's *Lynch on Lynch* shows that the ends of the cables resemble dual phalluses, suggesting both an actual and metaphoric link between electricity and the sexual impulse. As the "baby" is seemingly not created by sexual intercourse, electricity is offered as an alternate means of genesis.[135] This would confirm the notion expressed by Michel Chion when writing about *The Grandmother*, that Lynch's filmic world functions according to the kind of logic that might be "used by a twentieth-century child who has been summarily taught about electrical energy and has then deduced from those vague notions the way the world works" (22).

The merger between the mechanical-electric and the organic has seemingly fascinated Lynch from the start of his career. In an interview with the critic Kristine McKenna printed in *The Air Is On Fire*, a book accompanying the first comprehensive exhibit of Lynch's art—ranging from childhood drawings to stills from his three hour 2006 digital-video piece *INLAND EMPIRE*—Lynch says that in the 1960s, he was painting "mechanical women, women that were part machine and part flesh" (21). When asked why this was an appealing subject he replies, "it's just the machine-like thing and the way the shapes are" (*The Air* 21), words that suggest he views the human body as just another element of an abstracted, mechanized landscape, in the mode of Warhol's silkscreened faces. McKenna mentions that Lynch's drawings of women "look like

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[135] Using the name "Mary" for the baby's mother is, of course, suggestive of the Virgin Mary, and another mythic pregnancy that did not occur in typical fashion. The baby Spike could be taken as a "miraculous" birth for a new posthuman culture, or perhaps even for a posthuman religion or mythology, not that Lynch seems to believe posthumans would need such crutches.

they're cobbled together out of prosthetics and spare parts," to which Lynch adds,

"Exactly. And flesh…. Something about machine and mankind together… it's very

beautiful" (*The Air* 22). As demonstrated by *Eraserhead*, Lynch is drawn to the beauty

of "the ruins of the Industrial Revolution," stating that "the way nature goes to work on

the steel, the bricks, the concrete. It's just unbelievably beautiful… it's like music" (*The*

Air 34). Lynch claims that for him all things become more beautiful as they decay, and

that it's merely the naming of the things that causes "problems" (35), perhaps explaining

why he never discusses how he created, or found, the *Eraserhead* baby: "If you just saw a

close-up of something, you'd say, 'Oh, My God, that's so beautiful! What is that?' and

you say, 'That's a decaying body of a 97-year old woman,' and then you'd have another

thought. But alone it could be… unnamed, it could be very beautiful" (*The Air* 35).

Lynch, who is often reluctant to discuss direct influences on his cinema beyond obvious

ones such as Francis Bacon and Fellini, divulges when pressed in *The Air Is On Fire* that

he admires the work of the photographer Joel-Peter Witkin, in which body parts are

frequently reassembled to create new parameters for the posthuman form, in a manner

similar to new assemblages of flesh in *The Crystal World* and *The Atrocity Exhibition*.

Some of Lynch's most recent photographs, which are digitally manipulated to distort the

human body in superficially grotesque ways, seem heavily influence by Witkin. Lynch

took a book called *1000 Nudes*, of anonymous nude photographs from earlier in the

twentieth century, scanned them into his computer and distorted them; unexpectedly,

several have the uncanny look of the *Eraserhead* baby. Lynch states that the art derived

from these Witkin-inspired pieces is "like shapes…. They've got a thing happening so

the distortions, they come from another time, another kind of place… a whole other

world" (*The Air* 37). This "other world" is achieved through the hybridity of juxtaposing these old images with the abilities and techniques of new computer technology. The resultant images become the locus for the technological disruption of both the body and past photographic representations of the body.

To return to *Eraserhead*, The baby's explosive growth at the end of the film, in which it expands to fill an entire room, and the frame, is connected to the sparks that fly from the wires and sockets in the walls. In the final scenes of the film the baby begins to resemble a thin electrical wire, with its head as a plug.[136] For Martha Nochimson in *The Passion of David Lynch*, the explosive electrical release that occurs when the baby expands is coupled symbolically with the explosion of formless matter from the baby itself, as though the two function together on a metaphorical level, as in the unproduced *Gardenback* script. Yet it seems there is a more direct comparison to be made: *Eraserhead* presents a world in which the animate and the inanimate have become permanently fused, a metaphoric filmic zone of Ballardian petrification. Lynch's baby is the offspring of Henry's thoughts, or dreams, and the same electrical currents that run through the walls and power the constant suffocating industrial drones. If the "man-made chickens" are gruesome simulacra of real chickens, then the baby might represent a similar kind of mimesis, and suggest some vital organic element lost through misuse of, or loss of control over, technological processes. However, I would argue that the baby is an inherently more positive symbol of organic-inanimate symbiosis: a metaphoric cinematic cyborg.

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[136] The baby also resembles a phallus, yet interpreting the film in either Freudian or Lacanian terms would necessitate seeing the baby in terms of lack, as possibly a "female phallus," something that is not supported elsewhere in the film. More can be gained from *Eraserhead* in terms of the posthuman by analyzing it from a technological perspective than merely interpreting it as a recapitulation of Freudian and/or Lacanian theory, as many critics have done.

If the baby is positioned as a proto-Harawayesque cyborg, created from organic matter and industrial-strength electrical currents, a new means of interpreting the film becomes apparent. If the baby is taken as a human baby, then it obviously fails. The characters Henry and Mary in the film attempt to relate to the baby in human terms, displaying cliché horror at its lack of human features, as did many reviewers of *Eraserhead*. But if the baby is accepted as something else, a posthuman cyborg, then some of the anxiety it produces can be addressed and explored. The baby's cries, which are so persistent they infuriate Henry, could actually be interpreted as its desire to connect, or interface, with its parents, both human and non. Until the final minutes of the film, the baby never actually acts in any way differently from a human baby: it simply cries, sleeps, and gets sick. The reaction that the baby receives is predetermined by how the baby is perceived. To locate it as a cyborg suggests an interpretation of the film as advocating tolerance and acceptance of the posthuman. The explosion of matter from the baby at the end, an occurrence that the film obliquely suggests kills Henry, suggests the perils of refusing to engage with the posthuman on its own terms. Metaphorically, the baby's explosion also suggests that Lynch is indicating the importance of both defining, and learning how to relate to, the posthuman before it gets out of our control. The baby is treated like an experiment, or a lab animal, by Henry, who is both terrified of it and fascinated by the mystery it holds within, much like the public reaction to Michael Jackson's face. Donna Haraway argues in her treatise on posthuman technoscience, *Modest Witness@Second_Millennium. FemaleMan©_Meets_OncoMouse™,* that the lab animal is by definition "a scapegoat and a surrogate" and the object of "surveillance," adding that, its "passion transpires in a box" (47). If the *Eraserhead* baby is a lab animal,

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a cinematic test case to determine the survival and treatment of the offspring of man and machine in a film that is not explicitly or simplistically coded as science fiction or horror, then certainly the film criticizes human revulsion at the posthuman, and also the inevitable explosive power of the cyborg.

Another means of approaching the cyborgian nature of Lynch's posthuman infant is provided by ultrasound technology, a realm which invites a convergence of anxiety and excitement over parenthood, and technological innovation. I believe that Lynch has positioned Henry's baby to resemble a fetus far more than an actual human infant. Its gray, fetus-like appearance invites viewers to grapple for identifiable elements of the human form, and is not dissimilar to the image produced by a sonogram. The baby's bandaged body also hints at both mystery and potential, as well as suggesting that it is still unformed, not yet ready to be born into the world. Haraway has pointed out that the "televised sonogram is like a biological monster movie, which one still has to learn to view even in the late twentieth century" (177). The *Eraserhead* baby can be thought of in these terms, as a three-dimensional actualization of a sonogram. In "Baby's First Picture," Lisa Mitchell and Eugenia Georges discuss ultrasound as a process that generates images of a "cyborg fetus" (106). The *Eraserhead* baby's bandages echo the mystery inherent in the ultrasound process: a viewer knows that some quasi-human presence is there, but it is hard to locate and define the precise details. The screen on which *Eraserhead* is projected functions as a surrogate for the monitor on which the image of the cyborg baby is viewed. While the characters in the film see it as an unformed—or grotesquely malformed—human baby, it is better interpreted as an unformed cyborg that only reaches full potential at the end of the film, when it releases

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its torrent of stored electrical energy and expands to literally larger-than-life proportions, as it "grows up."

To some critics, *Eraserhead* presents "two sources of horror… the diseased organic world of the body itself and the cruel machines that surround it" (French 22). Yet the film is remarkably resilient in the face of any monolithic critical interpretation or unified system of analysis. For Martha Nochimson, the baby is only a "baby" because it has acquired that social label, and she argues that as discussed, "despite the imprimatur of language that it carries, it bears only a superficial resemblance to a baby" (151). Nochimson also suggests that although the baby "cries, coos, eats, gets sick" (151), these are only superficial signifiers. The baby itself is "formless… the essence of illusionist reality" and merely "a labeled mass of matter" (Nochimson 151). While it might act like a human baby, it is "not cute and rosy but skinless, boneless, and wormlike" (157), all valid statements, but ones which ignore the fact that sperm, eggs, and fetuses—all of which must be present to lead to the birth of a human baby—are also not "cute" in societal terms. They are merely hidden from view, as the baby's bandages hide whatever mechanisms lurk beneath them. As an ultrasound could be said to prematurely expose the pre-baby, Lynch's celluloid exposes the proto-cyborg. Nochimson interprets the film as social commentary, and the baby as a new life spawned merely by "social will" (151) and "forced meaning" (156). For her, the creature's monstrous form holds within it a critique of the societal pressures and forces that have created it, and the use of the term "baby" by the characters to describe it exemplifies what Lynch "perceives as the sickening sentimentality of our commitment to unreal illusionist realism" (120).

While there are glimmers of satiric intent in the film, Nochimson's interpretation would reduce the film to a single layer of social satire, one of the few interpretations Lynch has adamantly refuted. When asked in a 1991 interview if *Eraserhead* was intended as a parody, Lynch adamantly replied, "No. No way. What could it be a parody of?.... I didn't really know what a parody was when I made *Eraserhead* so it couldn't have been that" (Hickenlooper 95).[137] Lynch evidently intends his manufactured world to be taken quite seriously, despite elements that could easily seem satiric or parodic. In a quote which apparently became infamous among the cast members of *Eraserhead*, Lynch apparently wandered onto the set one day and proclaimed it looked exactly like the images he had seen in his head. Lynch also rejects specific psychological readings of his work, stating that psychology works to "destroy the mystery, this kind of magical quality. It [art] can be reduced down to certain neuroses or certain things, and since it's now named and defined, it's lost its mystery and the potential for a vast, infinite experience" (Breskin 89). Much has been made by reviewers and critics of the fact that directly prior to the filming of *Eraserhead* Lynch's wife had given birth to a daughter with a club foot, and that somehow *Eraserhead* is a recontextualization of these events: a psychodrama in which the anxieties of fatherhood and deformity are played out. Yet such a reading would be so reductive as to potentially reduce the power of the film's images and themes down to a take on the horrors of parenthood, and suggest that the baby in the film is merely a stand-in for Lynch's own child.

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[137] Of course Lynch knows what parody is, and *Eraserhead* is clearly influenced in its tone and style by arch noirs like *Sunset Boulevard* and *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane* (and John Waters, a master of parodic forms was an early champion of *Eraserhead*); yet Lynch's outrage at his film being primarily considered a parody seems convincing, and his forced naïveté further suggests a desire to protect his work from any monolithic interpretation as parody.

While it also remains tempting for some critics to dismiss the film as a polemic against the increasing industrialization of society and dehumanization, an anti-posthuman work in effect, this analysis is unconvincing because Lynch's aesthetically beautiful, classically composed mesmeric black and white images fetishize the very machinery that keeps his characters in bondage. The decaying factories and desolate spaces possess a beauty that the characters do not, and many of the film's nightmarish images are arranged to suggest the composition of a Francis Bacon painting. It is also significant that Lynch positions Henry's avenue of escape as the radiator, which hisses steam, and is therefore indicative and symbolic of the industrial world rather than the human. The Lady in the Radiator is deformed, with massive tumors on both cheeks, but Henry finds happiness with her at the end of the film, as though by embracing industry, he has successfully escaped his old human life and identity.[138] There is no longing for the pastoral, or the organic, or for a return to humanity in the film. Lynch relishes and exploits the potential of the industrial wasteland's "variety of textures and organic filth" (Chion 41) to find an unusual kind of beauty and hope for us and his characters. Henry's fate at traveling into a liminal nonhuman zone at the end of Eraserhead, and finding fulfillment there, mirrors Ballard's disaster series protagonists.

Eraserhead's soundtrack is also worthy of analysis, as it works in particularly close conjunction with the image, and is one of the predominant elements of the film,

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[138] And Henry literally does "embrace" the Lady in the Radiator in the film's final haunting image. Lynch's sole explanation of the Lady in the Radiator's distorted face is that she "had bad acne as a child" (Rodley 66), a response typical of his humor but also of his desire to deflect analysis. When I had a chance to speak with Lynch briefly following a Q&A session in Los Angeles in January 2007, Lynch declined to answer any specific questions about *Eraserhead*, but divulged that he was not interested in seeing or discussing any films, only in trying to come up "with his next big idea." He also explained that many of the images in *Eraserhead* had their genesis not only in his dreams, but in his exploration of Transcendental Meditation, which he began in the mid 1970s as a way to deal with anger and anxiety.

frequently taking the place of dialogue.[139] Several particular kinds of music punctuate

the soundtrack, the first of which is the seemingly incongruous use of Fats Waller organ

instrumentals. The deployment of this style of music suggests a play with nostalgia

typical of Lynch's later films, as well as *Twin Peaks*, but also a deconstruction of

temporal boundaries. Lynch's science fiction epic *Dune*, for example, employs characters

and sets more specifically reminiscent of medieval monasteries and 17th-century England

than of any imaginary point in the distant future. The same kind of temporal blurring

occurs frequently in *Eraserhead*; in a scene near the beginning of the film, Henry puts an

album on his record-player and lifts the stylus repeatedly, playing only brief snatches of

old songs, as if searching for the section he wants to hear. This has been interpreted as

the director's alter ego, i.e. Henry, performing "live sound editing" and creating "islands

of sound time" (Chion 45). Yet this degree of agency is illusory, as Henry only has

control over the past. He can manipulate his scratchy phonograph records, but has no

agency within the time period that the film traps him in, except in his fantasies and

dreams. Henry himself is as much at the mercy of the forces of industry as the record is

under his command, or as we are to Lynch's film. At one point when Henry enters an

elevator, he is forced to wait an excruciatingly long time for the doors to close, a comical

scene, but one which also foregrounds the manner in which humans have lost control of

their technology. The manner in which the camera lingers on the elevator doors after

they close also suggests that Lynch is slyly reminding his viewers they too are at the

mercy of the technology constructing the film, and the voyeuristic gaze of his camera

producing the image.

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[139] Music and sound effects function the same way—as a replacement for dialogue—in films by Warhol,
Herzog, and the Danish Dogme 95 collective, perhaps suggesting a trend in posthuman cinema.

Henry's profession, and the title of the film, are also both important in analyzing his relationship to meaning in the film. The title *Eraserhead* refers not only to a surrealist scene in which Henry dreams of his severed head being turned into pencil erasers, but also functions on a metaphoric level. Michel Chion writes that "the erasure referred to in the title… [refers also to] Henry's attempt to destroy the baby he brought into being, as an omnipotent creator can efface the work of his creation" (46). Lynch has stated that the key image from which the entire film came was of a core sample of eraser being taken from a man's brain—an image which never directly appears in the film. It is significant that Henry works as printer, one who sets and reproduces texts, and therefore disseminates meaning. The fact that he is "on vacation" from this line of work is presumably an explanation for the lack of narrative coherence present in the film, as many of the scenes are filtered through his perceptions and anxieties. Another scene in Henry's dream, in which the baby bursts from his neck and displaces his own head, could be suggestive of his anxiety about fatherhood and fear of being replaced by his offspring. But his reaction to this dream might be termed posthuman in that he not only kills his own partly organic child, but seeks eventual solace in the idealized industrial fantasy world of the radiator, the purely mechanical realm. This disavowal of the human in favor of fantasy and industry is yet another means by which Lynch complicates easy notions of humanity in the postindustrial age.

As a final note on *Eraserhead's* radical potential as a film dealing with a posthuman body, it is also worth pointing out that the film recontextualizes film noir, a genre which even in its original form seems to have some pre-posthuman, or super-human, impulses, such as the hypermasculinity of its male protagonists and stereotyped

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figure of the "femme fatale." Despite Lynch's claim that *Eraserhead* cannot, or should

not, be viewed as parody, Lynch certainly employs and satirizes many of the devices of

noir in the film. The "femme fatale" appears in *Eraserhead* as Henry's alluring female

neighbor, except that Henry is not equipped to be a hypermasculine noir hero, and is

swallowed up in a giant liquid pool that consumes the bed when he attempts to sleep with

her—as though sinking into her vaginal fluid. Even the mise-en-scene of *Eraserhead* is

an exaggeration of that found in classic noir; in Lynch's film it is always night, and there

is no respite from the darkness and shadows. As its title suggests, the film erases not

only traditional humanist notions about both plot and character, but also about film genre,

so that *Eraserhead* functions as a palimpsest, or like the literal "eraser-head" of a tape

deck, that erases what is already written to replace it with something new—in this case,

suggesting that posthuman cinema might require new genre categorizations. Lynch will

return to his reconfiguration of noir, and neo-noir archetypes, with *Blue Velvet, Lost*

Highway, *Mulholland Drive,* and *INLAND EMPIRE,* with generally intriguing results; yet

Eraserhead remains his darkest and most compelling film to date, mainly because of the

posthuman body of its monstrous infant.

Posthuman Filmmaking II:
Digital Cinemas and A Manifesto for Posthuman Films

While *Eraserhead* presents evocative images of a posthuman body, could it be

considered a posthuman film itself? What might a current posthuman film look like, and

how would it be constructed? This question seems particularly valid as film is currently

an unstable medium, with substantial changes occurring within the industry at the dawn

of the 21st century. In chapter two, I discussed elements of early posthuman cinema with regards to Warhol's films. But celluloid itself is going the way of the vinyl record, to be replaced by a more technologically advanced, and convenient, medium. In 2007, successful films released by major studios and independents alike were shot entirely on high definition digital video. The radical potential of digital video is enormous as it can enable the production of films for a fraction of the traditional budget. Lynch himself has declared that celluloid is dead, and has turned, with *INLAND EMPIRE*, to directing on mini-DV, mostly for financial reasons. The size of the digital video cameras also allows for a greater degree of flexibility and a new language of camera movement. Because of these features, digital video has made the filmmaking process possible for groups of people who would never have had the money, or access to affordable equipment, to make a film just a decade ago. Relatively inexpensive digital video cameras have served to break down barriers: the 2002 film *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* was shot in the Arctic on video by Inuit filmmakers, in a place where traditional film cameras could not function, due to the intense cold. In this way, the technology of digital cinema can be used to access previously unavailable areas, and explore issues of cultural difference and postcoloniality.

The primary film movement to engage with digital video, and legitimize it, has been the Dogme 95 movement in Denmark. The Dogme movement, which was founded in the spring of 1995 in Copenhagen by Danish director Lars von Trier and German director Thomas Vinterberg, associated with the directors Kristian Levring and Soren Kragh Jacobsen and their producer Peter Aalbaek Jensen, presents an antithesis of both the subject matter and methodology of mainstream narrative European and American

films. Their "Dogme 95 Manifesto" includes such politically oriented slogans as "Dogme 95 cinema is not individual!" and "To Dogme 95, the movie is not illusion!" (Kelly 226-7). For reasons of expense, most of the Dogme films have been shot on digital video and then transferred to 35mm film for projection. Ironically, the Dogme movement claims to be committed to using these technological advances as a way to return to the human. Yet this claim represents a nostalgia for a past that the movement itself is working to destroy via increasing emphasis on technological progress. Just as the 1990s produced a wave of nostalgic films, television shows and books about the 1970s, I believe the posthuman era allows for the manufacture of nostalgia for the human.

This mix of nostalgia and technological advance hinges upon the set of rigid Dogme 95 rules, termed "The Vow of Chastity." It asks the director "to refrain from personal taste" and admit that "I am no longer an artist." The Vow of Chastity, as composed by von Trier and reprinted below from *The Name of This Book is Dogme 95*, includes a list of ten aspects that comprise a Dogme film:

> **1.** Shooting must be done on location. Props and sets must not be brought in (if a particular prop is necessary for the story, a location must be chosen where this prop is to be found).
> **2.** The sound must never be produced apart from the images, or vice versa. (Music must not be used unless it occurs where the scene is being shot.)
> **3.** The camera must be hand-held. Any movement or immobility attainable in the hand is permitted. (The film must not take place where the camera is standing; shooting must take place where the film takes place).
> **4.** The film must be in color. Special lighting is not acceptable. (If there is too little light for exposure the scene must be cut or a single lamp be attached to the camera.)
> **5.** Optical work and filters are forbidden.
> **6.** The film must not contain superficial action. (Murders, weapons, etc. must not occur.)
> **7.** Temporal and geographical alienation are forbidden. (That is to say that the film takes place here and now.)
> **8.** Genre movies are not acceptable.

9. The film format must be Academy 35 mm.[140]
10. The director must not be credited. (227)

Dogme was intended to function as a means of cinematic and cultural liberation and revolution: the manifesto is a critique of auteur theory, the guiding principle of film criticism since the French New Wave of the 1950s and 1960s, and currently used by Hollywood to make marketable "stars" out of its better-known directors. Von Trier writes that "the auteur concept was bourgeois romanticism from the very start and thereby false!" (qtd. in Kelly 226), pointing out the inherent fallacy in assigning authorship of a film—a massively collaborative effort involving writers, a director, producers, actors, and a crew—to one person. It is not coincidental that Lars von Trier, as well as his business partner Peter Aalbaek Jensen, were members of the Communist party in the 1970's; in fact, at one point, Trier and Jensen claimed to have organized their Dogme production company, Zentropa, into a system of communistic cells. Both men clearly view Dogme 95 as a revolutionary act in keeping with their Leftist views. By their refusal to credit the director, and their emphasis on community filmmaking and "truth," the Dogme collective presents itself as a radical, and even militant, group within the international filmmaking community. Von Trier writes that this is because, "the phrase 'avant-garde' has military connections… we must put our films into uniform, because the individual film will be decadent by definition" (qtd. in Kelly 226). In the following section I will use the first American Dogme film, Harmony Korine's *julien donkey-boy,* as a means of exploring aspects of modern posthuman cinema to determine

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[140] Academy 35 mm is an outdated European format dating from the silent film era, but it dimensions are also those of a standard television screen (1:1.33), making it easy to film on digital video and then transfer the footage to film without altering the aspect ratio.

what features might allow a film to be categorized as "posthuman," and what can be gained by doing so.

American Dogma: *julien donkey-boy*

While David Lynch's works involve themes that can clearly be categorized as posthuman, they remain remarkably conservative in their actual construction on a technical level. Other than *INLAND EMPIRE*, Lynch has utilized the conventional technology and devices of mainstream Hollywood films to produce his radical visions. Yet a new school of filmmakers in the late-1990s took the posthuman project in an entirely new direction, one contingent upon new filmmaking techniques. The actor-director-filmmaker-musician Harmony Korine deserves special analysis for the unique posthuman style of directing evident in his second film, *julien donkey-boy* (1999). Perhaps best known for writing the screenplay of Larry Clark's 1995 film *Kids* while still in his teens, Korine has subsequently directed two obscure yet ultimately fascinating feature films. The first, *Gummo* (1998), is set in Xenia, Ohio during the aftermath of a tornado. It is essentially postmodern pastiche, pieced together out of wildly disparate elements such as stock footage, photographic stills, video images, and 35mm sequences. Korine employs professional actors as well as non-actors to create a hybrid: a quasi-documentary style that is also a parody of the documentary and docudrama forms. *Gummo* failed commercially and critically, and was "by critical consensus… the most reviled film ever associated with the post-1990 American independent film movement"

(Sklar 261).[141] However, the film attracted a sizable cult audience, including a number of

Hollywood celebrities, which ensured its notoriety and allowed Korine to make a second

film.

     julien donkey-boy has no narrative in the traditional sense of the word. Julien is a

murderous schizophrenic who works at a home for the blind and believes he is having an

incestuous relationship with his pregnant sister. Their father, played by Werner Herzog

himself—suggestive of a direct link to Herzog's own posthuman projects *Fata Morgana*

and *Lessons of Darkness*—abuses them and often sits alone in his room, wearing a gas

mask and/or drinking cough syrup from a shoe.[142] The film ends when Julien kidnaps his

sister's dead baby from a hospital and leaps on a bus, watched by quietly horrified

passengers filmed secretly by Korine, not aware that they are in a movie. *julien donkey-

boy* did not find as many champions as *Gummo* and received a limited release in America

before being relegated to video and DVD. However, *julien* is actually a much more

significant work in terms of posthuman theory. Korine filmed it according to the tenets

of Dogme 95 after Lars von Trier contacted him and asked him to make the first

American Dogme film. Korine reveals that he was inspired by the offer, and conceived

of a wholly different style of directing and editing for *julien*, one that would exist within

the Dogme ideology and aesthetic:

       Originally I'd had this idea of blanketing a huge wall with small camcorders, each
       one just a little bit skewed from the next in its point of view. So you'd have a set
       of views, maybe One through Fifty, all trained on the same subject. And I was
       interested in the idea of having to edit that footage, because you could approach it

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[141] Sklar does point out however that critic's polls frequently listed *Gummo* as one of the "best films, or
most significant, or most underrated" (261), suggesting that time allowed for a reevaluation of the film's
significance.

[142] Korine was initially going to play Herzog's son onscreen, until he ultimately decided to remain behind
the camera and cast Ewen Bremner in the role.

in a mathematical way. You could say, without looking, "Camera Fourteen to Camera Twenty-five to Camera Thirty-three." It would be completely random. (Korine qtd. in Kelly 199)

While Korine never actually built or utilized this wall of cameras, the device was later employed by Lars von Trier himself, who used over a hundred digital video cameras to film Bjork's dance routines from multiple angles in his death row musical *Dancer in the Dark* (2000). In this way, certain scenes in *Dancer* became merely transmissions of live events rather than scenes molded and recorded under the influence of a human director.[143] Korine discarded his wall of cameras in favor of using over twenty small and mobile digital cameras, hidden in objects and in the clothing of the characters so that scenes became spectacles for the omnipresent cameras. Without knowing which camera to play to, actors became destabilized, resulting in some of the most unique, confused performances in recent American independent film. The destabilization of the actors, the supposed locus of identification, results in the corresponding disorientation of the audience, and disrupts both identification and voyeurism.

Ewen Bremner, who played Julien, reveals that often Korine was not even present on the set as a director: "Sometimes they left me alone with a camera. There were occasions when the crew weren't even in the room with me. It would just be me getting on with it. It sharpens your wits, that responsibility" (qtd. in Kelly 186). Bremner also states that Korine's technique as a director involves "twisting the language of cinema into new shapes [which is] quite alienating for people who have grown up with certain cinematic conventions" (Kelly 188). Yet this "new shape" seems to be one dependent on, or even formed by, the camera itself and not the director. When the actor is left alone

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[143] Of course scenes still must be assembled from this raw footage, but ceding control of the process of actually filming the footage removes a crucial level of directorial control, in the manner of Warhol ceding control of *a* to his typists.

with the digital camera, the camera becomes the director and its "choices" involving automatic exposure, focus, and white balance determine the image that viewers see. To interpret or analyze the film is to engage with an interpretation of the mechanical decisions of the camera, and therefore with the nonorganic and the posthuman. Like *Gummo*, *julien donkey-boy* was one of the worst reviewed films of 1999, as Korine's uneasy blend of amateurish digital video footage and haphazard, nonlinear approach to editing created a film most critics deemed unwatchable. The few notable mainstream exceptions such as *The New York Times* and the *Hollywood Reporter* pointed out that it was an important film and represented a new kind of filmmaking, but also suggested that few people would appreciate it. However, what they failed to indicate is that the success of the film depends entirely on audience expectations: while it clearly fails as a cohesive narrative, or even as a postmodern "art film" meant to explore non-mainstream themes and characters, it succeeds as an example of what can be expected from posthuman cinema.

The first impression of the film is the ugliness of both the image and the soundtrack, which matches the unsavory nature of the characters. The viewer is made conscious that it is not a film image s/he is watching at all, but rather a blowup of a poor-quality video image. Unlike *The Blair Witch Project*, which integrated deliberately amateurish nature video footage into the story, by explaining it as "found" footage filmed by a group of students lost in the woods, Korine gives no such easy justification. Deliberately garish "in camera" special effects are deployed, such as digital double exposures and other alterations of the image. Reviewers who were dismayed to stumble across such a visually unappealing film, especially after *Gummo*—whose 35mm

sequences had been shot by the famed cinematographer Jean-Yves Escoffier, best known

for the aesthetically beautiful Leos Carax film *Les Amants du Pont Neuf*—essentially

missed the point of both Dogme and Korine's project. In his essay "The Case of

Harmony Korine," New York film critic Robert Sklar wrote that the film's use of

"superimpositions, gradations of graininess in the image, out-of-focus shots, varying

color tones and still frame images… make the film far more adventurous visually than

any previous Dogme-certified work" (268). Indeed, the poor quality of the image is

certainly intentional; the video was transferred to 16mm reversal film before being blown

up to 35mm, merely to make sure that, in Korine's words, it looked "worse."[144] In

addition, any attempt at stereotypically beautiful footage, such as an overexposed image

of the actress Chloe Sevigny walking through a golden field of corn, is intentionally

subverted by the shoddy nature of the video image. The colors are faded, the image is

blurred and grainy, and there is no depth of field. Like Warhol's films, especially *Poor

Little Rich Girl*, the image attempts to repulse the viewer. Even Sevigny, who once

worked as a model, is made to appear unattractive in conventional terms, a subversion of

her role as a "leading lady" in *The Last Days of Disco* or *Boys Don't Cry*. She is

costumed in thrift store clothes, pregnant, and sports a ridiculous hair-style. Bremner's

Julian is also given a makeover of gold teeth and a greasy perm; Bremner, whose looks

are naturally unconventional, is frequently used solely for comic relief in Hollywood

films such as *Alien Versus Predator* and *Pearl Harbor,* so Korine's casting of him as the

lead suggests an additional element of subversion. By destroying our visual pleasure in

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[144] Korine's 1998 photo book, *The Bad Son*, which features the grown up child actor Macaulay Culkin
frolicking with his wife Rachel Miner on a bed, presents similarly manipulated photographs, in which
digital artifacts and film grain merge to create images that resemble photocopies of tabloid newspaper
photos.

the image and in the appearances of the actors, as well as any narrative pleasure à la

Laura Mulvey, Korine is suggesting that we look elsewhere for meaning. While he is

obviously not unique in doing this, he takes it one step further by marrying Warhol-style

technique with a Lynchian fascination with the grotesque, and by casting subjects with

unusual physical features or defects as his supporting cast.

Korine's approach to casting suggests that he is interested in actors—or rather

"performers," to use his term—who are physically different from typical humans, as a

way to explore the limits of the human form. His parade of deformed, mentally ill, and

crippled people, along with a smattering of dwarves and albinos, indicates his interest in

subverting audience expectations about what "movie stars" or even actors should look

like. Among the more riveting performers in *julien donkey-boy* are an armless jazz

drummer who plays drums with his legs, and a blind albino rapper who unspools a

hypnotic rhyme. Of course Korine complicates the issue by claiming that he casts them

for personal reasons, and a Lynchian (and Witkin-esque) fascination:

> When people accuse me of being interested in things that are "grotesque,"
> there are so many arguments in there that I don't understand. I'm attracted
> to girls with scars on their faces. I like girls with missing limbs. I always
> have. I'm sexually attracted to that. So a lot of times, what people
> consider to be grotesque, I'm really aroused by. (Korine qtd. in Kelly 204)

Whether Korine's decision to make these people his "stars" comes from a desire to exploit

them—as in the case of *Pink Flamingoes'* director John Waters encouraging his "star"

Divine to eat dog excrement and Todd Browning of *Freaks* infamy casting real life circus

"freaks" in his film—or a genuine attempt to display empathy, is uncertain. Either way,

this kind of casting is a trait Korine shares with Lynch who has dealt both

sympathetically with physical difference in *Eraserhead* and *The Elephant Man*, and

exploited it in *Twin Peaks* and *Lost Highway*, suggesting an ambiguous attitude towards difference.[145] Of course many of Korine's own comments about his film and its cast cannot be taken too seriously as he seems to enjoy subverting the interview process as well. When asked why he chose the Danish editor Valdis Oskarsdottir to edit *julien*, he replied "She wears mittens. And I like her fingers" (Kelly 197). When asked what he thinks will be the legacy of the Dogme movement, he answered "I just hope it can breathe underwater" (203). In fact, one of Korine's more notorious moments was a brief appearance on the David Letterman show to promote *Gummo* in 1998, in which Korine seemed unable to answer Letterman's questions, and delivered a stream of consciousness ramble that prompted derisive laughter from the studio audience. Therefore, it is sometimes hard to give much credence to Korine's comments in relation to his work.

Yet Korine's statements about his "wall of cameras" and his "attraction" to unusual bodies have resonance, and I situate his work as posthuman due to several factors. The first is his emphasis on exploring the possibilities of both technology and the human form. He was a pioneer working at the forefront of digital video to harness a potentially explosive form, long before mainstream Hollywood turned to digital cameras to create its images. Coupled with this focus on technique is his exploration of posthuman bodies: bodies that function to produce the same fascination and anxiety as Michael Jackson's auto-cyborgian face, or the *Eraserhead* baby. Korine uses these as starting points for a diegesis on human identity, and I maintain that posthuman cinema

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[145] Lynch's use of midgets in *Twin Peaks* (both the film and the series) became so infamous it was parodied in Tom DiCillo's *Living in Oblivion* (1994). And Lynch's exploitation in *Lost Highway* of Richard Pryor, afflicted with multiple sclerosis and confined to a wheelchair, was noted by David Foster Wallace who wrote in "David Lynch Keeps His Head," that "Lynch is exploiting Pryor… letting the actor think he's been hired to act when he's really been hired to be a spectacle, an arch joke for the audience to congratulate themselves on getting" (189).

must involve a welding, or hybridization, of posthuman themes, like those Lynch

expresses in *Eraserhead*, with the posthuman style and technology embraced by the

Dogme movement. In fact, taking a cue from Dogme's Vow of Chastity, and these

posthuman elements explored in *julien donkey-boy*, it seems possible to assemble a list of

qualities that would constitute the definitive elements of posthuman cinema for the 21st

century. As in the case of Dogme, not every element would need to be present in order to

categorize a film as posthuman, although most would need to be inherent in the work.

The following list, finding inspiration in the Dogme 95 manifesto, delineates ten aspects

that appear to constitute the core elements of modern posthuman cinema in terms of

posthuman bodies.

A Pseudo-Manifesto of Posthuman Cinema

1. The characters in posthuman films must have attributes beyond those of human beings.
2. The films themselves must consist of elements and/or deal with events located outside the confines of common human experience.
3. Posthuman films must advocate the collapse of confining boundaries and limitations. Restrictive categories like age, gender, and/or race should be examined and deliberately destabilized in a celebratory manner.
4. Human-machine (cyborg) interaction, either on the level of the characters and plot, or of the camera and director, should be inherent.
5. Elements of style and technique should by necessity display an affinity for recent technological developments (even if the themes can sometimes end up displaying nostalgia).
6. Posthuman cinema should work to destroy the notion that millions of dollars are needed to make a feature film, or even tens of thousands of dollars. Just as posthuman films collapse limiting social boundaries, they should ideally function to liberate potentially suppressed (and/or repressed) filmmakers from the binaries of Hollywood. Posthuman cinema is post-Hollywood.
7. Posthuman films must work to defy typical filmic readings (such as simplistic psychoanalytic, auterist, or postmodern interpretations). They should strive to deliberately subvert and defy the concept of narrative, and require the development of a new kind of analysis to be understood and meaningful.

8. Posthuman cinema should work towards the goal of having each film shot, edited and projected digitally. Multiple digital versions of a film could be circulated, destroying monolithic notions of authorship.[146]

9. The cinematic landscape (the mise-en-scene) should complicate notions of humanity and inanimacy. It should not be easy to distinguish between "landscape" and "body" in a posthuman film.

10. As in Dogme's Vow of Chastity, the director should not be credited. Instead, the technology used to create the film should be given credit: the true director, and star. The posthuman is always anti-auteur.

A posthuman film would clearly need to balance posthuman methodologies with themes, as the two are not always related. For example, despite George Lucas' interest in digital filming and projection, the themes he advances in *Star Wars: Attack of the Clones* present the same anti-technology stance expressed in the previous four films—as its very title suggests—so the film would not be truly considered a posthuman work. In addition, Dogme films, despite the number of qualities they might share with posthuman films, are not by necessity posthuman. If anything, a number of Dogma films carry a critique of technology, and more significantly, present misogynistic views that perpetrate confining stereotypes. The "whore with a heart of gold" trope is dredged up for Soren Kragh-Jacobsen's *Dogme 3: Mifune*, for example, as it is in some of von Trier's work. In addition, Dogme rule #7 forbids "temporal and geographical alienation" and states that the film must take place in "the here and now." This clearly limits the posthuman possibilities of the Dogme films by restricting their scope and ability to deal with characters, spaces, and themes outside human experience. Rule #8 which bans "genre movies" would appear to place additional boundaries on posthuman explorations.

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[146] This is already occurring. In 2000, unauthorized re-edited versions of *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* (one of which was dubbed *The Phantom Edit*) circulated online, to the displeasure of George Lucas. More currently, John August is planning to release the raw, uncompressed digital files of his film *The Nines* (2007) online to the public, so that it can be downloaded and re-edited on personal home computers.

In order to explore the validity of my criteria for posthuman films, I have chosen

German director Tom Tykwer's 1998 film *Run Lola Run* as a test case. The reason for

choosing this film is simple: *Run Lola Run* was the first film on record actively

advertised as "post-human," with the movie poster carrying the tag-line from Janet

Maslin's *New York Times* review that positioned the film as "Playfully profound. Hot,

fast, and post-human" (E15).[147] Structurally, the film consists of three sections, in which

the protagonist, Lola, is given three different chances to raise a sum of money to free her

troubled boyfriend. Thus, each of the sections begins with the same set-up, or sequence

of events, before moving in a different direction. An analysis of *Run Lola Run* via the

posthuman elements isolated in the manifesto suggests that the term holds up in relation

to the film:

> **1. Attributes beyond the human body:** Lola possesses an impossibly loud
> shriek that shatters entire panes of glass (in addition to her day-glo red hair).
> **2. Events outside human experience:** Lola has the opportunity to relive the
> same series of events three times, the same number of lives assigned to the
> player in most video games. She is inhabiting a posthuman landscape in which
> time runs both forwards and in reverse.[148]
> **3. Collapse of boundaries and limitations:** *Run Lola Run* complicates not only
> issues of time, but also of gender. The plot is a reversal of the Hollywood
> traditions of the action film in which the male lead rescues the female. Here,
> Lola is given the agency to rescue her pathetic, unheroic boyfriend. She is the
> female as pure action hero, without the camp value assigned when Hollywood
> attempts this reversal, as in the *Alien* series, the remake of *Charlie's Angels*, or
> Renny Harlin's *The Long Kiss Goodnight*.
> **4. Human-machine interaction:** The three-part structure foregrounds the fact
> that we are watching a film, as do the brief computer animated sequences that
> punctuate the openings of each of the film's three sections. At the end of the first
> third of the film we are taken back to the opening sequence again. The presence
> of the technology that produces and edits the images is foregrounded in a self-

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[147] In her rave review, Maslin also notes that the film is a "cinematic video game," and also a "startling
harbinger of things to come. Mr. Tykwer deliberately blows away all traces of the mundane and the
familiar" (E15).

[148] David Cronenberg's *Existenz* (2000) is also structured as a video game, and contains potentially
posthuman bodies with new orifices, into which video game consoles are plugged.

reflexive manner that extends the meta-cinematic techniques first developed by Godard and the French New Wave.

5. Affinity for Technological Developments: Again, the mimicry of the video game structure suggests that this is a film that could not have existed without relatively recent technological developments.

6. Post-Hollywood: *Run Lola Run* was shot cheaply with only a handful of actors, who recur as characters in each of the three sections. Tom Tykwer even wrote and performed the musical score himself.

7. Defies typical readings: The film necessitates a posthuman viewpoint, i.e. one that allows us to embrace the fact that Lola relives the same sequence of events multiple times. Lola is not a human, and her world is not ours, but neither is it the typical celluloid space that most mainstream cinematic characters inhabit.

8. Digital projection and distribution: Here *Run Lola Run* does not succeed as an example, as it was shot and distributed on 35 mm film. However, this is more a function of the fact that most theatres are not equipped for digital projection yet. Theatre exhibitors agree that this will change within the next decade, and already many theaters are converting to digital laser projection.

9. Posthuman landscape: As discussed already, *Run Lola Run* takes place within the structure of a video game, and therefore within the landscape of one too. Lola's multiple lives are given multiple, but related landscapes, in which the parameters and characters shift in nonrealist fashion in each of the three sections that constitute the film.

10. Technology as Director: *Run Lola Run's* stylistic innovations certainly received more attention than the director. Tykwer's presence as a director is deliberately overshadowed by design via his technical and stylistic innovations.

The above indicates, in a general way, that it is possible to assign a film the category of posthuman if it satisfies certain requirements, although I intend the manifesto to invite playfulness and speculation rather than serve to limit what can, or cannot be, considered posthuman. I present these aspects as a means to be provocative rather than restrictive in suggesting the future—or a potential future—of posthuman cinema.

As a final note on the topic, Lars von Trier's most recent project has been the invention of a process he terms "Automavision," which stands as an attempt to further the aims of posthuman cinema. Von Trier's "Automavision" involves replacing the human director of photography on a film with a special camera that is "directed" by a computer program which randomizes the movement of the camera to determine the framing of the

shots—thus eliminating, or at least drastically reducing, any human control over which images are filmed. In this way, the human becomes a spectator along for the ride with the posthuman, inorganic camera-director, which is literally, "calling the shots." Von Trier has deployed his invention on only one film so far, *The Boss of it All* (2006), in which the themes of the film mirror the technical process; the film's plot revolves around the head of a business who hires a man to impersonate him as a means of abdicating corporate responsibility, just as von Trier (the camera operator on many of his own films, as well as director) has ceded his control and position to the Automavision process. The Automavision process creates a film in which shots are framed in an unexpected manner: character's heads are cut off, for example, creating a litany of awkward shots that would seem like mistakes in human hands. Thus, by allowing the camera's randomizing computer program a decisive role in making directorial decisions, von Trier has created a film in which the director of photography truly does not care about the (human) audience. Von Trier's attempt at injecting the inorganic into the intellectual process of filmmaking met with great critical resistance, and even von Trier has declared that he considers the project something of a failure artistically—an apt judgment—yet is pleased that he managed to push the boundaries of filmmaking into previously uncharted spaces. However, von Trier was hospitalized soon after making the film for clinical depression, exhaustion, and a panic disorder, suggesting that his posthuman innovations came at an all-too-human cost. Although he has recovered, in a recent statement he has claimed that he will now be retrenching back to smaller, less innovative films, perhaps leaving the advancement of posthuman cinema to his legions of European and American Dogma-inspired fans.

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CHAPTER FOUR

Posthuman Bodies, Gender Disruptions, and Fascistic Tendencies in
The Wasp Factory **and** ***The Passion of New Eve***

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Turning back to prose fiction from film, *The Wasp Factory* (1984), by Iain Banks, and *The Passion of New Eve* (1977), by Angela Carter, present two unusual narratives that center on the enforced, unwilling sex-changes of their protagonists. Both novels also invoke a curious, compelling image in their final pages: a set of what appears to be male genitalia in a state of suspended preservation. Near the end of *The Wasp Factory*, the protagonist Frank Cauldhame—who believes himself to be a mutilated boy— contemplates what he thinks is his set of severed organs, which hangs in alcohol solution in a specimen jar in his father's study. And at the end of *The Passion of New Eve,* Evelyn (aka "Eve") is brought by Leilah—one of the conspirators in his castration—a miniature refrigerator in which his severed genitals lie on dry ice, awaiting possible reattachment. Yet, the resonance between these two texts of gender disruption is not limited to the potential castrations that their protagonists endure, but rather encompasses a greater drive on the part of Banks and Carter to explore the creation of posthuman mythologies: that is, mythologies and religions that acknowledge the rupture of gender boundaries. Both texts are also profoundly connected in terms of who is given the agency to enact radical gender disruptions: Frank's deranged father in the case of *The Wasp Factory*, and the scientific godhead-like "Mother" in the case of *The Passion of New Eve*. As Maria Aline Ferreira

points out in "Artificial Wombs and Archaic Tombs," what Mother does, "like a new Frankenstein, is tinker with the human body, remodeling it… finishing the task that Victor Frankenstein was afraid of pursuing to the end, the creation of a female companion to the Creature" (91). I will argue that Frank's father plays a similar role in *The Wasp Factory*—the name of his son, "Frank," being, of course, no coincidence, but a textual allusion to "Frank-enstein." This chapter is concerned with the construction and presentation of posthuman bodies in *The Wasp Factory* and *The Passion of New Eve*, also with the implications of these bodies for those who possess them, as well as with notions of boundary-breaking gone awry and the production of fascistic posthuman bodies. Unlike texts which display either an evident fear of the posthuman, or those which solely explore its celebratory elements, the works of Banks and Carter present and advocate the ecstatic liberation the posthuman can provide, while also acknowledging its potential cost to the individual body and its community.

Upon its publication in 1984, *The Wasp Factory* was greeted with both instant condemnation and praise, the contradictory critical impulses reflecting the repulsion and attraction embodied in the book's posthuman themes of gender apocalypse.[149] A review in *The London Times Literary Supplement* is reminiscent of the early *Variety* review of *Eraserhead*, stating that Banks's novel deals "in extremes of oddity and unpleasantness… ghoulish frivolity and a good deal of preposterous sadism…. A literary equivalent of the nastiest brand of juvenile delinquency" (287), while *The Sunday Express* unwittingly links it to Cronenberg's *Videodrome*, with the reviewer writing that the book is "just the

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[149] The 1998 Scribner paperback edition proudly announces the controversy surrounding the novel on the back cover, using the critical ambivalence as a selling point for its intended cult audience. While a blurb from *The Independent* (U.K.) hails it as "One of the top 100 novels of the century," another from *The Scotsman* reads, "There's nothing to force you, having been warned, to read it; nor do I recommend it", and *The London Times* is afforded a one-word quote: "Rubbish!"

lurid literary equivalent of a video nasty" (qtd. in Butler, "Strange Case" 19). Oddly, the

mainstream *People Weekly* gave it one of the few rave American reviews, calling it "an

unconventional horror novel… a fearsome tale about our era's love of violence and the

perversion of technology" (20), while *Library Journal* termed it "as funny as it is

grotesque… a mordant yet surprisingly lyrical peek into the heart of darkness" (Koger

1684).[150]

 The Wasp Factory is essentially the study of fluid identity, and how the lack of a

monolithic identity—while liberating—can also lead to obsessions, and a fascistic desire

to exert control over one's environment as a compensatory mechanism. Banks' troubled,

teenage protagonist, Frank, who lives on an island with his father, does not technically

"exist," in the legal sense: "I was never registered. I have no birth certificate, no National

Insurance number, nothing to say I'm alive or have ever existed. I know this is a crime"

(14). Although this absence of identity vaguely troubles him, Frank takes advantage of

his less-than-legal status with his father, noting that, "As far as I can tell, we have some

sort of unspoken agreement that I keep quiet about not officially existing in return for

being able to do more or less as I like on the island and buy more or less what I like in the

town" (51). Frank's body image is distorted as a result of his nebulous identity, and his

internal mindset does not match what he sees in the mirror: "I don't look the way I'd like

to look" (20), Frank muses at one point early in the narrative, "I want to look dark and

menacing; the way I ought to look, the way I should look, the way I might have looked if

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[150] Banks is far more popular in the United States as a science fiction author, under the name Iain M.
Banks. His science fiction novels frequently focus on a complex, futuristic society called "The Culture,"
which Cristie L. March describes in *Rewriting Scotland* as "an effectively intermixed society of hedonistic,
genetically enhanced, sex-changing people and… sentient, artificial intelligences" (81). While Banks's
science fiction novels, especially *Inversions*, certainly provide excellent examples of posthuman theory,
they lack the mysterious hybridity, and frisson, that comes from *The Wasp Factory's* unusual earth-bound,
yet binary-shattering, content of posthuman elements within a non-scientific framework.

I hadn't had my little accident. Looking at me, you'd never guess I'd killed three people. It isn't fair" (20). This segue from identity disjunction to murder is a good representation of how Frank's gender anxiety is expressed in violent fashion within the desolate landscape of the island. Later, in a kind of reverie in his "Bunker," in front of the skull of Old Saul—the dog Frank believes castrated him—Frank thinks, "I saw myself, Frank L. Cauldhame, and I saw myself as I might have been: a tall slim man, strong and determined and making his way in the world, assured and purposeful" (48). Reconstructing himself mentally, Frank determines to compensate for what he views as his altered masculinity by adopting hyper-masculine stereotypes of violence and sexism; in fact, he takes pains to admonish himself if he ever behaves in a way he deems "unmanly," telling himself more than once "not to act like some stupid girl" (172).

Frank's virulent and oft-professed hatred of women reads like a reverse *SCUM Manifesto*. "Women… are weak and stupid and live in the shadow of men and are nothing compared to them" (42), Frank thinks, adding later that, "Nobody expects people to tell the truth to women" (76). The physicality of women disgusts Frank as much as their supposed mental "weakness," and he muses about a girl, "The thought of her tits pressed up against my face nearly made me want to throw up" (76). Frank defines himself by cliché notions of gender, and therefore comes to the conclusion that man's purpose—and therefore his own purpose—in life is killing:

> It occurred to me then, as it had before, that that is what men are really *for*. Both sexes can do one thing specially well; women can give birth and men can kill. We… are the harder sex. We strike out, push through, thrust and take. The fact that it is only an analogue of all this sexual terminology I am capable of does not discourage me. I can feel it in my bones, in my uncastrated genes. (118)

Even the animal world is not exempt from Frank's rabid sexism; he notes that rams are "demeaned by the idiotic females they have to associate with and inseminate" (146). Frank's view of women is one he cheerfully admits is founded solely on culturally disseminated gender assumptions:

> Women, I know from watching hundreds—maybe thousands—of films and television programs, cannot withstand really major things happening to them; they get raped, or their loved one dies, and they go to pieces, go crazy and commit suicide, or just pine away until they die. Of course, I realize that not all of them will react that way, but obviously it's the rule, and the ones who don't obey it are in the minority. (148)

Frank blames "the feminine" for corrupting his older brother Eric and essentially driving Eric insane, tracing "ruinous" feminine influence back to Eric's youth and psychological development. Eric, once a brilliant medical student, has lost his mind after witnessing a traumatic event and is now returning to Frank's island, purportedly to enact violence. Frank decides to locate Eric's mental collapse in the feminine and tries to decode his psychosis through isolating evident "feminine" qualities in his brother. For example, Eric shoplifts female-oriented items for himself at one point, telling Frank "I steal things I can't eat, just for the hell of it. Like tampons… slimming magazines… artificial eyelashes… make-up boxes…" (59). Frank, oblivious to the truth of his own gender—to his own maleness—ultimately locates Eric's gender dysfunction "in Eric's early years" (148) when their father encouraged Eric to "dress as he wanted… giving him the choice of dresses and trousers" (148). Frank concludes that "Eric was the victim of a self with just a little too much of the woman in it… sensitivity, that desire not to hurt people, that delicate, mindful brilliance—these things were his partly because he thought too much like a woman" (148). Frank's desire to establish his own "manliness" leads him to

commit all kinds of horrific, brutal acts, as his susceptibility to patriarchal gender myths "encourages self-alienating mimicry and conformism" that results in "monstrous deformations rather than an authentic fulfillment of individual difference" (Schoene-Harwood, "Dams" 145).

Yet Frank is not the only character for whom gender is complicated and hidden, and if Frank locates Eric's "feminine" aspects in his upbringing, the same is true for Frank's "gender trouble." Frank's father Angus is, as Eric tells us, known for his lies and deceptions; he won't even tell his son his real age, and there might be another aspect of his identity that he is concealing. One of the first things Banks notes about Frank's father is that he "has a delicate face, like a woman's" (10), and Angus has multiple phallic stand-ins, suggesting compensation for a lack in parodic Freudian terms. Banks writes that Angus' "left leg is almost totally stiff, and he usually takes a stick with him when he leaves the house" (10). In fact, when Frank discovers some boxes of tampons and hormones hidden in his father's study, he thinks at first, in an ironic moment, that his father is actually a woman posing as a man:

> I thought of that delicate face, those lightly haired arms. I tried to think of one time I had seen my father naked to the waist, but for the life of me I couldn't. The secret. It couldn't be. I shook my head, but I couldn't let go of the idea. Angus. Agnes…. But it *couldn't* be! It was just so monstrous, so appalling! (173)

Frank then goes to his father's room, and confronts his drunken father with the tampons and hormones, slapping him and menacing him with a knife. "'You bitch, you *bitch!*'" Frank screams, as he pulls "his/her" underpants down to reveal his father's "dark-haired, large, rather greasy-looking cock and balls" (174). While superficially this seems to refute Frank's reading of his father as a woman in drag, and indeed seems to convince Frank that his father is actually a man, Frank is distracted from a closer look by Eric's

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screams from outside, introducing a note of potential ambiguity. As Andrew Butler

points out in "The Strange Case of Mr. Banks: Doubles and *The Wasp Factory*, "by the

end of the novel, Angus at last has told the truth about Frank/Frances, but perhaps not

about Angus/Agnes…. It is entirely possible that Angus's greasy genitals could be made

of greasy wax… like the tiny set he manufactured to fool his/her daughter" (24).

Frank eventually comes to understand the truth about himself and learns that he is

actually not the person (or rather, "man") he thought he was, and that with the alteration

of a few letters in his name, he has become a new being, unfamiliar to himself: "I'm not

Francis Leslie Cauldhame. I'm Frances Lesley Cauldhame…. When Old Saul savaged

me, my father saw it as an ideal opportunity for a little experiment…. So he started

dosing me with male hormones, and has been ever since… what I've always thought was

the stump of a penis is really an enlarged clitoris" (181).[151] As Berthold Schoene-

Harwood writes in "Dams Burst," Frank is the one who has essentially "lived his whole

life in drag" (132). When he discovers what he thinks are his genitals in a specimen jar in

the study, he notes that "in the jar was clear liquid—alcohol, I assumed. In the alcohol

was a tiny, torn set of male genitalia" (171), clear "proof" that indeed he is the victim of a

childhood castration. But when his father unexpectedly smashes the jar and picks up the

contents, Frank sees that he is "holding a pink ball. Not a testicle; a pink ball, like a lump

of plasticine, or wax" (178). The genitals are a ruse, the inorganic posing as the organic,

and the wax genitals thus become symbolic of the mutability of gender. Eventually

Frank forces an explanation from his father, who tells him that he constructed the mock

genitals out of candle wax in case Frank ever got suspicious about the castration story.

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[151] As a note of clarification, Old Saul did indeed "savage" Frances, but only left some scars on her thighs.
Frances is still, and has always been, a biological woman.

Frank's identity is thrown into crisis as he realizes that he is now a "normal female, capable of intercourse and giving birth (I shiver at the thought of either)" (182) and feels a "knot of anger" (181) at his father. Frank's acceptance of the truth about his gender and identity is remarkably rapid and calm. He quickly accepts himself as a hybrid creature, noting that "my father's truth has murdered what I was…. But I *am* still me; I *am* the same person, with the same memories and the same deeds done, the same (small) achievements, the same (appalling) crimes to *my* name" (182). But Frank's name has changed, so he cannot be the "same" person he was, nor possess the same attributes. Of course he has confused his physical body with his mental state throughout the entire novel—near the beginning when the townspeople say of Frank, "he's not all there, you know," (13) in a paranoid, delusional state, Frank thinks it's "their little joke" (13) about his mutilated genitals, instead of a comment on his mental instability. Frank's paranoia comes from the fact that he is "a manufactured, entirely fictitious creation, obsessively overcompensating... by pursuing an extremist ideal of violent masculine perfection" (Schoene-Harwood, "Dams" 133). The truth about his gender allows him to escape from his fetishistic masculine stereotype, which has confined his behavior to a pattern of violence and sexism. Schoene-Harwood writes that at the end of the novel, what is needed to "cure" Frank's world of "its deathly schisms" and "put it back together again… is not synthetic closure but an eruption of regenerative chaos" ("Dams" 143); but of course this is not the case, as there is no "cure" or reassemblage in unity, only a relatively placid acceptance of chaos in place of Frank's obsessive gendered mask.[152] It's worth

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[152] Schoene-Harwood's belief that at the end of the novel, "Injurious distinctions between femininity and masculinity, madness and sanity, have collapsed into a vision of restorative unity" (146) misses the point that in fact, there is no "restorative unity," only an explosion of new elements and hybrids. Once boundaries are shown to be restrictive constructs, and demolished, new lines of flight, in Deleuzian terms,

noting that Banks has Frank return the narrative to the garbage dump—just where Warhol's *a* and Solanas's *SCUM Manifesto* originate and gestate. Yet Banks suggests clearly why the garbage is such a stimulating locale. When Frank travels to the island's revolting, smoking town dump—an apocalyptic field of fire, cardboard, plastic, and old machines completely devoid of people—Banks writes that Frank picks his way through it, "savoring its rotten, slightly sweet smell" (150). Frank explains that "One of the things I had come to like about the dump over the years was the way that it never stayed the same; it moved like something huge and alive, spreading like an immense amoeba as it absorbed the healthy land and the collective waste" (150). The dump is, of course, a representation of Frank's gender and identity—a liminal, chaotic zone in flux, which does not allow for the rigid or the obsessional—a rhizome, in Deleuzian terms.

The chaos in the novel finds its reflection in violence; in fact, the endless depictions of human and animal violence in *The Wasp Factory* are one of the reasons for the continued controversy surrounding the novel. Rather than being gratuitous, these descriptions are crucial in revealing how the organic body breaks down and can be recycled into components of inorganic constructs. As with Lynch's "Fish Kit," Frank is eager to disassemble organic bodies, determine how they work, and put them together again in new combinations. Eric is even more avid in his destruction of the natural world, setting fire to dogs and eating them, and ultimately setting fire to a flock of sheep.[153] The disassembly, and reassemblage, of the body—both human and animal—is

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are created, rather than any sort of monolithic "unity" restored. Frank might accept his new gender, but he in no way accepts feminine stereotypes, having learned the peril of accepting masculine ones at face-value.

[153] Schoene-Harwood writes that while Frank—who murders humans and insects—manages to hide his violence, Eric is a feared pariah within the world of the novel, suggesting that "Eric's violence is considered unacceptable because it targets man's best friend" (137).

a crucial element throughout *The Wasp Factory*. In a comic, yet telling, aside at the start

of the book, Frank pines for a pet: "I wish we had a cat. All I've ever had was a head, and

that the seagulls took" (16). Human bodies are taken apart in the same manner: Frank's

grotesque cousin Blyth loses a leg in a car accident, "playing chicken," and now has to

"strap on… [a] nasty pink thing" (38); Banks's words clearly suggest a phallus. In fact,

Blyth's stump itself is later described as "sticking out… like some monstrous erection"

(40).[154] There are few characters who are "whole" in physical, mental, or emotional

terms.[155] In fact, the organic and inorganic are deliberately and continually muddled,

until such distinctions are rendered meaningless. Frank's family's home looks to him

"like a stone-giant's head, a huge moonlit skull full of vast shapes and memories…

attached to a vast, powerful body buried in the rock and sand beneath, ready to shrug

itself free and disinter itself on some unknowable command or cue" (86). Even the dawn

is described as "bloodshot" (157), which is at once a cliché, and a suggestion that the sky

is some kind of organic entity, or perhaps a surveillance device mirroring Frank's

"Sacrifice Poles" with which he surveys the island.[156]

 Freedom from obsession and stereotypes of gender finds a mirror in freedom from

linguistic control. Language itself breaks down in *The Wasp Factory*, as it does in

Warhol's *a*, when Banks has characters' words and sentences devolve into gibberish.

When Frank confronts his father about the truth of his gender, fear and alcohol render

Angus almost incoherent: "Wha' you goin' t'do, Frangie? Am sorry, am really really

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[154] In fact, Frank ends up killing Blyth by hiding a poisonous snake in Blyth's hollow prosthetic.

[155] Even emotions are often hybrid constructions; in one instance Frank thinks about Eric returning home and deems it "good-bad" (10).

[156] These poles are stakes that Frank has planted around the island upon which hang parts of dead animals, to which Frank assigns a mythic and spiritual significance.

sorry. Was an experimen, sall. Juss an experiment…" (174). Eric's language also

disintegrates; for the majority of the novel, it is a barrage of profanity, bizarre jokes, and

non sequiturs, transmitted over the telephone, but at crucial points it becomes long multi-

syllabic screeds that parody empty conversational discourse: "Howzithingin' Are you

well? Howzitgon? Andyerself? Wotchermait" (156). Occasionally it breaks down

completely, Tom Wolfe style, into nonsensical howls of "Eeeeeeaaarrrggghhh

Bllleeeaarrrgggrrlllleeeoooouurrgghh!" (60). This suggests a disruption of traditional

discourses of power, as both Frank's older brother and father are no longer able to keep

up the façade of the patriarchal order. At the beginning of the book, language—via

Angus's insistence on making Frank memorize random numbers, and through the lies he

tells his sons—is "a tool of arbitrary indoctrination and insidious make-believe"

(Schoene-Harwood, "Dams" 141), and therefore a collapse of language, or a rebellion

against it, suggests a rupture of the symbolic power structure.[157]

       Eric, whose identity is as complicated and confused as his brother's, also

describes to Frank how he has managed to conquer the limitations of the human body, as

he clearly has of language:

> You don't have to sleep. That's just something they tell you to keep control over
> you. Nobody has to sleep; you're taught to sleep when you're a kid. If you're
> really determined, you can get over it. I've got over the need to sleep. I never
> sleep now. That way it's a lot easier to keep watch… and you can keep going as
> well. Nothing like keeping going. You become like a ship… (59-60)

Yet to Frank, Eric is less like a ship—a man-made inanimate object that moves

inexorably forward across an unstriated space—than a wild, animalistic presence who is

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[157] Cristie L. March points out that the deconstruction of language, "linguistic manipulations" (84) and
"linguistic play" (86) are pivotal aspects of Banks's other novels, especially phonetic Scottish dialects in
The Bridge and text interspersed with computer code in *Feersum Endjinn,* which provide a Bakhtinian
heteroglossia and supply multiple levels of meaning within the strata of discourse.

something other than entirely human. Throughout the book, Banks has Frank describe

Eric in animalistic terms; when Frank hears the sound "Aaaaoooo!" at one point, Banks

writes that he "couldn't decide whether Eric or the dog had made the noise" (101). Eric

becomes more like a spectral presence than a reality for Frank. Banks writes that Frank

"thought of what he [Eric] was now: a force of fire and disruption" (125), the word

"force" suggesting that Eric has escaped human form on some level, through his apparent

madness. Frank also notes that Eric reminds him "of a hologram, shattered; with the

whole image contained within one spear-like shard, at once splinter and entirety" (139).

Eric is therefore an accurate representation of the event that drove him insane: the

discovery of a nest of maggots in the brain of a hospitalized child.[158] When Eric

ultimately appears at the end of the novel to blow up the family's house, Frank notes that

"his face was bearded, dirty, like an animal mask" (176), and that Eric has essentially

become an animal himself. Frank also defines himself by his animalistic actions, as he

moves through the natural world, less as an intrusive human than as an intrinsic, animal

part of it. He marks his territory at his "Factory" with his urine: "I'd been pissing on the

Poles during the day, infecting them with my scent and power" (16). Frank also hunts

and kills small animals, "hamsters, mice and gerbils" (46) with a catapult he dubs "the

Killer," and he attacks flowers and plants as he walks, with a pseudo-phallic stick.

Banks also positions Frank and his attacks on the natural world in opposition to

the supposedly humanist hippie-anarchist movement that Angus was once a part of.

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[158] Banks also provides a suggestion of cannibalization. Eric sticks a spoon into the child's open skull, and
while Frank notes that this was because Eric was "thinking in that first instant of his mania to spoon out
what he saw" (142), in light of Eric's consumption of live dogs later in the book, and the fact that he is
ultimately certified insane and permanently institutionalized, it seems equally possible that Eric was
preparing a meal for himself.

While Frank and his lone friend, a midget named Jamie[159], play video games at the local pub—with Frank imagining the human race as "Space Invaders" who might "get into space and start doing horrible things to other races" (113)—Angus spends his days in a dazed hippie dream. Rather than merely suggesting a generational divide, Banks is also indicating a cultural trend away from stereotypical 1960s hippie values toward a hard, mechanical world, perhaps best exemplified by Frank's "wasp machine" itself, which I will soon discuss.[160] When Frank sneaks into his father's study, he finds a comical array of hippie signifiers: part of a typewritten novel "about hippies in a commune in the desert" along with "psychedelic badges, some old Beatles singles, a few copies of *Oz*" (172) all of which he dismisses with total contempt. Angus also displays little common sense or respect for the modern world or traditional education, "teaching" Frank that the earth is a "Mobius strip, not a sphere" (12), and that "Pathos was one of the Three Musketeers [and] Fellatio was a character in Hamlet" (14) among many other tidbits of disinformation. His father passes himself off as a doctor of chemistry who holds various patents, but Frank suspects, probably correctly, that "the old hippy survives on whatever family wealth the Cauldhames still have secreted away" (15).[161] Frank is the anti-hippie,

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[159] There are no "humans," per se, in the novel. Even Jamie, who is already positioned as an outsider because of his stature, is further relegated to nonhuman status. Frank notes at one point that Jamie "reminded me… of a puppet" (112) while Eric suggests that "Maybe he's really an *alien*! Maybe the rest of them are even smaller than *he* is! How do you know he isn't really a giant alien from a very small race of aliens? Eh?" (131).

[160] Frank identifies "nature with femaleness and fluidity, both of which threaten to upset and decentre the carefully established order of his insular world…. Incapable of ever mustering an erection, he becomes a mere impersonator of masculinity…. In order to make amends for his failure to embody the ideal, he must inscribe the phallic principle in whatever he does… assimilating the world in acts of autistic identification" (Schoene-Harwood 140).

[161] In an aside, Banks mentions Frank's uncle, Leviticus, who is as peculiar as Angus. Leviticus moves to South Africa—because he is a fan of what he calls "apart-hate"—and is then killed when the Johannesburg police throw a body off the roof of the police station, which lands on him. Banks also writes that Frank's other two uncles, Athelwald and Harmsworth, both committed suicide (Athelwald by burning himself alive

imagining himself at one point like "Mr. Spock in *Star Trek*" (126), aligned with

technology, punk rock music, and violence rather than with peace and love. While Frank

and his father have different interests, they are linked by the fact that they are both

victims of their own obsession, to the point of madness. One of Angus's "games" is to

force Frank to memorize the measurements and dimensions of every household object,

including tables, chairs, and doorways. Frank's father has attached stickers to everything

in the house giving "the appropriate measurement for the part of the object they're stuck

to. There are even ones in pencil stuck to the leaves of plants" (11). Whenever Frank

removes some stickers, he is whipped and sent to his room. Frank also has to tote around

a "Measurement Book" with all these numbers in it, seemingly an attempt by Angus to

both control Frank and infect his son with the same mania for rituals that he suffers from

himself. Angus has succeeded in this aim, for benign daily events like shaving take on a

ritualized quality for Frank: "As with all my ablutions, the shave follows a definite and

predetermined pattern; I take the same number of strokes of the same length in the same

sequence each morning" (44). Frank's obsessional disorder has become an outlet for his

gender anxieties.

Banks's unsatisfactory ending attempts to explain too precisely, in quasi-Freudian

terms, the ultimate psychological effects of Frank's gender crisis—an explanation which

results in Frank's apparent liberation from his obsessions:

> Having no purpose in life or procreation, I invested all my worth in that grim
> opposite…. I believe that I decided if I could never become a man, I—the
> unmanned—would out-man those around me, and so I became the killer, a small
> image of the ruthless soldier-hero almost all I've ever seen or read seems to pay
> strict homage to. I would find or make my own weapons, and my victims would
> be those most recently produced by the one act I was incapable of…. Talk about

and then drowning when trying to put out the fire, and Harmsworth by shoving an electric drill into his
head) thus establishing a clear family history of lunacy, pain, and despair.

> penis envy…. I was proud; eunuch but unique; a fierce and noble presence in my
> lands, a crippled warrior, fallen prince…. Now I find I was the fool all along….
> The murders were my own conception; my sex. The Factory was my attempt to
> construct life, to replace the involvement which otherwise I did not want (183).

Despite the sudden attempt to have Frank articulate his own situation in psychoanalytic

language, this effort does not undermine the previous anti-psychoanalytic bent of the

book; Frank's attempt at creating his own posthuman world allows *The Wasp Factory* to

be considered a posthuman text. It is an explicit exploration of what it means to live with

the knowledge that one is growing up permanently outside the realm of reproductive

existence, and constructing a new non-human ideology in order to replace the lost human

parts, both physical and psychological.[162] Banks ascribes the following thoughts to Frank

with regards to his crimes: "Why? *How* could I have done those things? Perhaps it was

because I thought I had had all that really mattered in the world, the whole reason—and

means—for our continuance as a species, stolen from me before I even knew its value"

(182). As several critics have pointed out, Frank and his torment over identity and

reproduction bear some resemblance to the monster's predicament in Mary Shelley's

Frankenstein. In "The Politics of Petrifaction," Victor Sage positions *The Wasp Factory*

as a sort of parodic neo-Gothic, which presents a "contemporary parody of the myth of

origins. Frank's is the story of the Frankenstein's monster written ironically from the

monster's deceived point of view" (24). Frank is the "monster" but, with his father's

assistance, also the creator of his own mythology. Without directly addressing this

notion, Sage does note that, in an echo of Ballard's and Carter's characters, Frank is "the

creature of his own imagination…. He is the Adam (and unknowingly, the Eve) of his

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[162] Among the texts I have discussed, this aspect of the posthuman appears to be peculiar to Frank's
situation: the trauma of believing that he is not able to reproduce is the motivating factor for his posthuman
explorations, but not, in essence, the reason that he is a posthuman character.

boy's own *Treasure Island* world" (26). In "Player of Games," Cairns Craig also

positions *The Wasp Factory* as "a gothic black comedy" (231), yet takes the analysis one

step further in applying Lyotard's notions of the postmodern, as well as a psychoanalytic

approach, writing that "Frank escapes from the 'game' that is his father's 'grand scheme' to

one in which he has god-like power to reshape and rename the world" (233) while

correctly suggesting, however, that "The creation of games whose rules are your own

invention do not necessarily release you from the rules of the game from which you are

fleeing" (233). Yet becoming mired in an analysis of Jameson via Banks, Craig

ultimately terms *The Wasp Factory* an example of "post-postmodernism" (237), a term

which seems to demarcate a territory somewhere between conventional postmodernism

and the posthuman.

Yet Frank's invented self is only as interesting as his other creations, especially

the titular "wasp factory." Sage writes that "Frank proceeds not only to invent himself as

a male, but also a whole religion and cosmology which will explain and justify the

microcosmic barbarian world he imagines himself to be at the center of" (25). One of

The Wasp Factory's crucial elements is the development and presentation of the complex

system of mythology and religion that Frank invents as a compensatory mechanism for

his gender anxiety. His mythology hinges on an old clock face, which he has elevated to

the position of a mechanical God and turned into a "fate machine." Frank's "wasp

factory," which Frank refers to as "The Factory" is the central metaphor, and structural

element of the text.[163] It is his source of spiritual, emotional, intellectual and

psychological comfort. He has already proclaimed that he has "learned to live without

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[163] Frank's Factory, which becomes the site of his religious, intellectual, emotional and artistic expressions, is in name reminiscent not only of sites of production and reproduction, but also of Warhol's Factory—another constructed liminal zone in which one was invited to define, or relinquish, his/her identity.

other people" (13), and the Factory takes the place of these people, along with most other elements of typical human life. When Frank thinks of his Sacrifice Poles, he is "seeing in my mind what those sightless eyes looked out to, and flicking through each view like a security guard changing cameras on a monitor screen…. My dead sentries, those extensions of me which came under my power through the simple but ultimate surrender of death…" (20). The Factory itself is, according to Frank, "beautiful and deadly and perfect" (118), the locus of his obsessions, fears and desires, and also the source of what he believes is preternatural knowledge about the future. Cristie L. March writes that

> Frank creates and relies on a complex spiritual system to protect himself and the island on which he and his father live. The system requires daily visits to the Sacrifice Poles, stakes planted along the perimeter of the island, dangling an assortment of small dead animals, in order to sprinkle them with urine, as well as visits to Old Saul, a dog's skull Frank has fashioned into a shrine to which he sacrifices other animal remains…. Frank's world is fraught with Signs—every action and occurrence points to the future. In order to decipher these signs, he turns to the Wasp Factory, an old clock tower face transformed into a maze through which he puts live wasps, watching their paths in order to determine the future. (91-92)

Frank additionally hopes to "gain telepathic knowledge of the future" (Sage 26) by essentially entering into a form of ritualized prayer in front of Old Saul's candle-filled skull. Frank tries to transport his mind through the dog's skull into Eric's mind, in a form of identity sublimation and voyaging. In demented ecstasy, Frank thinks, "I was getting through! I could feel him…. I could smell him as myself, see through those eyes that hardly closed and burned in his skull…. I was there!" (126). Pushing through the balance of human perception, or attempting to, in the manner of Herzog, gives Frank a sense of great power and energizes much of his violent behavior.

In addition to the text's inherent violence, much has been written about *The Wasp Factory* in terms of Scottish literature and its political content, as critics have attempted to place it both geographically and generically. Schoene-Harwood writes that *The Wasp Factory* is representative of a 1980's trend in Scottish literature "protesting that Scotland's imminent secession from England must not result in the creation of yet another insular monolith but give birth to a vibrant communal conglomerate" ("Dams" 131). Schoene-Harwood positions the text's hybridity and subversive nature as reflecting Scottish literature's ability to "bombard the myth of closure with a self-conscious proliferation of ambivalence and heterogeneity" (131). If the Scottish male is "already feminized as a disempowered native… [and] his condition is one of subordinate marginalization" (Schoene-Harwood, "Dams" 134), then Frank—who believes himself to be a castrated, and thus "feminized," male—could serve as a symbol of the postcolonial Scottish plight. Even Eric and Frank's destruction tends to center on "picture-book icons of the Scottish pastoral (rabbits, dogs, sheep)" (147). Although Cristie L. March's "Iain Banks' Fiction Factory" in *Rewriting Scotland* is primarily concerned with surveying Banks' novels to date, especially his science fiction novels, and the sociopolitical implications of the worlds he creates in his fiction, she notes the same thing that Schoene-Harwood does about *The Wasp Factory*, pointing out that "Banks offers a strange geographic hybrid as Frank builds his bombs amidst pastures of rabbits and sheep, illustrating the disruption of traditional views of a rural, idyllic Scottish Highlands" (104).

     The Wasp Factory's parodic tendencies have also been examined—although often at the expense of the novel's more disturbing posthuman statements. Approaching the text primarily as parody or satire becomes an easy means by which to contain and

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dismantle threats to established social order—the very monolithic entity the novel is

trying to undermine in the first place. Thus, some critics such as Victor Sage position the

novel as multi-faceted parody, writing that Frank's voice is "literary ventriloquism… a

parody of Defoe's method of the unconscious first person in *Robinson Crusoe*" (24). It is

also a parody of Gothic tropes, according to Sage, and also "a brilliant parody of the

weird insularity and the warrior-culture atmosphere of the Falklands campaign" (27).

Could it also be considered a parody of the posthuman? In a sense, it is certainly an

inverted narrative from those found in the other posthuman texts I have discussed so far:

Frank believes himself to be posthuman—in terms of how he self-defines "human"—but

is actually, physically, quite human. His actions during the majority of the book, in

which he believes himself outside limits of time, space, gender, and sexuality, are in

human terms abhorrent, and his creation of both the wasp factory and his obsessive,

brutal, fetishized world are redolent of fascism, albeit a fascistic society of one teenage

boy, many animal victims, and several human ones.[164] He destroys that which does not

fit his meticulously constructed notion of the world, and is himself ruled entirely by rigid

notions of what he should be doing, and how he should be acting. In this manner, it

could be said that Banks subtly suggests the costs of imagining oneself as posthuman—or

rather, as the sole posthuman being in the world—and the alienation that stems from that

position curdling into rage and ultimately a desire to enact tyranny upon the

(non)posthuman world and on oneself, in a move reminiscent of *Frankenstein*. The

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[164] I am using the term "fascism" here in its historical sense to suggest an authoritarian ideology of power
and control, suggestive of totalitarianism and the atrocities of the Nazis. The previously mentioned
references in *The Wasp Factory* to the uncle Leviticus, South Africa and apartheid suggest that such a
reading is warranted.

violence inherent in Frank and Eric point towards the manner in which desperate urges to break boundaries might result in anxieties and an obsessive need for control.

Sacred Monsters: *The Passion of New Eve*

The novel that most closely shares many of Banks' themes and preoccupations in terms of the posthuman body, and the dangers of posthuman bodies leaning toward fascism, is Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve,* which attempts to "rewrite archetypal representations of woman as Mother, Nature, Biblical Eve, sex symbol or screen icon, profane whore, sacred virgin, and the sources of these archetypes (e.g., psychoanalysis, Christianity, Hollywood" (Rubinson 721). *The Passion of New Eve* has been frequently analyzed in terms of notions of the grotesque or the abject, mainly because of the "monstrous" Mother-goddess figure at the heart of the narrative, as well as the gender-bending protagonist Eve(lyn), the grotesque madman Zero, and the reclusive, cross-dressing film star Tristessa; yet I seek to locate it within the realm of the posthuman. Through a discussion of the altered bodies of these four primary characters—or as Heather Johnson terms them, "chimeras… mythical creatures of mixed form" (46)—I will examine how these bodies are posthuman, and what it means to assert that *The Passion of New Eve* is a posthuman text.

For some critics, Carter's novel is merely a study of the Bakhtinian grotesque via Bakhtin's analysis of Rabelais, and is "dependent on a set of images that describe a transgressive body—one which emphasizes the lower stratum, which takes pleasure in bodily functions, and which embraces an interrelation of death and birth… this grotesque body [is] open, protruding, secreting, a body of becoming" (Johnson 43). *The Passion of*

New Eve has also been discussed by critics such as Maria Ferreira and Johnson in terms of Kristeva's notions of "abjection," as well as by Jean Wyatt in terms of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. I will examine these approaches as I position the text as one that displays an array of posthuman bodies, freed from typical gender restraints, yet still striated and constrained in other ways. The bodies with which Carter presents the reader all suffer limitations; as Lenora Ledwon points out in "The Passion of the Phallus," the novel is a deconstruction of monolithic identities, such as notions of "femininity incarnate (Tristessa), maternity incarnate (Mother), masculinity incarnate (Zero), or hermaphroditism incarnate (Mother's project to create a completely self-sufficient being in Eve)" (38). Carter herself noted that she conceived of *The Passion of New Eve* as an "anti-mythic novel… a feminist tract about the social creation of femininity, amongst other things" (*Shaking* 38), and I will argue that those "other things" include not only the fabrication of masculinity, but also of humanity itself.[165]

The monstrous figure of "Mother" is the most superficially apparent posthuman body; she is a self-created cyborg and experimental gender scientist, who "has undergone a painful metamorphosis of the entire body and become the abstraction of a natural principle" (Carter, *Eve* 49). Surrounded and supported by a group of devoted female followers in Beulah, Mother represents a locus of technological, mythological and religious worship. She is, at once, "the hand-carved figurehead of her own, self-constructed theology… a sacred monster" (58-59), a research scientist, and an expert in

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[165] The "anti-mythic" can be seen as posthuman, at least in relation to Carter, who writes that "all myths are products of the human mind and reflect only aspects of material human practice" (Carter qtd. in Wandor 71).

sexual, and psycho-sexual, surgery and manipulation.[166] Truly posthuman in her

unnatural physical appearance, Mother is "breasted like a sow—she possessed two tiers

of nipples, the result… of a strenuous programme of grafting" (59). She is literally larger

than (human) life, with gigantic limbs—"Her ponderous feet were heavy enough to serve

as illustrations of gravity, her hands the shape of giant fig leaves" (59)—and thick,

wrinkled dark skin, having "reconstructed her flesh painfully, with knives and with

needles" (60). Gregory Rubinson notes that Carter focuses on the "grotesqueness and

artificiality of Mother in part to draw attention to the artificiality of the figure she

replaces—the traditional white male, patriarchal, bearded, and vengeful god of Judaism

and Christianity" (725) while also making it evident that Mother is "a warning against the

dangers of merely inverting patriarchal myths" (725).[167] As Rubinson indicates, Mother

"does not 'subvert' the dominant paradigm; she merely attempts to invert it" (727).

Mother has become the new godhead, in both religious and scientific terms, of a fascistic

matriarchal regime that takes its cues from the brutal, fascistic patriarchies of years

past—of the kind Frank tries to create on his island in *The Wasp Factory*. When Mother

speaks, she invokes a "hieratic locution" that she has "adopted in her role as goddess"

(65), and she is given to quasi-religious proclamations and invocations of myth,

bellowing at one point, "'I am the Great Parricide, I am the Castratrix of the Phallocentric

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[166] Frank in *The Wasp Factory*, and his father Angus, could be seen as proto-Mothers, enacting obsessive experiments.

[167] Rubinson also references Carter's statement in *The Sadeian Woman* that "Mother goddesses are just as silly a notion as father gods" (Carter qtd. in Rubinson 725). Indeed, Carter's description of Mother, which features lines such as "her head… was as big and black as Marx's head in Highgate Cemetary; her face had the stern, democratic beauty of a figure on a pediment in the provincial square of a people's republic" (59), is heavily ironic. Carter parodies notions of "a paradigmatic Great Mother, with all the connotations of fertility, nourishment and, simultaneously, fear that are associated with that figure" (Ferreira, "Uncanny" 474) in addition to subverting the idea that a "Great Mother" is any more favorable, or ultimately transgressive, than a "Great Father."

Universe, I am Mama, Mama, Mama" (67). Carter writes that Mother's "statuesque and perfect immobility implied the willed repose of the greatest imaginable physical strength" (59), yet this strength will not only be used to brutalize Eve throughout the course of the novel, it will also inevitably be exposed as an illusion, when Leilah informs Eve near the end of the book that because history has superceded myth in an apocalyptic breakdown of American society—and the "Priestesses of Cybele… have turned into storm troopers" (173)—Mother has "resigned from the godhead [and] suffered a kind of… nervous breakdown. She has become quite gentle and introspective" (174). Indeed she ends up as both a sort of womb-like cave, and as a withered, enervated old woman: a blind, "lone, mad old lady" (176) alone on the beach, defecating on the sand and singing to herself as she prepares for death.

Yet prior to this breakdown which exposes her powers as transitory and as ironically insubstantial as those behind patriarchal myths and desires, Mother is positioned as a figure both embodying and parodying numerous powerful myths. As I have already noted, she is the "Great Mother," and the "multiplication of her breasts… link her with such deities as the great Diana of Ephesus…. Mother can also be associated with Gaia, the Great Earth Mother, and she is in addition connected with the Sphinx and Medusa, both of them mother-goddess figures, albeit ambiguous ones" (Ferreira, "Artificial Wombs" 92). As Ferreira also notes, Mother is additionally a "many-breasted Artemis" (Carter, *Eve* 77), a figure influenced by the ancient Greek goddess Bauboa: "a primitive and obscene female demon… originally a personification of the female genitals" ("The Uncanny (M)other" 475). And as Ferreira and others have suggested,

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Mother's absolute power and the worship she demands from her cabal of subjects is also

reminiscent of the character "She-who-must-be-obeyed" in Rider Haggard's *She*. [168]

Although Mother has suffered through a program of self-alteration, reminiscent of

the Deleuzian process of becoming a "body without organs," Mother has not achieved the

freedom of a Deluezian BwO. If anything, it might be said that Mother is a body "with

too many organs," and those organs are misused to represent herself as a technotopian

god, as "her own mythological artifact" (Carter, *Eve* 60). She essentially rapes Evelyn,

and her physical body during that process is described, comically, in terms of

cataclysmic, natural phenomena that invert masculinist notions of power and sexuality:

> I caught one glimpse of her gaping vagina as I went down; it looked like the crater
> of a volcano on the point of eruption… for a hallucinatory instant, I thought I saw
> the sun in her mouth…. Then her Virginia-smoked ham of a fist grasped my
> shrinking sex… it was the last time I performed the sexual act as a man… her
> thighs grasped me with the vigor of the female mantis and I felt only
> engulfment…. I rolled over the floor, yelping, leaving a snailtrack of gasped gobs
> of semen in my wake…. I never realized before how degrading it is to be the
> object of pity. She threw me a cloth with which to wipe myself and told me to
> cover my private parts (64-65).

After the rape, Mother takes him and presses him to her "double tier of breasts," which

Evelyn notes is "like being seated at the console of a gigantic cinema organ" (65).

Evelyn recognizes that he is going to be her "sacrificial animal" (69) but her strength and

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[168] An excellent modern visual analogue to Carter's Mother, down to the "false beard of crisp, black curls"
(59), can be found in the monstrous female figures of Chris Cunningham's music video *Windowlicker*. As
Jonathan Romney notes, Cunningham is a filmmaker who "specializes in mutants, hybrids, chimera" (34).
The culminating scene of *Windowlicker*, set to the experimental electronic music of Aphex Twin aka
Richard D. James, occurs when two men "end up on a promenade, where voluptuous bikini-clad women,
their backs to the camera, dance a meticulously choreographed number. As the men approach the women
expectantly, the dancers spin around, and, to the men's horror, they wear the same grotesque grimacing
facial features of… Aphex Twin" (Amy 150). These women continue to writhe and dance in a sexually
suggestive manner, parodying the treatment of women in hip-hop videos, yet their faces are bearded, hyper-
masculine, and wearing aggressive leers denoting their (uncanny) power.

power make her relentless in her zealous pursuit of turning Evelyn into his "own diminutive, Eve" (71) through two months of intensive plastic surgery and psychological conditioning. Mother actualizes the threat of castration that her massive, powerful form—a physical representation of stereotypical, masculinist fears of a Great Mother— suggests. Mother, who is "static and dynamic at the same time" (Bono 40), is a hybrid that encompasses notions of both the grotesque and the abject. Kristeva defines the "abject" as that which "disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (*Powers* 4).[169] Ferreira writes that Mother's genitals demonstrate a place that, for Kristeva, "constitutes one of the main sites/sights of terror: the archaic, maternal grotesque, the confrontation with the 'desirable and terrifying, nourishing and murderous, fascinating and abject inside of the maternal body'" (*Powers* 54). Evelyn experiences the archaic and repressed fear of the devouring, potentially castrating feminine (vagina) as well as the prohibition of incest" (Ferreira, "The Uncanny M(other)" 479).

Evelyn understands at once that Mother essentially represents the definition of the uncanny: "when I saw her, I knew I had come home; yet a desolating strangeness overwhelmed me" (58). This connects with Kristevian notions about the uncanny and the self: "by recognizing our uncanny strangeness we shall neither suffer from it nor enjoy it from the outside. The foreigner is within me, hence we are all foreigners" (Kristeva,

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[169] Kristeva's notion of the "abject" is not so far, in general terms, from definitions of the "posthuman," in its emphasis on that which explodes hierarchical systems and deflates binarist notions. Yet for Kristeva, the abject is located primarily in relation to psychoanalytic terms, and notions of the uncanny (which she notes is not as "violent" as abjection). In terms of the posthuman, Kristeva's abjection, although a site of liberation, seems a slightly more negative term: the abject is "immoral, sinister, scheming, and shady: a terror that dissembles, a hatred that smiles… a friend who stabs you" (*Powers* 4). Yet it is true that Valerie Solanas could equally be studied as a lesson in abjection as the posthuman, or rather, both terms apply equally to her life and her project. Kristeva writes that "The abject is perverse because it neither gives up nor assumes a prohibition, a rule, or a law; but turns them aside, misleads, corrupts; uses them, takes advantage of them, the better to deny them. It kills in the name of life…" (*Powers* 15).

Strangers 192). Yet Carter does not use Mother to merely exemplify interlinked notions

of the grotesque, the unheimlich, and the abject, but also to satirize and deconstruct them.

An element of the familiar that Evelyn undoubtedly recognizes in Mother is her

replication of, and enslavement to, the monolithic power structures she purports to

subvert. Schoene-Harwood writes that "as long as Mother continues to rival patriarchal

man's mythical feat of autonomous self-authentification, her oppositional radicalism will

never mature into a truly alternative world view. Instead it comes to resemble yet another

tedious manifestation… that merely reconfigures and supplants, rather than resolutely

eradicates, previous constellations of power" (*Writing Men* 123). Indeed, Carter has

Evelyn point out that he is "to be castrated with a phallic symbol" (70) by Mother,

demonstrating that she is utilizing the very device of the patriarchy that she abhors to

bring about a matriarchy—in the manner of Valerie Solanas—yet it seems doubtful that

this matriarchy will prove very liberating if it depends on retooled versions of outmoded

patriarchal devices and notions. Mother, even in her pseudo-posthuman body, has still

always been located within human hierarchies and power dynamics, and she has always

been playing a role: early in the novel, Carter makes that notion explicit in physical terms

when describing Mother's head as resembling a "handsome and austere mask" (59), the

word "mask" suggesting that her power is dependent on a superficial act and presentation

of being, rather than any essential posthuman qualities.

In fact, Carter makes her critique of Mother's failed attempt explicit at the end of

The Passion of New Eve, when Eve climbs back into a womb of "living rock… into

earth's entrails" (179-180). Eve must navigate a course of tunnels and chambers, pressing

her body through narrow, moist crevasses, evidently representative of Mother's vagina,

just as his penis disappeared into her massive folds when she raped him prior to his

castration. Eve notes of the tunnels that "the rock had softened or changed its substance;

the textures under my enquiring fingers were soft and yielding…. Now the dew felt like

slime…. The walls of this passage shuddered and sighed at first…. Walls of meat and

slimy velvet. Inward. A visceral yet perfectly rhythmic agitation ripples the walls"

(184). This is a posthuman landscape worthy of Ballard; the rock becomes flesh, the

water becomes viscous organic "slime," and it takes on the "pulsations" (184) of human

anatomy. Eve determines that now Mother is a "figure of speech and has retired to a cave

beyond consciousness" (184); indeed, this cave is also a place beyond space and time. As

in Ballard's novels, the posthuman is the prehuman, for as Carter writes, "The destination

of all journeys is their beginning" (186). Within this flesh-cave that allows Eve to

experience a rebirth—or perhaps her first birth, as the female "Eve" instead of the male

"Evelyn"—time slows down and runs backward, these temporal distortions suggestive of

both Warhol's early films and the parodic Jungian elements of *The Drowned World*: "I

have been subdued to the leisurely pace of Eocene time," Eve thinks, "I am inching my

way towards the beginning and the end of time" (184-185).[170] Although it is clear that

Mother is intended as a warning against the proto-fascistic tendencies dormant in a too-

rapid acceptance of a posthuman ideology, Merja Makinen raises an intriguing point in

"Sexual and Textual Aggression in *The Sadeian Woman* and *The Passion of New Eve*,"

when she comments that despite Carter's parodic, critical stance, the novel might not

actually "deromanticize" Mother at all:

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[170] For Maria Del Mar Perez-Gil, *The Passion of New Eve* can be read in anti-psychoanalytic terms, as an attempt to "reproduce many of the principles on which Jungian philosophy is based in order to subvert them" (216). The ending of the novel, in which time runs backward as Eve travels through the womb-like cave, could then be seen as a parody of Jung's notions of prehistory and collective myths of the unconscious: "anachronistic myths that need to be superceded" (Gil 232).

> Carter's creation of the mythic 'Great Parricide' and the 'Grand Emasculator' is so powerful that its vitality undermines the writer's overt concern to mock radical feminist idealizations of the Earth Mother…. Mother's power and aggression are represented here as an overwhelming and enthralling force… the complexity of her characterization turns her into an enormously enjoyable and awe-inspiring violator. (161)

This reading, which indeed is suggested and encouraged by the text, might seem to subvert Carter's stated goal of parodying both patriarchal power structures and radical feminism of the 1970s. Yet it allows for both parody and true subversion to exist simultaneously in the figure of Mother: a hybrid that can embody such apparently contradictory notions with ease. The posthuman tendencies across the generations (Mother, Eve, and Eve's unborn child) intensify with each iteration: if Mother is a proto-posthuman fascistic body, then Eve is slightly more posthuman (and without the fascism), and Eve's child might be the true posthuman of the novel. This presentation therefore literalizes the status of the posthuman implied in so many texts: unborn and unseen, yet waiting for its liberating birth.

Eve, created by Mother as one of the other dominant potentially posthuman bodies in the novel, demonstrates the idea that "'the perfect woman' is constructed according to the specifications of male desire" (Wyatt 552). The moment in which the newly created Eve looks at herself in the mirror is "Evelyn's first experience of gender as performance" (Lee 242):

> When I looked in the mirror, I saw Eve; I did not see myself. I saw a young woman who, though she was I, I could in no way acknowledge as myself, for this one was only a lyrical abstraction of femininity to me, a tinted arrangement of curved lines…. I saw white hands in the mirror move, it was as though they were white gloves I had put on to conduct the unfamiliar orchestra of myself…. I was the object of all the unfocused desires that had ever existed in my own head. I had become my own masturbatory fantasy. And—how can I put it—the cock in my head, still, twitched at the sight of myself. (Carter 74-75)

Just as Frank in *The Wasp Factory* teaches himself to enact "male" rituals and become "masculine" in compensation for what he believes to be his missing phallus, Eve now must undergo a Deleuzian "becoming-Woman" in terms of her psychological makeup and learn how to "perform" as a female. Like Frank at the end of *The Wasp Factory*, Eve comes "to the realization that 'femininity' is an amalgamation of male-authored conventions to which women feel compelled to conform throughout their lives… gender is determined not by physiology but by a variety of social and cultural factors" (Rubinson 732-734). As Alison Lee points out in "Angela Carter's New Eve(lyn)," for Eve, "gender cannot help being performative because its liminality provides multiple possibilities" (248). Just like Bhabha's concept of the stereotype and fixity, gender itself becomes "the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame… to produce the appearance of substance" (Butler, *Gender* 33). Mother's desire to destroy temporal boundaries and live forever, for example, "is perhaps an effort to eliminate precisely those frames that regulate gender" (Lee 247).

Yet Mother's experiment has merely replicated patriarchal mythic, religious and gender stratagems, for Eve realizes that after the surgeries she has become both "more and less than a real woman… a being as mythic and monstrous as Mother herself" (83), suggesting that in a sense, like God, Mother has (re)made Eve in her own image. Eve is a cyborg who describes her new physical features in the language of mechanization, noting both her "factory-fresh incision and engine-turned breasts" (150). Yet Eve is also a self-reconstructed body, a cyborg created not only from technology and mythology, but also from the rearrangement of her own body parts. Carter writes that Eve's "pretty face had been constructed out of a painful fabric of skin from [her] old inner thighs" (143), and

Eve thinks of her body, "I was a man-made masterpiece of skin and bone, the technological Eve in person" (146).[171] Her own thoughts and memories have been altered; at one juncture in the novel she thinks back to her previous life as a man, and notes that it doesn't seem like a "real memory, it was like remembering a film I'd seen once whose performances"—i.e. the performance of being male that mirrors Tristessa's performance of being female—"did not concern me. Even my memories no longer fitted me, they were old clothes belonging to someone else no longer living" (92). Ferreira points toward this posthuman project near the end of her article "The Uncanny (M)other," writing that "if New Eve herself incarnates a fusion of sexes, her offspring… born from a woman constructed from a man and from a man who is a transvestite… will presumably encapsulate the promise of a new world characterized by a greater harmony and tolerance between the sexes, one of the most important concerns in *The Passion of New Eve*" (486).

Yet the "unity" between Tristessa and Eve that produces her unborn fetus—and suggests "the imminent incarnation of a new kind of human being, a messianic Tiresias or pansexual hermaphrodite"—is "as likely to produce a monster as a messiah" (Schoene-Harwood, *Writing Men* 127-129), and based on the messianic urges of both Mother and Zero, there may be very little difference between those two terms. In fact, is Eve a posthuman body at all? Perhaps she is better thought of as a proto-posthuman body in transit than a full fledged posthuman liberated from human restrictions. Her "becoming" is a failed one, because, as Deleuze and Guattari would point out, it does not take place at

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[171] In "The Passion for Sexual Difference: On (Re) Reading Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve*," Paola Bono points out that Mother's "sexuality is the experience of pregnancy and giving birth, the very experience which has been in our culture both degraded and exalted, a source of power turned into a reason for enslavement. Her grotesque body bears the marks of idealization and abjection" (41). Yet all of this is also true of Mother's greatest creation other than herself: Eve. And while Eve is physically beautiful rather than "grotesque," her body bears those same marks of "idealization and abjection" that Mother's does.

a molecular level, only the level of the skin and organs.[172] Eve notes, "I have not yet

become a woman, although I possess a woman's shape" (83), and indeed she never

"becomes" a woman, only a simulacrum of one. Indeed, despite the physical and

psychological changes, at a molecular level, her DNA remains unaltered. Eve's female

skin is, on some fundamental level, akin more to Mother's "austere mask" of a face; a

superficial transformation. There is a greater hope for the posthuman to be located in her

unborn child, which ideally, might "grow up with entirely new concepts of masculinity

and femininity" (Makinen 163) and therefore be free from the need to perform gender

roles based on societal, and individual, assumptions and stereotypes.

Mother's plan involves not only the castration of Evelyn, but also the evacuation

of a "fructifying female space" (68) inside her, followed by impregnation via Evelyn's

own sperm. Mother tells Eve that "now, first of all beings in the world, you can seed

yourself and fruit yourself… that is why you have become New Eve, and your child will

rejuvenate the world!" (76-77). Thus Eve is merely a vessel of potentiality for a being

who might, or might not, be posthuman. At most Eve is, as Carter notes, an "interrupted

continuum" (167), whose maleness has been disrupted in order to send him on a new line

of flight, speeding across traditionally transitional zones like the desert and beach, to

chart and establish new coordinates of identity.[173] Near the end of the novel, Leilah takes

out a small, refrigerated metal box, and reveals Eve's preserved genitals: "Inside, on a bed

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[172] The same is true of Frank in *The Wasp Factory*, who notes his "uncastrated genes" (118), which he
believes consign him to a life of masculinist aggression.

[173] It is true that although a failed BwO, Eve is definitely an attempted one, with all the difficulty and pain
associated with a Deleuzian becoming. Carter has noted of the novel's title that the word "passion" does
not only refer "to the erotic attraction between the two principal characters… but also to the process of
physical pain and degradation that Eve undergoes in her apprenticeship as a woman" (*Shaking* 592). I
would posit, then, that although the "pain and degradation" necessary for becoming a BwO are present, the
fact that she becomes "a woman" rather than a complete other, suggests that Eve has not completed her
posthuman journey.

of dry ice, lay the set of genitals which had once belonged to Evelyn" (187). Leilah offers them back to Eve, but Eve begins to laugh and shake her head, suggesting that she has no desire to return to her previously held state within monolithic boundaries as Evelyn, but has embraced her new hybrid form, despite the hardships she has endured at the hands of Zero, and others. Eve's rejection of her old genitals is an acknowledgment that Mother's systemic gender reassignment has been a success, which, as Makinen indicates, complicates a simplistic reading of Mother as wholly negative and parodic. Yet it will not be Mother, nor Eve, who becomes the true posthuman, Deleuzian "probe head" that charts truly new territory in terms of ungendered physical bodies and mental states, but Eve's offspring with Tristessa.

Tristessa de St Ange, an iconic faded film star once billed as "'The most beautiful woman in the world'" (5) who now attracts a cult of "sentimental queers" (5) and is ensconced along with Billie Holliday and Judy Garland in the "queenly pantheon of women who expose their scars with pride" (6), is one of the other primary quasi-posthuman bodies represented in Carter's novel. The protagonist, Evelyn, is attracted to her at an early age, and once loved the campy Tristessa—the reader is ironically informed—"out of pure innocence when I was a little boy and the sculptural flare of her nostrils haunted my pubescent dreams" (6). Tristessa's "specialty" is suffering, and her films are romantic and Gothic in nature, so Evelyn's illusions are shattered when he writes a fan letter to MGM and receives a publicity shot of her which shows her holding a (phallic) golf club, in a pallid attempt at looking like "the girl next door" (7). Evelyn explains that he only "loved her because she was not of this world and now I was disillusioned with her when I discovered she could stoop to a pretence of humanity" (8).

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For Evelyn, "Tristessa" is a construct and mythology made possible through semiotics: "Tristessa. Enigma. Illusion. Woman? Ah! And all you signified was false! Your existence was only notional; you were a piece of pure mystification" (6). Evelyn notes that Tristessa would always be "just as beautiful" as she had been "twenty years before… as long as celluloid remained in complicity with the phenomenon of the persistence of vision" (1). Despite his disappointment in the photo, which suggests to Evelyn that MGM "lost confidence in the mythology they had created for her" (7) and thus essentially put an end to "Tristessa," he cannot shake her spell, and goes to a "camp" screening of her films. When the girl who accompanies him to the theater sees that Evelyn is turned on by Tristessa's cinematic suffering, Evelyn informs the reader that she gets on "her knees in the dark on the dirty floor of the cinema…. and suck[s] me off" (9).

Evelyn then sets aside his "adolescent" thoughts about Tristessa as the "perfect" woman, and travels to New York City. [174] There, notions of race and gender are being complicated by an apocalyptic upheaval meant to rewrite societal boundaries. At the university where Evelyn plans to teach, he finds "combat-suited blacks… with machine-guns at every door" (13) and discovers that "the blacks" have begun "to build a wall around Harlem" (16). In addition, he sees gender-based graffiti everywhere: the image of "bared teeth in the female circle… in virulent dayglo red" (12), a signifier of a vagina dentata which both terrifies and titillates Evelyn. Women with guns—perhaps the textual

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[174] Although I am primarily focusing on posthuman bodies in this section, *The Passion of New Eve* presents a wide array of posthuman landscapes, ranging from the graffiti-drenched "lurid, Gothic darkness… rank, disordered streets... [and] skies of strange, bright, artificial colors" (10-12) of the city, which eventually becomes "almost medieval" (32), to the bleakness of the liminal zone of the California desert (a move that takes Evelyn from the striated to the smooth, in spatial terms). Nicoletta Vallorani notes that, "Since the city endlessly echoes and reflects the self, the typical processes of the body are coherently transferred to the objects inhabiting the city's space. And then the process is reversed…. Ontologically, that is, the body and the city are identical in that they undergo the same fictionalizing process" (367). And Paola Bono writes that Carter's novels "offer alternative mental geographies" (36), a useful phrase applicable to virtually all of the novels discussed so far in this study.

spawn of Valerie Solanas—begin "sniping from concealed windows at men… there were rumors of a kamikaze squad of syphilitic whores…. They blew up wedding shops and scoured the newspapers for marriage announcements so that they could send brides gifts of well-honed razors" (17). New York City as a zone of destabilization will have the effect of transitioning Evelyn and preparing him for an even greater destabilization: his enforced gender reassignment surgery.

When Eve is reunited with Tristessa, through the Charles Manson-like lunatic "Zero the poet," Eve discovers that Tristessa inhabits a glass, cathedral-style house in the desert which is temporally (and literally) frozen, in a manner similar to that of Ballard's crystallizing zones which freeze time. Tristessa is blasting the desert sand into liquid glass; Carter writes that over the swimming pool, "the diving board dripped icicles of glass and a solid frosting of glass clung to the rungs of the ladder that led up to it" (111). Time is static within Tristessa's domain, and Eve notes that "She lived in her own mausoleum" (112). In fact, when Eve and Zero enter the house, they discover "a bier of glass bearing a glass coffin" (116), which turns out to be, in fact, one of many waxwork, celebrity figures—all of whom died tragic deaths, such as James Dean and Sharon Tate.[175] Eventually, Eve finds Tristessa, who is still alive, having "cheated the clock in her castle… her ice palace, her glass shrine. She was a sleeping beauty who could never die since she had never lived" (119), again suggesting that Tristessa is only a celluloid construct—a cyborg, perhaps—but definitely not a human. And equally enthralling to Eve, not a woman, either; Tristessa is revealed to be a man, when "out of the vestigial garment sprang the rude, red-purple insignia of maleness, the secret core of Tristessa's

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[175] Intriguingly, one of these figures is Lupe Velez, who also fascinated Warhol; his 1965 split-screen film *Lupe* stars a drug-addled Edie Sedgwick in the title role, and serves as a parodic discourse on Lupe's suicide, and a meta-text with regards to Sedgwick's own troubled life.

sorrow, the source of her enigma…. *That* was why he had been the perfect man's woman! He had made himself the shrine of his own desires… an unbegotten woman who made no concessions to humanity… an anti-being that existed only by means of a massive effort of will and a huge suppression of fact" (128-9). Upon discovering Tristessa's "secret" Eve thinks, rhetorically, "How could a real woman ever have been so much a woman as you?" (129). Tristessa later explains to Eve that "Tristessa" as a conceptual identity "came and took possession of my mirror one day when I was looking at myself. She invaded the mirror like an army… she entered me through my eyes" (151), suggesting that the male gaze turned back in on itself—which is analogous to Zero's belief that her "penetrating" female gaze sterilized him—so that Tristessa became the object of her own desire, the pimp and whore located within the same physical form. She is a hybrid creature, not only in terms of gender, but in terms of celluloid, and her "artifice flaunts hetero-normative, androcentric gender norms" (Rubinson 732).

As with Eve, Tristessa has not undergone any sort of molecular-level alterations either, yet she has undergone a celluloid alteration, as I will discuss. The living character Tristessa is bound by human limits, and the exposure of her "secret" phallus, also exposes her basic humanity. The celluloid Tristessa remains a more potent, disruptive body— because the phallus is hidden, resulting in the "uncanny" power she holds over viewers, ranging from Zero to Evelyn—yet she is equally bound by the medium of celluloid that she inhabits, a medium which she is permanently encoded within. This dichotomy between celluloid and the real can be read in completely semiotic terms; David Punter writes that "cinema and the star system become the most potent and ambivalent images of the union of technology and charisma," noting that as Tristessa "drops her glass

sculptures into the pool and sees them harden on the instant into the frozen forms of pain, so she/he, a living person, is dropped into the alchemical medium of the screen" (219)—and is metaphorically and literally frozen there until Eve's presence unthaws her. When Zero forces Eve and Tristessa to undergo a bizarre wedding ceremony, Carter has Eve point out the gender stereotype-defying elements of the union, i.e. "My bride will become my child's father" (136). Yet Eve also notes about herself and Tristessa that "circumstances had forced us both out of the selves into which we had been born and now we were no longer human… we were being composed of echoes" (136). Yet Eve soon views Tristessa as all-too-human, thinking not long after that "He was a mad, old man with long, white hair" (145) who is ultimately shot by a fascist, homophobic Christian child soldier, and thrown into a shallow, sandy grave. Tristessa, who previously told Eve that he believed himself "inviolable, like glass… a pane the sun shines through" (137), is revealed as ultimately human, or at least, human enough to die in his non-celluloid, and therefore non-eternal, incarnation.[176]

Tristessa, like Mother and Eve, is not an entirely successful posthuman body; Leilah notes near the end of the book that although Tristessa lived an "atomized, fragmented existence" (173) he kept "his cock stuck in his asshole so that he himself formed the uroborus, the perfect circle, the vicious circle, the dead end" (173). In fact, Leilah reveals that Tristessa had once consulted Mother for a sex change in Los Angeles, but Mother had declined, both because "he was too much of a woman already… [and] she was struck by what seemed to her the awfully ineradicable quality of his maleness"

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[176] The character Tristessa, like so much of Warhol's work, also raises questions about the relationship between the posthuman and the queer. I would argue that as the posthuman always advocates the transgression of confining boundaries, it therefore often functions as a liberating force in terms of gender and sexuality.

(173). Although Tristessa subverts many boundaries, her "masquerade… is solidly

embedded in the binarist structures that inform traditional sex and gender formations….

Tristessa constitutes in fact a glamorous reflection of Zero's monomania, his cinematic

impersonation of the feminine exacting the same perpetuation of gender roles as the

latter's punitive battering of his wives" (Schoene-Harwood, *Writing Men* 128). Tristessa

is merely another representative of the business of the reproduction of myth, in this

instance via Hollywood machinery rather than societal gender norms, with its own set of

illusions and sacred monsters. Tristessa has defined his identity as a woman in

stereotypically feminine terms: "he sees femininity as the complete opposite of the active

male…. Understood as masquerade, Tristessa's cross-dressing is a male appropriation of

femininity, not a radical form of gender-bending" (Makinen 158).[177]

The monstrous Zero is perhaps the least successful potential posthuman body.

Zero believes that Tristessa's gaze disseminated from the screen—which, as noted, is the

inverse, and a parody of, the male gaze which traditionally apprehends the images on the

screen—and has performed a "spiritual vasectomy on him" (92). Like Frank's demented

brother Eric in *The Wasp Factory*, Zero is a located source of fear; he is the masculinist

act, or persona, stretched to its most brutal limit. He treats his "harem" of wives brutally,

both in terms of his physical behavior and his language. Eve notes that Zero would only

"bark, or grunt, or squeak, or mew at us because he only used the language of the animals

towards his wives" (96). He beats, rapes and tortures the wives, and makes them kiss

"his solitary foot" (103). Zero—containing no positive elements whatsoever—is an

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[177] Merja Makinen also cites Carter's interview with John Haffenden, in which Carter states, "I created [Tristessa] in order to say some quite specific things about the cultural production of femininity. The promotion slogan for the film *Gilda*, starring Rita Hayworth, was 'There was never a woman like Gilda,' and that may have been one of the reasons why I made my Hollywood star a transvestite, a man, because only a man could think of femininity in terms of that slogan" (86).

animalistic grotesque who reads as a catalogue of horrific male stereotypes of violence and sexual aggression, like a parodic amplification of Popeye in Faulkner's *Sanctuary*; in fact, Carter has her narrator Eve mention Faulkner in passing in the text. Zero has only one eye, and one leg—he pokes his wives "with the artificial member" (84) of his other leg. He also smears his own excrement on them, and prefers his "bestial locution of grunts and barks" (85) to human speech, unleashing at one point, "a huge stream of crude sound" (89). He also listens to Wagner and contemplates a bust of Nietzsche, signifiers of the fascistic tendencies and urges at the root of his behavior, just as Beulah's hierarchical structure hints at Mother's inherent fascism. Unable to produce any offspring, he treats piglets as human babies, and dresses them up as such, preferring swine as children rather than nothing (or "zero"). Zero suggests the dangers inherent in embodying "patriarchal tyranny…. His monomaniacal cultivation of the phallic ideal has exerted an entirely detrimental influence on his bodily self…. As Carter suggests, man's total identification with patriarchy renders him a paranoid robot-like caricature of human nature" (Schoene-Harwood, *Writing Men* 125). Thus, Zero, like Mother, Tristessa, and even Eve, stands as a warning against the shedding of human attributes and the tendencies toward violence and fascism that can develop in their place. In the next chapter, I will examine how issues of posthuman bodies in our own society play out in terms of posthuman communities, and present both the positive and negative consequences of our continued cultural drift towards the posthuman.

FUTURE SPECULATIONS

Our Proto-Posthuman Communities:
The Mole People **vs. Second Life**

If we are already living in potentially posthuman times, what does the future hold

for our bodies, communities and their artistic representations? Rather than simply ending

this dissertation with a conclusion, or coda, I believe that it should end with a discussion

of the future ramifications of posthuman landscapes and bodies with regards to

communities and posthuman development. As elements of the posthuman spread,

rhizomatically, through our culture, these elements will be reflected in developments

within our (post)human communities. For example, in *The Body Electric: An Anatomy of*

the New Bionic Senses, James Geary presents not just implanted devices that might

restore sight or hearing, but entirely new modes of human-machine interaction in bodies

and communities. He discusses how the bioscience researcher Keiichi Torimitsu has

cultivated neurons from rat embryos on a computer chip. The neurons grew and

"junctions formed between the biological and silicon synapses" which then "began to

show some firing activity" (Geary 162). This is research supported by the discoveries of

biochemist Peter Fromherz, who has also mounted arrays of neurons on computer chips

so that "the chips and the neurons talk to one another by batting electrical signals back

and forth like ping pong balls" (Geary 160). The possibilities for cyborgs, both actual

and metaphoric, now become infinite, as society is on the verge of dramatic revolution

that might ultimately negate the difference between man and machine. Yet

simultaneously, aspects of our society hinging on capitalist desires will also work to

increasingly foreground those differences. In this final section, I will explore the

dichotomies and ramifications of a society in which the gap between the technological

elite and the disenfranchised widens dramatically with each passing year. The best model

for an exploration of this divide, is an examination of the high-tech virtual world—or

"metaverse"[178]—known as "Second Life," in relation to the homeless "Mole People" who

inhabit the subway tunnels beneath New York City. In "The Erotic Life of Machines,"

Steven Shaviro notes that "the dominant narratives of the new technological culture are

cyberfictions of disembodiment" (21). I argue that this "disembodiment" is on display

both within the communities of Second Life and its hidden, disenfranchised reflection:

the world of the Mole People—and a survey of both posthuman communities reveals

some startling similarities.

In her remarkable, but disputed, 1993 non-fiction book *The Mole People*, the

journalist Jenifer Toth describes the lives of the homeless people who make their

"homes" in the subterranean tunnels beneath New York City.[179] Toth traveled

underground herself to investigate various tunnel communities in the early 1990's, while

working as a reporter for the *Los Angeles Times*, and her book is an account of her

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[178] The term "metaverse," which is commonly used to refer to a virtual realm, is generally attributed to the science fiction author Neal Stephenson, who first used the term in this manner in his novel *Snow Crash* (1992).

[179] It should be noted that Toth's work has come under some critical scrutiny, as other tunnel explorers refute her assertions, and claim that she exaggerated, and fabricated, portions of her manuscript (based on what they believe to be geographical errors about the location of certain tunnels as described in her text). The accusations followed a deluge of positive press, including reviews in *Booklist* and *Library Journal*, as well as a *Publisher's Weekly* review that stated the book was both "troubling and memorable… A disturbing read that offers little hope of a better life for the tunnel people" (62). Toth has so far refused to respond to any allegations that her research was fabricated.

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personal experiences interacting with the tunnel dwellers. Toth introduces the term "johatsu" to describe them, a word used by the Japanese to refer to people without a home, literally meaning a "wandering spirit of one who has lost his identity" (Toth 35). It is an apt term, and one that can be applied when discussing posthuman bodies, or bodies that have shed their human identities in exchange for something new and/or "other."

Except for a ten-page chapter titled, "The Underground in History, Literature, and Culture," Toth makes little effort to contextualize, or analyze, what she discovers in the tunnels from a cultural perspective.[180] Her lack of analysis, which at first seems frustrating, reveals a deeper strategy: a blunt presentation of facts that allows the multiple voices of the tunnel dwellers to come through without being submerged or dramatically mediated by Toth's.[181] According to Toth, around five thousand homeless people live in the tunnels under the city, though she quotes one figure as high as twenty-five thousand (39). The network of tunnels beneath New York extends for miles in every direction, and descends more than seven stories below the surface. In addition to the tunnels are numerous abandoned stations and rooms, as well as natural caverns, including one called "The Condos," which is large enough to house over two hundred refugees. For the most part, these hidden spaces are dark, cold and damp, representing spaces of isolation, separation and confinement; they are interstitial zones in which the inhabitants remain mostly hidden from aboveground society. In an echo of the unnamed narrator of Ellison's

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[180] Toth mentions Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, along with Dostoyevsky's *Notes from the Underground* and H.G. Wells's *Time Machine*, but surprisingly few other texts that deal with underground dwellers.

[181] In places, Toth's manuscript takes on the odd grandeur of some of V.S. Naipaul's later travel books (namely, *A Turn in the South*), in which he allows the voices of his subjects to speak, uninterrupted, through unfiltered monologues. Indeed, Toth's book is as much a postcolonial travel narrative as Naipaul's works, with the tunnel dwellers as the disenfranchised colonial subjects.

Invisible Man, one tunnel dweller tells Toth, "The tunnels are where my conscious self meets reality. This is where my mind has been all my adult life. Underground" (200).

How did these people get there, and why would anyone willingly choose this way of life? What do the tunnels have to offer to these disenfranchised people? Unsurprisingly, elements of restrictive boundaries of race, gender, and sexuality seem to play significant roles. One female tunnel dweller tells Toth that she came into the tunnels because she was "sick of pretending to be white, or a man… pretending to be an insider in an insider's world when everything about me says outsider" (217). Toth also describes how a homeless man tells her that he has not rejected society, but rather it has rejected him. She writes that, according to him, it has "cast him out because of his black skin. The black world on the surface cast him out when he tried to fit into white society. They both cast him out when he fought against them both" (Toth 199). The tunnels therefore provide a means by which to subvert racial distinctions; a woman living underground asks Toth to guess whether she is black or Latina, and when Toth tells her that she appears to be a mixture of the two, the woman informs Toth, "I'm as white as you are… the tunnel turns us all a shade of gray" (196).

The tunnels also provide an escape from societal pressure and identity; one tunnel dweller named Dericka tells Toth she lives in the tunnels because "there are no mirrors" (223). According to Toth, this is a statement made frequently by the women who inhabit the tunnels:

> The fear of seeing their reflections, perhaps when passing a store window aboveground or in some other way, runs through the comments of many homeless women who live or have lived underground. Men often admit they hide in the tunnels in shame that they cannot provide for their families, but none of the men ever told me they wanted to avoid seeing their physical image. Women, aside from being more aware of appearances, sometimes hint they can even see their

inner selves in the reflections that strike them unaware when they are on the streets. (223)

It is interesting to note that some of the homeless people Toth interviews in *The Mole People* speak of a palatial underground ballroom, with a grand piano, chandeliers, and—most significantly—mirrored walls. Though various tunnel dwellers mention this space to Toth, she admits she can never find any conclusive proof it actually exists; the space seems to be a mythical zone rather than an actual one, a mental construct. This subterranean mirrored space, whether real or imagined, seems to suggest an unconscious desire on the part of the tunnel dwellers to locate a place in which they can actually stand to view their own reflections again, and locate their own potentially lost or deliberately displaced human forms.

Skin color and other external characteristics are not the only factors that lead marginalized people to seek a new life in the tunnels, as Toth comes across a number of refugees from sexuality. Many of the young men Toth meets in the tunnels are queer, and make money by turning tricks. In some cases their homosexuality seems to be the motivating factor for inhabiting the tunnels; in a chapter titled "Runaways," Toth discusses several such cases. The first of these is Frederick, who began living on the street at the age of thirteen, after being raped by one of his mother's boyfriends (135). When he was taken off the streets and placed in a foster home, he was raped again by his foster father. Toth quotes Frederick as saying, "I became gay after that" (136), and he also tells her that he moved down to the tunnels soon afterwards. Frederick's friend David presents a similar case, "molested by his stepfather when he was only seven" (137). David, who lives in the tunnels and supports himself by turning tricks, says he is no longer sure of his sexual orientation (138). Like a subterranean version of John

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Rechy's *City of Night*, these young men describe to Toth how they are locked in a cycle of sexual confusion and despair. Yet the tunnels provide some degree of refuge for them, and a chance to create a new identity. One tunnel dweller named Seville gives the following explanation of the performative aspect involved in living in the tunnels:

> It's a whole 'nother world down here…. Everyone's on a different wavelength down here, and then every time you join a new group of people and move in, you find the direction they're going…. It's a family in a way, but limited…. You take on a role, and then you become like them even when you don't know it's happening. (20)

Like the flesh-tunnel that allows for Eve's "rebirth" at the end of *The Passion of New Eve*, the tunnels allow for a subversion of confining elements of identity like race and gender, and also present an instance of time distortion and collapse. Subway cars rush by, carrying "a quarter of a million pounds of flesh and blood each day" (Toth 44) at extremely high speeds, in contrast to the tunnel dwellers whose stasis presents a temporal paradox. By inhabiting the tunnels, the underground homeless transform a space designed for speed and movement into a static one. The racing of the subway cars both foregrounds the stasis of the tunnel's inhabitants, and suggests a state of flux, as well as a space containing two extremes of movement. The tunnels themselves are displaced from our national identity and history: a policeman tells Toth that the tunnel dwellers often die of "illnesses that should only be lethal in medieval times" (41). Many of the tunnel dwellers are reduced to hunting and gathering, living off tunnel rats which they call "track rabbits" (29). The tunnels themselves are old, some sections having been built over a hundred years ago, and as tunnel dwellers move deeper into them, they are literally moving backwards in time, to an earlier era, à la Ballard and Carter. The sense of

temporal dislocation is linked to the mental processes that occur within the minds of the

people who inhabit these spaces. In *A User's Guide to the Millenium*, J.G. Ballard writes:

> Time delay may well reflect some subtle dislocation of one's normal processes of
> recognition and action during situations of extreme danger or hazard, like the
> suspended time of Warhol's 'Death and Disaster' series—a deliberate holding of
> the camera frame for the purposes of one's own conceptual understanding. At
> times of crisis or bereavement one may well 'hold' events in the camera of one's
> mind in order to grasp the totality of the situation. (162)

The rooms and spaces provided by the tunnels serve a similar purpose, slowing time to

allow the dwellers to come to terms with the problems—or "crises"—of identity.

Therefore, these temporal distortions might be a necessary component of the posthuman

tunnel world, in that they allow the inhabitants to engage with their mutable identities, or

perhaps suspend the need to come to terms with them.

In one underground community, Toth finds the tunnel dwellers practicing a new

kind of religion they have invented, termed "human religion," an ironic term considering

their exile from human society, but representative of the desire for new religions and

myths for the posthuman age, as both Angela Carter and Iain Banks explore in their

novels. "Human religion" seems more a system of ethics than a religion, at least

according to a woman Toth interviews who states that "It's based on caring and protecting

our brothers and sisters…. It's what sets this race above all others" (196). Toth

understands "race" here to mean the homeless people who live in the tunnels, "not black,

brown or white" (196). This new religion, when coupled with the subversion of race and

time, suggests the development of a new kind of human society. And it's not without a

certain allure: "rent-free, tax-free, independent" (27), as Seville puts it. Indeed, Toth cites

the case of a social worker named Sam, who went from helping the tunnel homeless to

becoming one of them:

> When Sam lived aboveground, he was a social worker. In 1982 he began working with the tunnel homeless…. Not long afterward, he was fired for what he terms "eccentricities"… he decided to come where he could be free, completely himself, he says…. What drove him underground, he explains, was "red tape. All that fucking red tape…. How can you help anyone when there's that red tape?.... How can you live in a society like that? The rules don't make sense. They're not based on human needs or caring…. They are based on money, not right or wrong. They might as well have come from a computer." (208)

Toth notes that now Sam is indistinguishable from the people he went down into the tunnels to help, displaying many of the same stereotypical traits he was meant to counsel them about, such as mood swings, extreme anger, and a propensity for violence. Yet his violence seems justified, and appears to come from true frustration with a system of government designed around hierarchical bureaucratic power structures rather than the people it is supposedly intended to serve.

Yet, as Toth learns, violence is a natural part of the tunnel environment, as it is of the world above. While most of the tunnel dwellers are portrayed as peaceful, Toth encounters a man who calls himself the "Dark Angel," who has modeled himself as a vampire and wears a cape as he prowls the tunnels. A policeman tells Toth that once he went into a tunnel below Grand Central Station and saw the Dark Angel rising out of a coffin-shaped box. He tells Toth he was struck with fear, and for a moment "thought it was the real Dracula" (168), e.g. a true non-human. When Toth encounters the Dark Angel herself he warns her, "You have left the world of fairness…. You are no longer safe. Leave before the tunnels swallow you, and you are one of mine" (168). A figure like this is in keeping with the popular conceptions of, and myths about, the tunnel dwellers that many New Yorkers have: the subway maintenance crews refer to the dwellers pejoratively as "C.H.U.D.S.," an acronym for "Cannibalistic Human Underground Dwellers" after a popular 1980s horror film about underground people who

devolve into undead flesh-hungry creatures. Toth even cites a homeless man who calls

himself "Chud," apparently reclaiming the derogatory term for himself as a potential

means of empowerment. The man seems proud of his name, although he is quick to tell

Toth, "I ain't never ate no humans" (205). By claiming the term "chud" for himself, and

thus identifying with the "undead," this tunnel dweller is also moving another step

towards relinquishing his hold on a human identity in favor of the potential power held

within the "otherness" of the posthuman.

The tunnel dwellers therefore present a new kind of community that has set up

new standards for community living. With their explosion of barriers like race, sexuality,

and even time, they present themselves as posthuman. Yet, like Michael Jackson's face,

they do not present a comforting image. Perhaps this is because they have become

posthuman not by choice, but by marginalization—there is literally nowhere else for

them to turn. Toth cites a man who tells her how "he stumbled into the tunnels one night

after he broke up with a girl, and has lived there now for six years" (99). And a homeless

runaway tells Toth that one day he found a loose metal grate in a park, opened it up, went

underground, and has lived in the tunnels ever since. Yet the tunnel dwellers create, in

Deluezian terms, a striated homey space within the tunnels. Several of the dwellers

decorate their homes; Toth recounts how one man "spent $200 to insulate his

underground room, put in wall-to-wall carpeting, a queen-size mattress, a lamp, a table,

and two chairs" (108) over the period of a year.[182] Other tunnel communities also

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[182] Mark Singer's 1999 film *Dark Days*, a documentary which Singer made in the tunnels beneath Penn
Station, functions as a visual analog to Toth's book. Singer, who funded the film by working as a model
during the day, ended up sleeping in the tunnels himself when money ran out, and making the film became
an obsession for him. Filmed in grainy black and white 16mm images, and set to a spare soundtrack of
electronic, instrumental hip-hop music, *Dark Days* provides a glimpse into the lives and living conditions
of the tunnel dwellers that Toth writes about, and suggests that many of her accounts of their living space
and situations are quite accurate. Singer's subsequent documentary, about a group of American soldiers

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continually work to refine their living spaces, adding electricity and running water stolen from pipelines. In addition, one of the main occupations of people who come down into the tunnels, according to Toth, is the painting of "tunnel art" or "pieces" (119), descriptive terms for the underground dwellers' "graffiti." As one of the men explains to Toth, "They're works of art, and they mean a lot to us" (119). The choice of what the tunnel artists paint illuminates some of the desires behind their artistic expression. Toth recounts how two artists paint a reproduction of Goya's *Third of May* as a mural, explaining to her that they want to "transfer the sense of violence and terrorism in the original onto the tunnel wall in an attempt to dramatize the fear and horror of that world" (126). A tunnel dweller tells Toth he likes looking at the underground art, saying, "It makes me feel human" (128). Indeed, through art and community, the tunnel dwellers attempt to recapture , or in some cases harness for the first time, a sense of what it means to be "human," representing a nostalgic urge for an identity and era that they know has been displaced.[183] Toth is told many times by different underground dwellers that the only people who manage to survive for any length of time in the tunnels are those who join a community. Those who do not, and venture deeper into the tunnels alone, rarely return to the surface, and often do not survive for very long.

Yet many of those who prosper on the surface apparently share a desire for escape with the Mole People, given the rise in recent years of the "multiuser virtual

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fighting in Iraq in 2005, was infamously halted mid-production when the government refused to allow him to continue filming, an event which resulted in his near-bankruptcy and the liquidation of his cameras and editing equipment.

[183] The very idea of nostalgia for the human indicates that for these tunnel dwellers, the human is a thing of the past, replaced by their new posthuman existence.

environment" (Willis, "Unexamined" 13) Second Life[184], which now has nearly five

million discrete users.[185] Second Life exists only on the internet, and is a virtual, digital

realm created by Philip Rosedale and Linden Lab in 1999 in San Francisco, and made

accessible to the public in 2003. Although initially categorized as an online "game,"

Second Life is instead an entire world—a microcosmic reconstruction of capitalist

America in virtual terms—that Rosedale calls "a platform" or "substrate."[186] When

entering Second Life, a user sees a digital representation of a world, complete with

buildings, streets, trees, and all the elements that one sees in the "real" world. Just as

Toth's underground dwellers redefine their identities within the tunnels, to elude

troubling binaries of race and gender, the users of Second Life must undergo a similar

process. In "Born Again: A Prosthetic You," Randall Anderson writes that to enter the

world of Second Life, "the first thing you must do is create an avatar, your persona in the

virtual world" (66). This avatar is a digital representation of the user, configured in any

way that the user desires. Second Life provides a set of tools and options to create one's

avatar—which can resemble any kind of form, and can also be programmed to constantly

shift. Anderson cites the example of an avatar named "GS" that turns into "a floating

television set… then a cartoon figure, a horse, a humanoid box cluster, and finally a

floating pile of stones" (66) and he notes that taking on the new persona of an avatar

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[184] Second Life is also commonly referred to as a MMOG, or a "Massively Multi-Player On Line Game."

[185] The number of users of Second Life is in dispute. Linden Lab, the company that owns Second Life, claims that there are, as of fall 2007, twenty million accounts, yet many of these are duplicative, as users frequently create more than one discrete avatar. In addition, many users create an avatar (which is necessary for the exploration of Second Life) and then abandon it if they are not interested in the metaverse, resulting in inactive accounts. The figure of five million current, discrete users is therefore something of an educated guess on the part of writers and critics of Second Life, as there is no way to determine the actual number of "inhabitants" of Second Life's virtual world.

[186] Catherine Smith, the Director of Marketing for Linden Lab, notes in Randall Anderson's "Born Again: A Prosthetic You," that "Second Life isn't a game—it is completely open-ended and as such, there is no goal, no dragon to slay, no predetermined objectives" (71).

"creates a shift in our understanding of individual identity… the avatar is the embodiment of growth and potential. The kinds of identity slippage that the avatar represents could be a model for [the real world], bringing with it a level of acceptance and tolerance…. The avatar is… a pixilated purveyor of freedom" (68).

Indeed, one can change his or her race, gender, sexual orientation, and virtually any other physical or mental detail one wishes in Second Life. Avatars can fly, and move through space and time in ways that humans cannot. Avatars are not confined to societal boundaries; like the world of the tunnel dwellers, there are no mirrors in the traditional sense, but only because in Second Life, one can always control the image looking back from the mirror by altering the aspects of the avatar. If the end result is similar, the difference between the worlds of the Mole People and Second Life is financial: owning "land," building things in Second Life, and utilizing all the capabilities of the metaverse requires a paid membership subscription, in addition to a relatively new computer and high-speed internet access.[187] This monthly subscription also yields a monthly stipend of "Linden Dollars," which the user can use to purchase items in the metaverse.[188] It is curious, however, that both the technological elite who can afford to be part of Second Life and the tunnel dwellers seek the nearly identical effacement of troubling, or confining, aspects of their identities. Many users of Second Life spend their money augmenting and altering their avatars—even sex organs and sexualized features are for

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[187] Second Life is already hierarchical: "Landowners acquire the space needed to build and create, thereby establishing at least two tiers of Second Life participants: landowners, who are able to build, and the homeless, who do not pay to use Second Life and cannot build but remain free to explore most parts of the world" (Willis, "Unexamined" 13). Indeed, Second Life even features avatars who are homeless people pushing carts with their "belongings" in them, including "Homeless Hermes," who Randall Anderson cites as Second Life's first official homeless person.

[188] As in the "real" world, the more one pays, the more one gets: residents of Second Life can spend additional Linden Dollars to purchase additional land.

sale. While the grime and dim light of the underground tunnels turn all the "mole people" the same "shade of gray" (196) and provide freedom from the judgments of human society, the virtual visual aspects of Second Life allow users to similarly alter their appearances so that everyone is essentially digitally masked, and therefore potentially liberated from unwanted judgment.

Users of Second Life are called "residents," and indeed they are encouraged to act, and interact, as they would in the non-virtual world. Residents of Second Life have their own specific vocabulary, often consisting of acronyms and phrases that relate to the differences between their metaverse and the physical world: for example, "IRL" stands for "in real life," and "TP" stands for the act of teleportation across the Second Life "grid," which allows for a resident to rapidly move from one coordinate to another. The emphasis on user-creation in Second Life is noteworthy, and different from many multiuser virtual environments that have come before. As a "user-defined" world, Second Life encourages its residents to create their own worlds, as well as their own avatars. Yet, as some critics have pointed out, the world of Second Life looks oddly like our own; Luke Strosnider notes the curiosity among many as to "why a place where anything was possible would look so similar to what we presently inhabit" (33). While this might appear to be due to a paucity of imagination on the part of Second Life's inhabitants, it could also be seen as a desire to recreate a new version of the world as it is, but with freedom from the restrictions of physicality. In "A New Light," Strosnider discusses a series of digital images taken by the photographer James Deavin within Second Life, and writes that the "wide-open spaces of Second Life" look like those of "an eerie, post-apocalyptic world" (33) but concludes that this emptiness is merely indicative

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of the fact that "Second Life is a world just being born, a place where… structures can be conjured up quickly, while the migration of users from this life to Second Life will take more time" (33). Yet who will lead this migration, and why? What kinds of people are drawn to construct an alternative reality and identity for themselves within a virtual world?

Much as the residents of the underground tunnels are refugees from gender and sexuality, so are the "residents" of Second Life. Many men create female avatars for themselves, in a kind of digital cross-dressing, and have virtual sex as females; the same is true of women posing—or "passing"—as men. The inhabitants of Second Life create their own appearances in two discrete ways. In addition to purchasing the elements that comprise their appearance, Celeste Biever notes in "The Irresistible Rise of Cybersex," that skilled users can "write programs to give their characters unique hairstyles and outfits… [and] some gamers are using these programming tools to give their avatars genitalia and erotic outfits, and to have them engage in animated cybersex" (30). In fact, the sexual aspects of Second Life have become one of its most prominent features; an area called "Amsterdam" exists—which is a simulacrum of the red-light district in the "real world" Amsterdam—in which "players pose as 'escorts' and charge for their services" (Biever 30). Fantasies, role playing and fetish communities now abound with the metaverse of Second Life.[189] Biever also notes that "some bisexual or homosexual members of Second Life have experimented with coming out in the game before trying it

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[189] In fact, metaverses based on Second Life but with a primarily erotic focus, such as Naughty America and Red Light Center exist to service these virtual sex demands. Celeste Biever mentions them in her article, and notes that the developers of these two virtual worlds believe the "safety aspect" of virtual sexual encounters "will appeal especially to women, traditionally an untapped market for the entertainment software industry" (31). Biever also cites a disturbing "virtual underworld" called "Sociolotron," developed by Patric Lagny, in which users enact fantasy "rapes" on each other.

in real life" (30). These findings suggest that, like the tunnels beneath New York, perhaps Second Life, as a liminal zone, draws those who wish to explore the fluidity of gender and sexuality. Second Life, with its diverse communities, provides a "safe" transitional space in which to explore identity—safe from traditional societal judgments—much as the underground tunnels do.[190] Biever also points out that it is sometimes difficult to join a community in the metaverse, much like the tunnel communities, because "Second Life's sex rooms can be difficult to find without a guide, and even if you did stumble upon one, the community might not accept a stranger immediately" (30). Yet unlike the world of the tunnels, acceptance often depends on one's finances: "customizing a beginner-level avatar into a sexual being is difficult and expensive: genitalia, outfits, more realistic skin and hair, and sexual moves all cost extra" (Biever 30). In fact, while the tunnel world is essentially money-less, the world of Second Life is monied, and issues of cost and finance have become another of Second Life's most discussed elements.

The economy of Second Life is based on "Linden Dollars" (or "L$")—named after Rosedale's Linden Lab which oversees the metaverse—which are linked to the strength of the US dollar, and exchangeable for actual US currency through online banking software. As Holly Willis notes in "The Unexamined Second Life Isn't Worth Living," one of Second Life's "main assets is its economy. Users are able to create objects and own the copyright, allowing them to sell those objects to others" (13). Willis notes that although the tagline of Second Life's primary marketing campaign is "Where

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[190] "Safety" can be a relative concept, however. Biever writes that "in the virtual world of Second Life, it is possible to walk up to someone and rub a body part against them without their permission" (31), and in "Second Life, Revisited," Michael J. Bugeja describes his attempt to document issues of "avatar harassment and assault in Second Life… known as 'griefing'" (C1), and develop sexual harassment policies for the online presences of universities, among other institutions.

anything is possible," much of Second Life consists of a re-fabrication of preexisting

"real world" elements in virtual terms, writing that Second Life

> bears a striking resemblance to the physical world where what is possible is
> determined by cultural, legal, temporal, and physical constraints, among others.
> Second Life visitors will find recognizable replicas of Yankee Stadium, Capitol
> Hill, and many college and university campuses… making virtual copies of their
> real-world counterparts. There are also virtual stores such as Sears, Circuit City,
> American Apparel, and Adidas. (13)

The "real" world also impinges in other ways. Various nations, including Sweden and

Estonia, have set up embassies in Second Life on "Diplomacy Island"—a place designed

for countries to tout themselves as "real world" tourist destinations. Authors hold book

readings in Second Life, university professors give lectures there, films have premieres,

and musicians perform exclusive concerts. While Second Life is billed as a sort of

technological utopia, its juxtaposition with the Mole People creates an uneasy resonance;

to have a "second life" is a luxury afforded essentially by wealth and/or privilege, while it

could be said that the Mole People struggle to maintain and create a single, primary life

for themselves. Yet both the inhabitants of Second Life and the underground tunnel

dwellers are moving away from traditional modes of human(ist) life and creating new

lines of flight, and new kinds of communities founded on notions of the posthuman.

Yet despite these notions, both are inevitable results of an all-too-human split

down economic lines. In fact, they stand as warnings as to how the posthuman can

potentially lead to a mere replication of typical hierarchical social structures if its radical

power is harnessed only in service of capitalist aims. The residents of Second Life can

transfer their Linden Dollars into US currency, and actually profit from their identity-

blurring explorations in the metaverse—unlike the Mole People, many of whom work

low-paying jobs merely to survive, or beg for change on the streets of New York City. I

suggest that the tunnel dwellers represent one strand of posthuman communities—that of

the apocalyptic—who dwell in abandoned, forgotten dismal areas similar to those of

Ballard's disaster series protagonists, of Valerie Solanas, or of Frank in *The Wasp*

Factory, as though having weathered a global disaster. The inhabitants of Second Life

seem to inhabit a zone closer to Warhol's Factory, in which art and commerce collide in a

realm positioned at the forefront of experimentation, technology, and fashion; Second

Life is currently "in vogue," just as Warhol's Factory was defined by its "hip-ness" in the

1960s. Yet as Valerie Solanas proved, it is almost inevitable that an outcast nomad will

blaze a trajectory "out of the garbage" and create a line of flight from one posthuman

community to another, crossing all boundaries and creating new forms of radical

liberation. Perhaps the Mole People will one day have access to Second Life; or perhaps

within the metaverse of Second Life the inhabitants will create a community of virtual

underground dwellers. Either way, the true path of the posthuman is suggested, as

always, by hybridity and notions of reconstructed selves—carrying with them elements of

both the celebratory as well as the disturbing and uncanny.

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