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# **NEBULA**

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## Note on contributors

### Emily Anderson

Emily Anderson recently completed a Masters degree in literature at the University of California, Riverside, and is currently working on a Masters of Studies in Gender Studies at the University of Oxford. Anderson's research interests are "feminist, queer, and postcolonial theory, as well as 20<sup>th</sup> century film and literature." In her contribution to *Nebula*, Anderson evokes the atomic intimacies of internal dialogue that children undergo on their path to self-discovery, by providing an entertaining and informed reading of "Catholicism and Lesbian Sexuality in Carla Trujillo's *What Night Brings*".

### Geoff Berry

Geoff Berry recently completed an MA in the Creative Literature of Mythology at Deakin University's School of Communication and Creative Arts. His project, titled 'Sojourn: contemporary mythopoeics as initiation, underworld journey and atonement', comprised of a piece of creative myth with an accompanying exegesis. Berry's contribution, *Mythopoeica Today*, is a result of some of the research carried out for his master's thesis and it is remarkable for both its rhetoric and logic.

### Will Harris

Will Harris is a former Indiana University Bloomington Fellow and his essays have appeared in such journals as the *African American Review*, *Zora Neale Hurston Forum* and *CLA Journal*. Harris is currently working on both a book of

poems, as well as a book on Chinua Achebe's relationship to African oral and Western heroic traditions. Harris currently teaches English literature at the United Arab Emirates University in Al Ain. Will Harris contributes a rather captivating moment in time in his short poem "Pauper at His Feet", leaving us filled with the curiosity of strangers passing by an unfamiliar world.

### Blake G. Hobby

Blake G. Hobby completed and passed his doctoral thesis with distinction on *Reading, Listening, and Understanding: Wordmusic in Narratives of Joyce and Mann* in the year 2000 at The University of Miami (Florida, US). His works have appeared in *The James Joyce Literary Supplement* and *Effective Teachings*. He has presented his work at numerous conferences; his latest presentation taking place at the 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Rocky Mountain MLA Convention. In his article *Translating Music and Supplanting Tradition: Reading, Listening and Interpreting in Tristan* Hobby argues for a very particular means of interpreting the suggested sound of music in one of Thomas Mann's least celebrated works, *Tristan*.

### Carra Hood

Carra Leah Hood is an Assistant Professor of Writing at Stockton College. She received her Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from Yale University in 1998. Since then, she has taught courses in writing and cultural studies and published creative and expository work that explores trauma, cultural encounter, and gender/sexual orientation. Carra's contribution to *Nebula 2.4* comes

in the form of a passionate and documentary poem entitled *After the Levees Breached*.

### **Eva Kuttenberg**

Eva Kuttenberg received her Ph.D. in German Studies from New York University with a dissertation on “The Tropes of Suicide in Arthur Schnitzlers Prose.” After holding positions as Assistant Professor of German and German Studies at the University of Dallas in Texas, and at Albion College in Michigan, she is presently posted at The Pennsylvania State University, Erie, as an Assistant Professor of German and Humanities. Her essay “Suicide as Performance in Dr. Schnitzlers Prose” appeared in *A Companion to the Works of Arthur Schnitzler* (2003). Kuttenberg’s contribution *Body Shop Catalogue* is the result of a revised version of a presentation written for a Salon on the Body held in New York City. It is a rather peculiar but pleasing array of human-body-related terms.

### **Ryan McIlhenny**

Ryan McIlhenny is a Teaching Assistant, at the University of California (Irvine), in World History. He received his Masters from California State University and his PhD on radical slave abolition rhetoric in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, from the University of California. His article “The Austin T.E.A. Party: Home School Controversy in Texas, 1986-1994” appeared in *Religion and Education* (Vol. 30. No. 2). He has presented papers at the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Religious Studies Symposium (Florida State University, 2005) and at the 27<sup>th</sup> Mid-America Conference on History (at the University

of Kansas, 2005). His article ““Deliver us from Kant”” Rereading Hegel’s *Science of Logic* in a Post-Kantian World” reviews the basic conflict between differing philosophical paradigms accounting for reality and the role of human experience in the physical world – which may or may not exist.

### **Anna Notaro**

Anna Notaro is the author of *Magiche Rifrazioni: Angela Carter e le riscritture della tradizione* (Naples: Gallo, 1993) and has co-edited *City Sites: Chicago and New York, 1870s to 1930s* (ebook: University of Birmingham, 2000). She has conducted extensive research on the city during two research fellowships she received from the University of London (1995-1997) and the University of Nottingham (1997-2003) respectively. Notaro’s contribution to *Nebula 2.4* originated in a conference paper given at the 37<sup>th</sup> World Congress of the International Institute of Sociology in Stockholm, Sweden (July, 2005). In *Imagining the Cybernetic City: The Venus Project* Notaro brings the possibility and veritable feasibility of “utopia” back into postmodern discourses regarding structure, architecture and urban planning.

### **Rotimi Taiwo**

Rotimi Taiwo received his Ph.D. in English Language from Obafemi Awolowo University (Nigeria) in 2003. Since then he has acted as lecturer in English Language and Grammar at the university. Taiwo has published numerous articles and contributed to a number of edited collections



and has presented at various conferences including the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of Linguistics Association of Nigeria, held at the University of Port Harcourt (Port Harcourt, 2004). His work has appeared in *Papers in English Linguistics; the Nordic Journal of African Studies* and *The Nigerian Field*, to only name a few. In his contribution to *Nebula* Rotimi Taiwo provides a close and intensive reading of the grammatical structures of “charismatic” religious speech.

### Paul Ugor

Paul Ugor is currently acting as Teaching Assistant and doctoral student in the Department of English and Film Studies at the University of Alberta (Canada). Paul is working on popular African video-film culture in Nigeria. His scholarly interests are in African Literature and Film. His most recent work “Reparations, Reconciliation and Negritudist Poetics in Soyinka’s *Burden of Memory and the Muse of Forgiveness*” appeared in the critical anthology *Ogun’s Children: The Literature and Politics of Wole Soyinka Since the Nobel* (African World Press: New Jersey, USA). In addition, his essay “Censorship and the Content of Nigerian Video Films” is forthcoming in *Modes of Seeing African Video Films*. Ugor’s contribution to *Nebula* 2.4 regarding “Democracy, New Political Elites and the Emergence of Mountain Tourism in Nigeria” sees the author aptly combine his extensive knowledge of the recent history of Nigerian Tourism, Nigerian politics and the state of Nigerian popular culture, to lend us insight into the unstable political climate endangering national stability.

### Laura Madeline Wiseman

Laura Madeline Wiseman received her B.S. from Iowa State University in women’s studies and English literature (in 2002 with Honours) and her M.A. from the University of Arizona in women’s studies with a certificate in teaching (2004). She currently teaches at the University of Arizona and at The Learning Curve. Her works have appeared in *Fiction International, Familiar, Poetry Motel, Spire Magazine, Colere, Clare, 42opus, 13th Moon, Vs, Altar Magazine, Driftwood, Dicey Brown, Flyway Literature Review, Nebula* (2.1) and other publications. She is also the imagine editor for the magazine *In the Fray* and a columnist for *Empowerment4women* and *The F-WORD*. Wiseman’s contribution to *Nebula* 2.4 comes in the form of a tense and capturing narrative—“Out with the light”—about the dark pits of urban and post-industrial adolescence.

# Imagining the Cybernetic City: *The Venus Project*

By Anna Notaro

*Only when democracy is lost can technology  
and the economy determine the way we live.*

(Castells)

*What gives our dreams their daring  
is that they can be achieved.*

(Le Corbusier)

Once upon a time there was Utopia. Ideal cities, or utopias, have been imagined in minute detail by philosophers, poets, architects, social reformers, religious devotees, and artists for more than two thousand years.<sup>1</sup> The attempt to invent the perfect city, cradle of the ideal society, is an abiding and ever-evolving vision embracing a wide variety of fascinating and often controversial movements and figures, including Plato, Filarete, Leonardo da Vinci, Thomas More, Thomas Jefferson, Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, Charles Fourier, Etienne Cabet, Robert Owen, William Morris, Ebenezer Howard, Bruno Taut, Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright, the European Situationists, the Japanese Metabolists, Archigram, Superstudio, and many more. Utopias, as Ruth Eaton, author of *Ideal Cities: Utopianism and the (Un)Built Environment* (2002), cogently explains, are most often conceived as panaceas during ‘times of profound social unrest’; aim for ‘the greatest collective happiness and harmony; and tend toward geometrically precise and orderly designs as though mathematical balance can control nature’s wildness and humanity’s perversity. The ideal cities exist for the most part in the domain of ideas, they are ‘paper cities’ (Notaro 2000), whose main aim is to stimulate reflection and change and, as I will argue below in the case of the Venus project ([www.thevenusproject.com](http://www.thevenusproject.com)), they continue to exercise their vital function in relation to the urban environment of the future. As Eaton suggests, ‘while it is true that notorious attempts to cross the border into reality have greatly discredited utopianism, it is useful to recall – with the famous historian of cities, Lewis Mumford – that ‘a map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at’ (Eaton 2002).<sup>2</sup> In other words, to reject the utopianism of the Ideal City is to reject a fantasy of pure space, not the need to imagine how we might live differently. To reject positivist pragmatism should not entail a disdainful withdrawal from an engagement with those activities and rationalities that lead to changes in the fabric of the city: urban policy, planning architecture, and so forth. Only by discovering ‘what Le Corbusier called the ‘rules of the game’: the interrelated revolutionary changes in urban design, politics, and economics,

real solutions are likely to be found' (Fishman 1982, x). In this sense, utopias are not to be intended in the pejorative sense of being vague, impossible dreams, rather in Karl Mannheim's classic definition of utopia as a coherent program for action arising out of thought that 'transcends the immediate situation', a program whose realization would 'break the bonds' of the established society (Fishman, x). The ideal cities of the Machine Age in particular tried to combine the power and beauty of modern technology with social justice based on the belief that reforming the physical environment can revolutionize the total life of a society. Architects such as Howard, Wright and Le Corbusier, without subscribing to the simplistic 'doctrine of salvation by bricks alone', still believed in the idea that physical facilities could by themselves solve social problems (Fishman, 4). The main problem to overcome was the fact that humanity was living in what Le Corbusier called the 'Age of Greed'. Greed was the main obstacle towards the creation of a total environment in which man would live in peace with his fellow man and in harmony with nature – I will return to the question of human greed in my discussion of the Venus project below.

The Machine Age was an age of great expectations and ideological fervor, an age in which the promise of the Enlightenment appeared realized. In more recent years postmodernism has disposed of old utopias and deconstructed our totalizations, in so doing 'we think we have reinstated freedom of choice and enabled the voice of alterity to rise, but we have clearly done so at the cost of community' (qt. in Boyer 1996, 28)<sup>3</sup>. What Boyer is warning us against is the fact that our technological fascination with computers, with cyberspace, has caused a withdrawal from the real world to the point that 'our critical engagement with the city is, at best, action at a distance' (11). Contrary to modernism, whose main focus was the city, today 'it [the city] appears to be disappearing from critical debate' (10). Although Boyer is by no means unaware of what she calls the 'darker side of modernism' so well explored by Foucault, I cannot fully agree with the gist of her argument. My contention is that far from disappearing from critical debate, the city is still very much at its centre, similarly the 'utopian drive' that we have come to associate with positivist/rationalist thought is re-emerging under new guises in contemporary futuristic projections where nature and technology coexist in harmony.<sup>4</sup> As if it was a reassuring memory we are too fond of to abandon, we seem incapable to free ourselves from the 'utopian baggage' that the city trope inevitably carries with it. We might have lost faith in a notion of utopia as a community which is ordered on some rational principle, which offers 'the good life' to its people so that they are happy' (Dahrendorf 1968, 107-110), and yet we still speak the *language* of utopia. Significantly, the connections between (cyber)space and 'the city' trope have emerged since cyberspace was first defined in William Gibson's words as:

A consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators... A graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind, clusters and constellations of data. Like city lights, receding...[ellipses original] (Gibson, *The Neuromancer*, 1984).

Since then the city has become the most common tool for thinking about the virtual world: virtual cities, cybercities, cybervilles or cybertowns, as they are often named, keep springing up and not just in SF novels, there are in fact, a growing number of avatar worlds which are shared, graphical spaces.<sup>5</sup> New forms



of citizenship, the ‘cyborg citizen’ (Gray 2001) have been envisaged in a post-gendered ‘technological polis where machinic desires drive cybernetic systems by artificial instincts and recursive feedback loops’ (Haraway 1991, 181). And yet it is the reified view of the city as a physical entity that still helps shape our conception of what this new world should be like – using the metaphor transfers the (allegedly) concrete meaning of ‘city’ to the abstract virtual environment (Leiss et al. 1990; Eco 1984). Moreover, and *pace* Boyer, cities have always been at the centre of critical debate even when it was argued that the new information and communication technologies (ICT) would threaten their very existence (Mc Luhan 1964, Toffler 1980, Negroponte 1995, Gates 1995). Post-urban fantasies imagined cyberspace as a ‘neo-utopian’ ecological force for

Decontaminating the natural and urban landscape, redeeming them, saving them from the chain-dragging bulldozers of the paper industry, from the diesel smoke of courier and post-office trucks, from jet fuel flames and clogged airports...from all the inefficiencies, pollution (chemical and informational), and corruptions attendant to moving information attached to things ... across, over and under the vast and bumpy surface of the earth rather than letting it fly free in the soft hail of electrons that is cyberspace (Benedikt 1991, 3).

Futurists such as Alvin Toffler (1980) spoke of a ‘third’ wave for the ICT-based societal revolution, following on from the first (agricultural) and second (industrial), thus reflecting the classic, deterministic view of the role of new communications and transport innovations in which ‘changes in technology lead inexorably to changes in urban form’ and urban life (Hodge 1990, 87). In such a view technology is seen as the direct cause of urban change. One would have thought that years of familiarity with ‘weak thought’ (Vattimo 1991) would have prevented any technological determinism from reoccurring and yet, as Robins has pointed out, ‘too often futuristic accounts of the electronic city are driven by a resurrected modernism that, like Saint Simonian’s of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, looks to technology to offer transparency, efficiency and thus social harmony’ (qt. in Graham 2004, 131). It has also been argued that neo-utopian ICT discourses and the virtual realities of neo-liberal economic thought to which they have been so closely tied, are but ‘camouflage screens’, in other words they mask the roles ICTs have played in facilitating the corporate control of cities, economies, infrastructures and the international economic system. They have also masked the deepening environmental crises caused by contemporary capitalism, thus shifting attention from the deepening social, economic and cultural inequalities (Graham 2004, 20). Contemporary critical debate has often stressed how our urban fabric has become an e-topia (Mitchell 1999), a new urban form in which we constantly interact, deliberately or automatically, with online information systems, increasingly in the wireless mode. In such a scenario it is not surprising that the word ‘city’ becomes more diffuse. Rampant growth and instantaneous forms of communication have transformed cities from separate pockets of urban space to what Arjen Mulder, co-editor of *TransUrbanism* (2002), calls an ‘urban field, a collection of activities instead of a material structure’ (6). This field is not defined by a geographical, a political or even an architectural boundary, but by a technological one – the availability of cell phone service where urban edges are defined by the ability to avoid roaming charges. The conclusion about the current status of urban space is twofold: on one hand unchecked, unplanned urban growth appears inevitable, whether it is new cities in developing countries or suburbs in developed countries. On the other, globalization is

diluting the identity of individual cities, blurring their unique characteristics into the black-and-white duality of urban versus rural (Mulder 2002). The fact that the word city has become more ‘diffuse’ does not imply, however, that cities have lost their validity as conceptual tools, as Ulf Hannerz reminds us ‘Cities are good to think with, as we try to grasp the networks of relationships which organize the global cultural flows and connections of our planet... They are places with especially intricate internal going-on, and at the same time reach out widely into the world, and toward one another’ (qt. in Graham 2004, 243). Also, it is significant, as Castells points out, that ‘grassroots movements continue to shape cities, as well as society at large’ (qt. in Graham 2004, 87). Castells is quite right in stressing the importance of social movements in the ‘network society’ for their clever use of the internet for social mobilization and – interestingly for the purposes of this paper – for their ‘exploration of the environmental movement, and of an ecological view of social organization’ (88). As a consequence, Castells argues, ‘urban areas become the connecting point between the global issues posed by environmentalism and the local experience ... To redefine cities as eco-systems, and to explore the connection between local eco-systems and global eco-systems lays the ground for the overcoming of localism by grassroots movements (89). In the next section I will be discussing several eco-communities projects which, notwithstanding their heterogeneity, seem to aim at connecting, in Castells’ words, local eco-systems with global ones. Their neo-utopian visions offer ‘spaces of hope’ for alternative technonatural worlds, the promise of a new civilization founded on values of peace and harmony. The communities presented below show, in some cases, striking similarities with some aspects of the Venus project. By pointing out such similarities I do not intend to underestimate the originality of the project, but to provide a cultural and historical context in which we may better appreciate its merits and evaluate its shortcomings.

### **Eco-communities**

Since the 1980s, the New Urbanism movement founded by Miami architects Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk (<http://www.dpz.com/>) has urged a return to traditional American communities or ‘urban villages’. Seaside, FL (<http://www.seasidefl.com/>), familiar worldwide as the setting of *The Truman Show*, was the blueprint for a ‘new’ community with high housing density, controlled automobile traffic and judicious planning.<sup>6</sup> In the neo-urbanist view, the design of the city, at the micro and macro levels, can be *both* environmentally and economically more sustainable. Interestingly, in those same years, far from the architects’ studios was emerging the so-called ‘eco-village vision’, a vision which did not advocate just new forms of communal living, but a whole new philosophy of life. The first appearance of the word ‘ecovillage’ was at a Gaia Trust seminar in Denmark in 1991. The seminar brought together for the first time representatives of several very different projects from well-established settlements like Solheimer in Iceland, Findhorn in Scotland, Crystal Waters in Australia, and Lebensgarten in Germany to The Farm in Tennessee. The hope was that as more and more ecovillages appeared, the idea of sustainable human settlements in harmony with all aspects of life, including the cultural, ecological and spiritual dimensions would quickly spread all over the planet. In the words of the Gaia Trust founders this is ‘a feminine utopia and a community utopia’, a way ‘to reinvent ourselves as humans’, thus bringing about ‘a global society

of independent free peoples in harmony with nature and each other, but with a diversity of cultures, races and religions that honor and respect the diversity of our common heritage'. Similarly to the Venus project the Gaia trust expresses a deep distrust of politicians (unsuitable and/or unwilling to solve problems they have contributed to create), the only alternative lies at the grassroots level, that's where 'one should expect revolutionary change to occur' (<http://www.gaia.org/ecovillage/index.asp>). The Findhorn Foundation, the educational and organizational cornerstone of the Findhorn Community – one of the participants to the Gaia Trust seminar mentioned above – is based on 'the values of planetary service, co-creation with nature and attunement to the divinity within all beings'. Findhorn ecovillage project, which began with an energy producing wind generator and some caravans, now features cutting-edge eco-houses ([http://www.findhorn.org/about\\_us/display\\_new.php](http://www.findhorn.org/about_us/display_new.php)).

'The Farm', founded in Tennessee in 1971 and inspired by the hippie movement of the 1960s (not surprisingly, they also run a Hippie museum) is a self-sufficient, strictly vegetarian, rural venture grounded in religious communitarianism. Its spiritual base rests on a rather diffuse, syncretistic set of principles combining Eastern mysticism, tantric telepathy, and Western spiritualism in a matrix of evangelical enthusiasm (<http://www.thefarm.org/>). The Farm's web site includes an interesting link to 'Permaculture', a design system for creating sustainable human environments in balance and harmony with nature. Permaculture is based on three ethical principles: care of Earth, care of people, reinvesting the surplus towards the former two. There is also a Permaculture Institute, founded in 1997, which provides education, consulting and fund raising. A Permaculture demonstration Farm is active in New Mexico and an ecovillage project has been set up in Brazil (<http://www.ibiblio.org/spittman/>). The emphasis put on the importance of eco-friendly design is certainly an element shared with The Venus project.

Also part of the ecovillage network is Auroville, a place in south India where, since 1968, a number of people from all over the world have been working on the construction of a 'new township, a new way of living, a new way of being'. Today Auroville counts 1,789 residents committed to the goal of 'a universal township where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony, above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities ... so that, eventually, our species may progress' (<http://www.auroville.org/>).

Even outside the ecovillage network it is possible to come across a whole range of projects which share a deep dissatisfaction for the current state of human affairs and aspire to the establishment of new communities on a global scale. The 'Island Foundation' (<http://www.island.org/intro/>) founded in 1990 by Bruce Eisner focuses on the vision of Aldous Huxley expressed in his last novel *Island* (1962), a true utopia that is destined to perish as soon as it comes into contact with the greed and exploitation which characterize the modern world. Starting from the usual premise that contemporary society faces difficult challenges – exploding population, deterioration of the environment, intense competition for resources, totalitarianism, violence and alienation – the foundation responds by blending, like Huxley, some ideas from the archaic past with the most current ones. The result is a rather syncretistic ensemble – mysticism, shamanism, tribal culture, paganism, sacred plants, psychedelics, entheogens, nanotechnology, transhumanism, intelligence-increase, altered states of consciousness, humanistic and transpersonal psychology,

self-actualization, alternative lifestyles and cultures, genetic engineering, hedonic engineering, the ‘new physics’, systems thinking etc.<sup>7</sup> The foundation also prides itself on having become ‘a communication hub for like-minded people around the World’. Such like-minded people include, apparently, Jacque Fresco, the founder of the Venus project. In the words of Bruce Eisner, such a project has ‘similar aims to the Island Sanctuary Project. Both believe that our culture is due for an upgrade’ ([http://www.bruceeisner.com/new\\_culture/2004/01/the\\_venus\\_proje.html](http://www.bruceeisner.com/new_culture/2004/01/the_venus_proje.html)). However, I should quickly add that the similarities are very limited since, as we shall see below, The Venus Project does not entail a similarly syncretistic conceptual basis.

Contrary to the Island foundation, whose main inspiration stems from the world of literature, Arcosanti (<http://www.arcosanti.org/>), an experimental town in the desert of Arizona is the product of a visionary Italian architect, Paolo Soleri. When complete, Arcosanti should house 5000 people, ‘demonstrating ways to improve urban conditions and lessen our destructive impact on the earth’. Its large, compact structures and large-scale solar greenhouses ‘will occupy only 25 acres of a 4060 acre land preserve, keeping the natural countryside in close proximity to urban dwellers’. Arcosanti is designed according to the concept of arcology (architecture + ecology), developed by Soleri (1969). In an arcology, ‘the built and the living interact as organs would in a highly evolved being. This means many systems work together, with efficient circulation of people and resources, multi-use buildings, and solar orientation for lighting, heating and cooling’. In this complex and creative environment, apartments, businesses, production, technology, open space, studios, and educational and cultural events are all accessible, while privacy is paramount in the overall design. Greenhouses provide gardening space for public and private use, and act as solar collectors for winter heat. His communities would concentrate housing, industry and services into a single, massive complex that would be updated regularly to meet the community’s needs. Arcosanti is an educational process as well as a town *in fieri*. Regular workshops are run in building techniques and ‘arcological philosophy’ for volunteers and students from around the world. The project has been featured in several international exhibitions and produces various fund-raising activities. The principles of arcological building (with a particular emphasis on alternative technology) put into practice in Arizona are definitely akin to those envisaged in The Venus project, both in its built headquarters in Florida and in its various graphics and designs. Arcosanti, however, falls short of proposing a whole new culture on a global scale and not just some innovative ways to conceive our urban environments. Similarly to Soleri, another visionary architect, R. Buckminster Fuller devoted his imaginative efforts to respond to the challenges posed by the modern world. Like in the case of Jacque Fresco, Fuller’s motivation was an acute social awareness of the profound economic disparities which characterize our ‘supposedly’ advanced way of living. Although Fuller did not come up with a whole new blueprint for humanity, he sought to ‘do more with less’ by designing for example a lightweight, inexpensive alternative to the square building. His domes were very light, extremely strong, energy efficient, and offered a limitless variety of possible floor plans, making them ideally suited for housing – domes are a recurrent feature in many futuristic projections, among the ones realized one should mention the EPCOT Center at Florida’s Walt Disney World and the US Pavilion at the 1967 Montreal World’s Fair.



Geodesic Domes Advertisement, 2000

In 1927 Fuller designed the factory-assembled Dymaxion house (making cheap mass-produced housing a reality), followed in 1928 by the three-wheeled Dymaxion car (technically superior and safer than the Model T Ford). Not surprisingly, Fuller's designs encountered resistance from purely profit-driven corporations. Fuller believed that any true social or political revolution must arise from and encompass design revolution insights, and not just be based upon shallow political rhetoric. Design Science was for him 'the effective application of the principles of science to the conscious design of our total environment in order to help make the Earth's finite resources meet the needs of all humanity without disrupting the ecological processes of the planet' (F. Buckminster and R. Marks 1973). He also discovered the science of Synergetics, which explores holistic engineering structures in nature (long before the term synergy became popular). Fuller's work has been influential on, among others, well known futurists such as Robert Anton Wilson, Barbara Marx Hubbard and Marshall Savage (see the work of the Living Universe foundation <http://www.luf.org/>). Today his legacy is carried forward by the Buckminster Fuller Institute (BFI) (<http://www.bfi.org>).

I wish to conclude this section dedicated to – at various degrees neo-utopian – projects and eco-communities by mentioning two by the same founder, Eric Klien. One is the short-lived Atlantis Project (<http://oceania.org/>), which proposed the creation of a floating sea city named Oceania. It began in February 1993, receiving nationwide publicity from *The Art Bell Show*, *Details Magazine*, *The Miami Herald*, *Boating Magazine*, and worldwide publicity in Canada, New Zealand, Hong Kong, England, and Belgium and ended, due to lack of interest, in April of 1994. Worth noting is the fact that floating cities are also part of the Venus project.

From the sea Klien moved to the skies with his current project, the Lifeboat Foundation (<http://lifeboat.com/ex/main>), a project dedicated to the preservation of the human race. The organization's aim is to 'safeguard humanity from the growing threat of terrorism and technological cataclysm'. Among the options are 'self-sustaining technologies using AI and nanotechnology with an emphasis on self-contained space arks'. Significantly, the Lifeboat Foundation is very much anchored in capitalist models of enterprise since among its long terms goals by 2016 it includes the launch of 'a for-profit corporation to work outside the humanitarian efforts of the Lifeboat Foundation. This sister corporation will aim to put the first self-sustaining space colony in orbit. A colony designed to function as a lucrative space hotel providing protection against terrorism, force and fraud'. Also, by 2020 free enterprise in the conquest of space should be promoted. 'This would include the development of giant mobile ecospheres, moon colonies, a terraformed Mars, solar arrays on Mercury, a Dyson Sphere covering most of the sun, and interstellar spaceships'.



Because of its belief in capitalist values and its interest in space colonies rather than in improving the human condition on Earth, the Lifeboat project diverges substantially from the Venus one.

The projects discussed so far – only a brief selection – are exemplary of that abiding and ever evolving (utopian) way of thinking mentioned at the beginning. The Venus project certainly has not come out of a vacuum; it has come out of a cultural *humus* heavily permeated by utopian discourse. The philosophical premises and the proposed solutions might differ, still the utopian writes of things not as they are, but as s/he would have them. This tells us that we realistic humans are characterized by optimism, the hope that people and things can be better than they are and that our posterity can, through the human gift of creative intelligence, be offered a blueprint for building a better world.

### **Venus Project**

When it comes to technological utopias, one would be correct in arguing that these are an integral component of the American Dream. From the emphasis on philosophically-based patterns derived from European antecedents, interest shifted to utopian designs much more heavily dependent on technological advancements – a motif nearly entirely absent from European utopian writings. As the idea of America as man-made rather than natural utopia became a distinct possibility, the original Puritan notion of America as the site of God’s millennial kingdom on earth faded in popularity. The earliest American utopian book was by the German born John Adolphus Etzler and its title, *The Paradise Within the Reach of All Men without Labor, by Powers of Nature and Machinery* (1833) emphasized the *practical* attainability of a new Eden. John Etzler further elaborated his plans to free humanity from menial labor in his *The New World; or Mechanical System to Perform Labour of Man and Beast by Inanimate Powers* (1853). Etzler’s intention was to build a universal, all-purpose machine, which he called ‘the Satellite’. It would take the mechanical power from a water wheel and distribute it, through long belts and complicated gears and levers, to other machines connected to it. With its various extensions, the ‘Satellite’ would supposedly perform all the work on a farm. The form of the vast imagined contraption would necessarily define the form of the farm organized around it. Giant iron earthmovers attached to it would cut and flatten the ground into grand circles of social organization, all centralized and mechanized. Etzler pre-dates Fresco, the founder of the Venus project ([www.thevenusproject.com](http://www.thevenusproject.com)), by a century, but his approach has similarities<sup>8</sup>, not just in the potential for technology to minimize the need for menial labor, but also for his emphasis on the *practical* attainability of a better world. When I questioned Mr Fresco about his influences, he stressed how:

living through the 1929 Great Depression in the US helped shape my social conscience. During this time I realized the earth was still the same place, manufacturing plants were still intact, and resources were still there, but people didn’t have money to buy the products. I felt the rules of the game we play by were outmoded and damaging to so many. This began a life-long quest resulting in the conclusions and designs presented in The Venus Project (email of 20/2/05).

Another important life experience was his work with drug addicts, alcoholics, and juvenile delinquents in New York City. This was helpful in understanding ‘that instead of working with individuals, more effective methods would deal with the societal conditions creating dysfunctional behaviors in the first place’ (Ibidem). An additional motivation had to do with ‘the apparent incompetence of governments, the academic world, and a lack of solutions from scientists. Many fail as generalists because [they] consider problems within the context of the system they’re in, which is mainly responsible for the problems in the first place’ (Ibidem). Having done ‘a lot of reading and explored architecture, political movements, and utopian thinking’ Mr Fresco came to the conclusion that ‘none seemed sufficient’ (Ibidem). As for the current state of affairs in urban centers, contrary to the current trend ‘to retrofit new, more efficient technologies into their existing infrastructures’, Fresco argues that ‘Our physical infrastructure of industrial plants, buildings, waterways, power systems, production and distribution processes, and transportation, must be reconstructed as an integrated system. Only then can our technology overcome resource deficiencies and provide universal abundance’ (Ibidem).

In his view ‘Today’s problems can’t be solved by political or financial strategies because they are *technical* in nature. They will only be solved by the intelligent management of Earth’s resources through an international cooperative joint venture’ (Ibidem, emphasis in the original). Having disposed of politics – apparently one of the world’s great evils together with poverty – see Fresco’s book *The Best that Money Can’t Buy, Beyond Politics, Poverty, & War* (2002) – one is left wondering what form of governance future society will have. Having identified today’s problems as technical in nature it is not surprising that Fresco foresees a cybernated society where as ‘AI develops, machines will be assigned the tasks of complex decision-making in industrial, military and governmental affairs ... This would not imply a take-over by machines’ (Ibidem 56).<sup>9</sup> It won’t be a take-over because, as it is already argued – at various degrees of alarm and/or approval – within contemporary post-humanist discourse, ‘the division between living bodies and technology is increasingly difficult to maintain’ and ‘we are well on our way to becoming machinic’ (Armitage 1999, 2)<sup>10</sup>. In other words, we will become machine ourselves, our salvation as a species resides in the loss of our humanity as we know it: ‘When biological technology becomes further advanced, human beings as we know them, will become a modified species. If we as human beings fail to include the possibility of this development in our overall, social evolution we will witness the decline of our species’ (Fresco 2002, 141). One is puzzled at the way in which a perspective of such magnitude is introduced with a matter of fact attitude, regardless of the deep philosophical and ethical implication. Unfortunately, there does not seem to be space for idle theoretical speculations on ‘pointless’ questions such as ‘what is the meaning of life’ in the Venus project, although one would have hoped that once humanity is relieved from menial labor, this is exactly the sort of spiritual activity one would entertain. As for the cybernetic city itself, it presents a circular arrangement as follows:

\* The outermost perimeter is utilized for recreational activities such as biking, golfing, hiking and riding, etc.

\* A circular waterway for irrigation and filtration surrounds the agricultural belt. The agricultural belt, with many transparent enclosed buildings, will be used to grow a wide variety of

organic plants without the use of pesticides.

\* Areas are set aside for renewable clean sources of energy using wind generators, solar, heat concentrating systems, geo thermal, photovoltaic and others.

\* The residential units, apartments and the design centers are beautifully landscaped in natural surroundings, adjacent to dining and other amenities.

\* The buildings surrounding the central dome provide the community with centers for cultural activities such as the arts, theater, exhibitions, concerts, and various forms of entertainment.

\* The central dome or theme center will house the core of the cybernated system, educational facilities, access center, computerized communications networking systems, health and child care facilities

(<http://www.barbelith.com/topic.php?id=2604>)<sup>11</sup>.



Circular City



Cybernated complex



Center-dialogue



### Automation lift and apartments

(photos from <http://www.pinian.com/the-venus-project-photogallery-page-one.html> – reproduced with authors' permission).

Most importantly, all the facilities are available to everyone without cost in a resource based economy where human greed becomes a thing of the past. By resource based economy Fresco intends one that 'utilizes existing resources rather than money and provides an equitable method of distribution in the most humane and efficient manner for the entire population ... all the world's resources are held as common heritage of all the Earth's people.. This is the unifying imperative' (Fresco 2002, 40). The cybernetic city, as delineated above is totally connected (wired, in today's terminology). Technologies, computers, and automation have affected all services and functions in the city. Transportation, work, food production, housing, education, entertainment will all reflect changes in living conditions. Architecturally the Venus Project is designed to be 'in harmony with nature' incorporating parks, gardens, waterways, and utilizing the best in clean technology. The buildings are to use reinforced concrete and be fabricated in dome shapes, which will make them easy to build and maintain. Such a city is no far-fetched utopia; it 'represents an achievable, sustainable, and sophisticated environment, one that is design to help bring out the best in human potential. (Ibidem, 117). The important premise is that 'Bigotry, racism, greed, nationalism, egotism etc. are not 'inherited human traits', or 'human nature' therefore 'if the environment changes people will change' (Ibidem, 89). Some of the ideas outlined above have been translated into reality in what is Phase One of The Venus Project, i.e. the twenty-five acre design center in south-central Florida where one finds buildings and a conference center, along with the models, illustrations, blueprints, posters and a video presentation.<sup>12</sup>

In conclusion, I have to say that I am greatly impressed with Fresco's thorough approach to solving large issues of humanity, technology and the environment. His attempt is particularly praiseworthy at a time when it is easy for most people to criticize society, but much more difficult to identify and implement plans to resolve its problems. Fresco's main motivation is one that is difficult to disagree with: the humanitarian effort to preserve the future of human life. His vision is eminently practical, and although this constitutes an innovative and welcome element with reference to previous utopian projections, his focus on science alone makes him fail as a generalist – the criticism Fresco himself passed on academics and scientists. Today's pressing problems require a holistic approach, – various disciplines, arts science, philosophy working on a 'convergence mode', unfortunately Fresco's vision seems to consolidate the long-established view that the 'two cultures' (Science and Art) are antagonistic. Also, Fresco is a bit too hasty, in his blueprint for a new world civilization – one based on human values and environmental reclamation – to

dispose of current beliefs and social customs ‘Our future’ he proclaims, ‘does not depend on present-day beliefs or social customs, but will continue to evolve a set of values unique to its own time. There are no Utopias. The very notion of ‘Utopia’ is static ... the survival of any social system ultimately depends upon its ability to allow for change to improve society as a whole’ (Fresco 2002, 156). Many years ago Ernst Gombrich pointed out that the unfamiliar is always extrapolated from the known (1960, 72) our current customs and beliefs are part of ‘the known’, hence instrumental for that process of change that is, quite rightly, advocated. Clearly, The Venus project is no static utopia, rather a dynamic one: it requires an incremental process driven by an ever-changing extropic ideal.<sup>13</sup>

This paper has discussed the cybernetic city, as envisaged by the Venus project, in the context of contemporary urban debate and neo-utopian discourse. The challenges we currently face are enormous, our priority, even before producing a blueprint for posterity, is clear: to design a new sustainable city in a world that has begun to address its environmental problems. In other words what we need is designing at greater densities, living and working together, in fresh green places of intense sustainable food production, in extended family units, safe secure pleasant places to inhabit, cohabit, enjoy. Is using natural renewable resources with minimum reliance on technical solutions to maximum effect an utopian dream or an achievable reality? Too much would be asked of science and technology if they were the only conceptual tools at our disposal. We need co- operation and convergence on a global and interdisciplinary scale. In this sense, it was encouraging to see that Expo 2005 – in Aichi Japan – has chosen as its main theme ‘Nature’s Wisdom’, thus suggesting ‘that the true meaning of technology is to draw out the hidden potential of nature so that it has new purpose. This new purpose must include environmental, technological and cultural concerns about local and global development’. Interestingly, one of the Expo sub-themes is ‘Eco-communities’ and ‘There are even plans for the Expo 2005 site eco-community to become a node in an international network of eco-community experiments which will hopefully develop as we progress into the next millennium’ ([www.expo2005.com/](http://www.expo2005.com/)). The sustainable city (and the world?) of the future might look nothing like the one we know today, in thinking about what might lie ahead though, let’s not lose our sense of history and hope, with Lefebvre, that ‘it will turn out well’:

To think about the city is to hold and maintain its conflictual aspects: constraints and possibilities, peacefulness and violence, meetings and solitude, gatherings and separation, the trivial and the poetic, brutal functionalism and surprising improvisation...*Thinking the city moves towards thinking the world...One can hope that it will turn out well* but the urban can become the centre of barbarity, dominance, dependence and exploitation...In thinking about this perspective, let us leave a place for events, initiatives, decisions. All the hands have not been played. The sense of history does not suppose any historic determinism, any destiny. (qt. in Kofman et al. 1996, 53 emphasis mine).

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> A selected bibliography on this vast topic includes: Suvin, D. *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979; Marin, L. *Utopics: The Semiological Play of Textual Spaces*. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1984; Bloch, E. *The Principle of Hope*. Trans. S. Plaice, N. Plaice, and P. Knight. 3 vols. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986; Moylan, T. *Demand the Impossible: Science fiction and the utopian imagination*. New York: Methuen, 1986; Jameson, F. *The Seeds of Time*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994; Owen D. J. and T. Moylan. *Not Yet: Reconsidering Ernst Bloch*. New York: Verso, 1997; Jameson, F. "‘If I find one city, I will spare the man’: Realism and Utopia in Kim Stanley Robinson’s *Mars* Trilogy" in Parrinder P. ed. *Learning from Other Worlds: Estrangement, Cognition, and the Politics of Science Fiction and Utopia*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001, 208-232.

<sup>2</sup> Mumford's quote originates from his *The Story of Utopia* (1922), as Rhodri Windsor-Liscombe reminds us in his interesting 'The Ideal City' *A Discussion Paper in Preparation for the World Urban Forum 2006*, [www.finearts.ubc.ca/faculty/rhodri/The\\_Ideal\\_City.pdf](http://www.finearts.ubc.ca/faculty/rhodri/The_Ideal_City.pdf) p.32. However, it is worth pointing out that Mumford himself echoes Oscar Wilde in 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' (1891). The full quote is the following: 'A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realization of Utopias' *The Best of Oscar Wilde*, ed R. Pearce, London: Duckworth (1997), 42 (36-44).

<sup>3</sup> Virtual communities exist in cyberspace and have been object of scholarly inquiry since Rheingold's study of 1993, *The Virtual Community*, available at <http://www.well.com/user/hlr/vcbook/>. See also Jones, S. *Virtual Culture: Identity and Communication in Cybersociety*, London: Sage (1997); Smith M. A and P. Kollock eds. *Communities in Cyberspace*, London: Routledge (1998); Preece, J. *Online Communities: Designing Usability and Supporting Sociability*, Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, (2000); Renninger. K.A., Cambridge University Press (2002).

<sup>4</sup> In the words of Tsvi Bisk, an independent Israeli educator, social researcher and writer, 'Neo-Utopianism' should be pluralistic in order to avoid the totalitarian know-it-all temptation that has doomed utopian experiments in the past'. The 'Neo-Utopian challenge', as he puts it, should be formulated as a question. The question is: 'How can we create, by the year 2100, a planetary human society composed of 12 billion people with an American standard of living with one tenth the negative environmental impact present human society has on nature? What research and development policies, international trade policies, tax policies, space exploration policies must we pursue in order to achieve such a vision? This is a practical question *given to rational treatment* that will engender *numerous* alternative possible answers. The debate, therefore, will be utopian but *pluralistic and non-totalitarian*. 'Utopianism Come of Age: From Post- Modernism to Neo-Modernism', <http://www.wfs.org/bisk.htm>. The 'American standard of living' referred to above is not necessarily the best example, since recent events in New Orleans have dramatically unfolded the spectacle of poverty – of what Michael Harrington described as 'the other America' - on millions of TV screens, still, Bisk's call for a 'Neo-Utopian' challenge is a valid one.

<sup>5</sup> See for example cybertown at [http://www.cybertown.com/main\\_iefames.html](http://www.cybertown.com/main_iefames.html) and S. Horn's *Cyberville: Clicks, Culture and the Creation of an Online Town*, New York: Warner Books, 1998.

<sup>6</sup> See Mohny, D. and K. Easterling, eds. *Seaside: Making a Town in America*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1991. For a solipsistic criticism of the Seaside project, see Nunn S., 'Designing the Solipsistic City: Themes of Urban Planning and Control in *The Matrix*, *Dark City*, and *The Truman Show*,' *ctheory*, [www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=292](http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=292), 2/7/2001.

<sup>7</sup> See Eisner's Interview with Laura Huxley (1993), wife of the late Aldous Huxley, available at <http://www.island.org/ive/3/>

<sup>8</sup> I am very grateful to William Gazecki for first mentioning to me Eetzler as a possible precursor of Fresco's work.

<sup>9</sup> For Fresco Cybernation is 'the wedding of the computer to production' (2002, 51). The word, cybernetics, derives from the Greek term, *kybernetics*, referring to mechanisms of steering, governing, or control. The term was first used with reference to 'human engineering' by MIT mathematician Norbert Wiener. See his *Cybernetics or Control and Communications in the Animal and the Machine*, 2nd edition, Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1965 [1948].

<sup>10</sup> While theorists such as Arthur and Marilouise Kroker in their *Data Trash: the theory of the virtual class*, Montreal: New World Perspectives, (1994) argue that the body is already obsolete, Katherine Hayles, in her *How We Became Posthuman*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, (1999), while not offering any conclusions, presents us with some fascinating interwoven stories about 'how information lost its body'. On this point compare the emergent philosophical movement of transhumanism - the term *transhuman* is shorthand for *transitional human*, i.e. people who are in the process of becoming 'posthuman' or 'cyborgs' - which says that humans can and should become more than human through technological enhancements. More at The World Transhumanist Association web site <http://transhumanism.org/index.php/th/>.

<sup>11</sup> The plan is vaguely reminiscent, among others, of Hugh Ferriss' personal manifesto of visionary urbanism. See *The Metropolis of Tomorrow*. Reprint of NY: I. Washburn, (1929). Princeton, NJ: Princeton Architectural Press, c1986.

<sup>12</sup> The center has been set up with the help of Fresco's long time associate, Roxeanne Meadows. In 2005 a film about the project and its founder, *Future By Design*, has been produced by Emmy award winning documentary filmmaker William Gazecki, more information at [www.FutureByDesignTheMovie.com](http://www.FutureByDesignTheMovie.com).

<sup>13</sup> Extropy means seeking more intelligence, wisdom and effectiveness, an open-ended lifespan, and the removal of political, cultural, biological, and psychological limits to continuing development. Perpetually overcoming constraints on our progress and possibilities as individuals, as organizations, and as a species ([http://www.unet.univie.ac.at/~a0102122/about\\_me/extropy.htm](http://www.unet.univie.ac.at/~a0102122/about_me/extropy.htm)). For a useful summary of the main principles of extropy see also [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Principles\\_of\\_Extropy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Principles_of_Extropy).

# Queer like *La Virgen*: Catholicism and Lesbian Sexuality in Carla Trujillo's What Night Brings

By Emily Anderson

*The land of little boys was ADVENTURE-DANGER-BUDDIES!  
And really cool toys.*

*Don't get me wrong, I never wanted to physically be a boy. Although I did try peeing standing up  
a couple of times-and I did pretend to shave with dad. I liked my girl body. I just wanted what they  
had- POWER!*

*I wished they would have told me sooner. I wished someone would have taken me aside-preferably an  
angel and said:*

*"The reason you felt like an outsider when you were growing up, the reason you couldn't handle all that  
Male Sexual Power, the reason you've had all these unexplainable weird feelings for women-is because  
you were born a lesbian and NOBODY TOLD YOU!"*

*-Excerpt from "Tomboy" by Monica Palacios*

I open this article exploring the intersections between religion and queer identity in Carla Trujillo's What Night Brings with an excerpt from Monica Palacios's poem "Tomboy" because I think it distills two main ideas that are at the crux of Trujillo's novel. Firstly, the poem features a young lesbian protagonist who realizes that her erotic leanings are in some way different from those embraced by her family and her culture at large, and it is this difference, she realizes, that equips others with power, and relegates her to a relative state of disempowerment. The subject in Palacios's poem, like the character of Marci in What Night Brings, longs for maleness, not as an end in itself, but more because of the freedom it allows its owner, especially in regards to engaging in relationships with women. Also similar to Marci, Palacios's character uses religious symbols and teachings to finally locate and identify what precisely the difference in her sexual orientation is. In "Tomboy," Palacios states that had she been in charge of her journey into sexual consciousness, she would have chosen to be informed about her queerness by an angel, not unlike the way that Marci prays to God, Mary, and Baby Jesus to transform her into a boy so that she can "like



girls,” as she puts it, without negative social repercussions. Since Marci does not find initial validation of her queer identity within her family or her community, she turns to her church and her spirituality in order to create a space in which she can explore the implications of her homosexuality. She demands this nurturance from the church, and for the most part, the church provides, even if Marci has to do quite a lot of revising of patriarchal religious ideologies in order to formulate the support she needs as she travels toward realizing her burgeoning queerness.

### **Replanting Cultural Roots: Moraga and Catholicism**

Chicana writing about Catholicism and the lesbian’s place in it is not a new phenomenon. Writers such as Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa have written about the role that religion has played in the shaping of their identities as Chicanas, often critiquing it for its sexism and homophobia, but at the same time not entirely denouncing its ability to act as a source of cohesiveness within Chicana/o communities. Moraga especially seems to equate the particular brand of Mexican Catholicism that she experienced as a child as something solidly rooted and inseparable from her racial and ethnic identity. In Loving in the War Years Moraga describes the years she spent away from Catholicism as a time that she “grew white . . . and sought to free herself from her culture’s claim on her (ii)” Clearly, it is not simply the church that she describes herself as fleeing, but the Chicana/o community as a whole. For her, Catholicism seems to provide an opportunity to assert and embrace Chicana identity, while Protestantism or Agnosticism are religions she consistently equates with whiteness. When writing about her white college friends, she states that “they had enough privilege to be atheists” (55), implying that those who already have a relatively high degree of social, racial, political, or class power have less of a reason to seek out the emancipatory potential within communities of faith, whereas she was in a position to use the church as a tool for cultural and political coalition building.

This coding of Protestantism as white is something that Trujillo seems to incorporate into What Night Brings when she details Marci, and here sister Korin’s interactions with Miss Patt, a white evangelical Baptist who, after asking Marci if her name is “Spanish,” tells her “well, never you mind. Jesus loves everybody” (51). Miss Patt’s racism coupled with Marci’s mother’s admonishment to stop rubbing shoulders with “Okie-holy-roller-hootenanny” (55) seems to send a message, if not to Marci, at least to the reader, that Catholicism is the only suitable religion for a young Chicana. Indeed after hearing about Marci’s meeting with Miss Patt, her mother informs her that the “only type of prayer meeting [she’s] allowed to go to from then on are the prayer meetings at [her] own church” (55). It is questionable, however, if Marci’s mother would be as apt to send her catechism classes, communion, or confession if she knew the ways Marci was using Catholicism and its teachings as a space where her own queerness could be interrogated and realized.

In Loving in the War Years, Moraga writes about visiting a Mexican basilica, and witnessing women who refuse to be herded off the moving platform underneath the Virgin’s feet, but rather hold onto the side rails

and determine that they will not leave until they have paid proper tribute to the Virgin (ii). This image of women, determined not to compromise their worship despite the “irreverence imposed by such technology” (ii) is comparable to Marci’s refusal, even as a child, to subscribe to a version of Catholicism that does not allow her to develop an understanding of her lesbian desire. Rather, she demands that the religion alter itself in such a way that will validate her own sexual identity, and what’s more she revises, recreates, or outright ignores sexist and homophobic ideologies so that she can directly recruit God in her quests to win the affections of the girls she is attracted to. Just as the women at the Mexican basilica refuse to allow the machinery of the church to relegate them to the status of just another visitor of the virgin, Marci will not embrace a spirituality that tries to push her off the platform before she is ready, that is, before she receives from it what she believes it should deliver: materially, maleness, but emotionally, a realm where lesbian identity can be identified and understood. Although it could potentially be argued that Marci does not believe that she can simultaneously love god and women, as evidenced by her persistent entreaties to be changed into a boy, I believe her requests are more due to her ignorance regarding the fact that homosexuals exist, rather than any idea on her part that the church condemns homosexuals. In other words, her desire to be male is rooted in the fact that she sees this as the only possible way she can pursue her love for women, not because she believes that queerness and Catholicism can’t conceivably mix.

### **From Virgin to Goddess: Shades of Catholicism in Anzaldua’s Spirituality**

Somewhat differently from Moraga, who sees her Catholic faith as a cultural and ethnic marker, Anzaldua is more aggressively condemnatory of the Catholic church and does not appear to strike the same balance between critique and embrace that Moraga does. Anzaldua writes, “In my own life, the Catholic Church fails to give meaning to my daily acts, to my continuing encounters with the ‘other world.’ It and other institutionalized religions impoverish all life, beauty, pleasure. The Catholic and Protestant religions encourage fear and distrust of life and of the body; they encourage a split between the body and the spirit and totally ignore the soul; they encourage us to kill parts of ourselves” (59). Finding that Catholicism does not nourish the feminist and queer parts of her subjectivity, Anzaldua writes in *Borderlands*, about a host of ancient Mexican goddesses who she has found more representative of her spiritual and political goals. Perhaps the one she devotes the most amount of time to in *Borderlands* is Coatlicue, a creator goddess tied closely to the image of serpents, fertility, and agricultural abundance (49). Anzaldua illustrates how these early Aztec goddesses were altered or changed by patriarchal influence so that they eventually came to represent nothing beyond dutiful mothers, but how originally Coatlicue, or “Lady of the Serpent Skirt” as Anzaldua refers to her, “contained and balanced the dualities of male and female, light and dark, life and death” (54). Anzaldua depicts Coatlicue as existing in a hybrid or in-between state, fluidly shifting genders in a way that is similar to what Marci prays for. Obviously as a poor child who has had minimal schooling, Marci does not have the knowledge or the power to create and write a religion that is solely hers, as Anzaldua does, but interestingly, Marci demands many of the same things from Catholicism that Anzaldua declares are tenants of her spirituality: a focus on the body, a validation of queerness, a nurturing presence in a life that is rife with abuse and alienation. In any case, this idea of striking a balance

between different dichotomies, of embodying dualities that Anzaldua outlines, is something that Moraga feels Catholicism can do in her life, and it also seems to be a belief that Marci holds, although perhaps not totally consciously. All three women seem to be using religion as a site to balance a critique and an assertion of self, whether through the rewriting of patriarchal Catholicism or a replacement of it with an alternative spirituality.

**What Night Brings: Rethinking the Religious, Incorporating the Queer**

*“During the long difficult night that sent my lover and I to separate beds, I dreamed of church and cunt. I put it this way because that is how it came to me. The suffering and the thick musty mysticism of the catholic church fused with the sensation of entering the vagina-like that of a colored woman’s-dark, rica, full-bodied. The heavy sensation of complexity. A journey I must unravel, work out for myself.”*

-Loving in the War Years, Cherrie Moraga

The connection between Catholicism and the female body is one that several Chicana writers have addressed, both in ways that illustrate the suppression and control that religion can exact over issues surrounding sexuality and reproduction, but also in ways that claim the Catholic woman’s body as fluid, complex, and a potential site of subversive re-creation of patriarchal religious ideologies and iconography. Carla Trujillo addresses this when she writes about how symbolism surrounding the Virgen de Guadalupe’s body has been re-appropriated by Chicana lesbians who ascribe alternative meanings to her traditional cultural role, rejecting her characterization as chaste and virtuous and instead reading her as a strong, rebellious, and possibly queer figure (“Virgen,” 218). Trujillo particularly notes that while the majority of priests may describe the Virgin as having no divine abilities, many Chicana women pray “directly to her, turn to her for answers to their prayers, for the bestowal of graces, and sometimes even for the miracle of physical healing” (“Virgen,” 221)

In an above passage, Moraga talks about entering a church in the same manner that she would have sex with a woman, with a particular focus on suffering, complexity, and reverence. This leads me to question how the connotations of being entered and altered by spirituality take on different meanings when compared metaphorically to lesbian sex. What happens when the female body becomes not a passive vessel to be penetrated by the ideologies or doctrines that relegate Mary or Guadalupe solely to the role of mother and virgin, but rather what are the implications when a woman’s body is allowed to moderate or control the aspects of religion she “lets in” and which ones she forces to remain on the periphery? Perhaps more subversively, what are the implications of a woman allowing a spirituality that is coded specifically as queer and female penetrate her body and her consciousness, creating a sexually-charged discourse in a space previously designated as an asexual, or at best, heterosexual territory? Trujillo argues that there is a significant difference between “enforced emulation of La Virgen in the classic manner which is obviously a means of repression” (220) and the ways in which many “lesbians claim La Virgen as [their] own, and

take part of this creation of La Virgen and redefine her to suit [their] own needs” (220). It seems that this agency that the subject has to decide how to read religious codes could point to the differences inherent between forced or welcomed incorporation of already established religious symbolism or iconography.

This creation of a feminist, queer, and yet still Catholic body is something that Marci embraces throughout *What Night Brings*. Early on in the novel, Marci informs the reader that were she to ever need a “Hollywood name,” she would choose between Mary Cross, Marci Christa, or Margi Cress” (6), all names that conjure up associations with Mary, Christ, and the crucifixion. Interestingly, she is informed by others that she would need a new name as a way of hiding her Mexican descent from the show business community, but by choosing names that relate so closely to Catholic symbolism and iconography, she is subtly demanding that attention be paid to her culture and ethnicity, and avoiding the totalizing white-washing that Moraga claims her estrangement from Catholicism caused for her.

Secondly, Marci contemplates taking on religiously charged names that emulate Mary or Christ, not as a way to show devoutness or holiness, not because she wants to fulfill some sexist ideal of feminine perfection, but because, strategically, she thinks she will need the name in order to “make it” in Hollywood and by extension, meet and pursue relationships with beautiful women (her internal monologue about seeking work in Hollywood immediately follows a lengthy rumination about the attractive women she sees on screen). Her emulation and incorporation of religion fits very much within Trujillo’s ideas about redefinition in order to meet one’s own specific needs—in Marci’s fantasy about going to Hollywood, she refuses to entirely separate her religion from her queerness, and instead decides to use religiously coded names in her pursuit of fame, and, more importantly to her, women. Catholicism becomes a strategic tool she can use, if only in fantasy, to gain access to ways of living and loving that seem impossible within the strictures of her class, family, and ethnic community.

Perhaps the most obvious way Marci literally puts her body in the hands of God is through her constant entreaties to God to make her male. In one of several such pleas Marci explains her actions in the following manner: “I went to the chapel and stood under the statue of the Virgin Mary holding Baby Jesus ... I lit a candle and started praying. ‘Mother Mary, please help me be a boy. I love girls so much and I need you and Baby Jesus to help God change me. Only you guys can do it. I promise to be good so please don’t forget me’” (30-1). Marci is obviously praying that her body will be enacted upon by religious forces, but again, for the specific desired result of allowing her to have sex with women.

It can be argued that while her faith cannot physically turn her into a boy, it does provide the framework that she uses in her discovery of queer people and in her formulation of where she herself fits within this framework, and this will be explored further momentarily. However for the purposes of this argument about Catholic female bodies that literally subsume or absorb certain elements of the faith in order to fulfill specific ends, I would like to look briefly at Marci’s reaction when her Tia Leti catches her outside of Tink’s bar while she is attempting to take photographs of Eddie while engaged in his alleged affair with Wanda. In the hopes of pacifying her Aunt, Marci gives “her the same look Jesus had on the cross” (204), while informing the reader that she had “practiced it during mass when [she] was bored, telling the

reader that she would also “point to other statues in the church and do their faces to make Corin laugh” (204). In both cases, Marci uses religious icons, internalized and manifested through her own body, as a means of either exacting influence over her Aunt or making her younger sister happy; both acts that she has deemed necessary and important. Marci consciously performs the religious, comically hyperbolizing familiar imagery, and through this masquerade, reshaping the purposes these images serve, transforming them from something that limits power to something that grants it. Through her simultaneous embodying and performing of religion, Marci is enacting Luce Irigaray’s idea about constructing “the female imaginary [while at the same time] negotiate[ing] for its creation” (Perez 91). By this I mean that while Marci is literally creating a new religious “language” through the performance of Jesus and the other icons, she is also creating a space in which alternative readings of religion are allowed to exist. Even if her goals in appropriating the religious symbolic are not particularly profound, and are certainly self- focused, she still, by asserting her reading and performance, makes room for other systems of religious language and interpretation to be formed, something Irigaray believes has to happen if unitary, dominant meanings are ever to be challenged.

In her article about Chicana Spiritualities, Lara Medina states that Chicana women and lesbians in particular “have learned to supplant patriarchal religion with their own cultural knowledge, sensibilities, and sense of justice” (189), something that Marci accomplishes when she decides, after seeing an autobiography of Christine Jorgenson, a white male to female transsexual, that she would rather keep asking God to change her sex even after learning that some people can create the change through sex reassignment surgery. Rather than accepting the idea that her religion would not condone her queerness, she resolves to, in her words “have another talk with Baby Jesus” (28) after deciding that the content in the autobiography was not representative of her specific desire “I didn’t want to go to the hospital and have an operation,” she writes, “I didn’t even really want a birdy. I just wanted Raquel” (28). Marci’s allegiance to her faith, her belief that religion is capable and will ultimately provide her with what she seeks in a more effective manner than medical science, shows the extent to which she is able to rewrite Catholicism so that it allows for a woman to change her gender.

Interestingly, Marci’s rejection of the image of Jorgenson, while based partly on a gender transformation that she finds lacking and incomplete (she notes for instance that if medical science can change people’s genitals then perhaps it should also be able to reduce other “mannish” aspects of Jorgenson’s appearance as well), also seems based on an alienation that she feels from Jorgenson’s whiteness. Marci is quick to note the copious blue eye shadow and Dusty Springfield haircut that Jorgenson sports on the cover of the book. Perhaps part of her gravitation towards a queerness grounded in Catholicism relates back to Moraga’s idea about Catholicism functioning as a way for Chicanas to assert culture and ethnicity. Since Jorgenson’s queerness and whiteness exclude her, Marci will construct her own racial and sexual identities within a context that she feels included in.

Conversely, simply because Marci chooses religion as a vehicle for expressing her queerness, this does not lead her to an uncritical acceptance of the church, even if her critiques follow the candid manner of an eleven year old girl. She informs the reader that she “hate[s] stupid Holy Communion. Didn’t need it and



didn't want it," she proclaims (124). Later in the novel she states that she suspects that Sister Elizabeth, a nun who teaches her catechism class, "makes up most of what she says about God, just to keep me believing in him. Either that or she thinks I am really dumb" (141). There are obviously several aspects or rituals within Catholicism that Marci finds no redeeming value in. Not coincidentally, these parts of the church that Marci rejects are resistant to the personalization of her own prayers and entreaties to God. She is told to stop asking questions during catechism lessons because in the words of Mother Superior, her "questions do no good for anyone and cause the other children to doubt what they are being taught" (112). Sister Elizabeth, Mother Superior, and Mrs. Beauchamp (the Holy Communion teacher) all ask Marci to suppress her curiosity, deny her body, and become a passive receptacle for Christ through the act of communion, a ritual that Marci finds no meaning in and relegates to the same level of absurdity as barking like a dog, an action she assumes her Baptist neighbors engage in when they are worshipping. Her criticisms of the religion at this point are almost identical to those expressed by Anzaldua in *Borderlands*; however, instead of quitting Catholicism, Marci tends to focus on those parts, both institutionalized and personal, that provide her with the queer space that she is coming to realize she needs, while scornfully rejecting the aspects of the faith she finds meaningless or confining.

I mention institutionalized queerness in the Catholic church in the above paragraph, because there does seem to be potential moments in the novel where Trujillo allows Marci's queerness to be at least passively endorsed by Father Chacon, one of the priests at the church her family attends. When Marci, out of exasperation, admits to him during her first confession that she is attracted to girls (and would like to touch their breasts), and he does not condemn her, she expresses relief, stating, "I couldn't believe what I was hearing. He said it was okay to squeeze chichis. I was happy" (72). However, seconds later Marci's elation fades when she remembers that confession is anonymous; Father Chacon cannot see her face and may therefore think that he had just advised a young boy instead of her. The reader never discovers if Father Chacon knew that he was talking to Marci or not, and this ambiguity calls into question whether there are spaces within institutionalized Catholicism for Marci to receive validation in her queer identity.

This ambiguity regarding the church's "official" position on homosexuality is complicated later in the novel when Marci begins to unravel definitions surrounding queerness and begins to suspect that Father Chacon is a homosexual. As readers we know this about him long before Marci has her first confession, so are therefore forced into the position of wondering throughout most of the novel if his refusal to denounce Marci's homosexual desire is rooted in anti-homophobic sentiments on his part or merely upon the fact that he misrecognized her gender during the confession. Marci poses this question herself when she addresses the reader, asking them, "Remember when I was in confession with father Chacon and I told him I liked girls and he didn't even care? And remember I thought it was because he thought I was a boy? Well, maybe he knew I wasn't. If he knew I was a girl and I said I liked girls, then can you see why he didn't care?" (136). Marci is questioning the presence of homosexuality within the core of the church itself, not merely as something that may exist on the outskirts. It certainly seems to be the case that Father Chacon's relationship with Marci's Uncle Tommy is an open secret, and by the end of the novel, even Marci has a shred of suspicion about the nature of their relationship. For Marci's mother, Marci's Aunt Arlene, and most of the other members of the community, the relationship between Tommy and Father

Chacon is something viewed with tacit if grudging acceptance. Therefore there seems to be a space for male homosexuality within both the community and the church, although perhaps a less than ideal space, judging by the fact that his relationship with Father Chacon seems to contribute to shame and silence in Tommy and alcoholism in his wife, Aunt Arlene. When Father Chacon hears Marci's confession, it is unclear if he is trying to extend the queer space to include potential lesbians or not. Trujillo could have easily disclosed Father Chacon's reasons behind his confession speech to Marci, but in not doing so, she leaves the potential for lesbian maneuvering room within Catholicism as a concrete reality, a negotiable space in which queer assignments of meaning can co-exist with opposing ideologies.

Much of this paper has focused on the ways in which Marci refuses to separate her religion from her queerness, but instead how the two seem inextricable; however, Marci is not the only character in *What Night Brings* who seems unable to talk and think about queerness without embedding the assertions in religious language. In a conversation between Eddie, Marci, and her mother, the phrase "holly roller" becomes a euphemism for a homosexual when Eddie implies that Uncle Tommy is a holy roller because of all the time he "spends with priests" (74). Marci then assures Eddie that she is not a holy roller since she spends virtually no time with priests and does not like talking to them.

Interestingly, interaction with father Chacon, is seen, through Eddie's eyes at least, as something that may be contagious, a force that could potentially spread queerness to others. This is something that Marci assumes as well before she understands the definition of the word "queer" fully and wonders if Tommy might have become queer from the time that she saw him and Father Chacon exit from the same confessional booth. In these examples, queerness, like religion, is seen as something that people learn from others as opposed to something that is innately part of them. For Marci, queerness, like religion, is learned, and what is more, it can be proselytized—those who are already queer can pass the knowledge onto others.

After seeing Uncle Tommy physically attack Eddie after Eddie derisively accuses him of being queer, Marci realizes that queerness must be something undesirable, at least in the eyes of some. She proceeds to look up the word "queer" in the dictionary. Initially, and similar to her reaction to the Christine Jorgensen autobiography, Marci concludes that none of the definitions of "queer" that she finds in the dictionary are suitable descriptions of Uncle Tommy. While attempting to formulate a definition that makes sense to her, Marci relies upon the first definition of the word "queer," which is "differing in some odd way from what is usual or normal" (134) and proceeds to analyze Uncle Tommy's activities, finally deciding that that the only thing about him that fits this description is his devotion to the church. She thus concludes that it must be the priests, and by extension the church that makes people odd, abnormal, or queer. Finally she asserts that if the church and most of its followers are queer, than perhaps God is as well. While Marci has not yet reached the point of equating queerness to homosexuality, she is able to use religion as a gateway into understanding that queer people and queer actions deviate from the standards of normalcy that Eddie, among others, try to impress upon her. At this point, Marci's understanding of the word "queer" is completely divorced from any sort of supposed sexual deviance, yet she seems aware, somehow, that the definition she has used that merely focuses on strange or abnormal behavior is not entirely sufficient. This causes her to question whether it really is the church that might make a person queer or if a person

is already queer and that is why they go to church.

Still unsatisfied, Marci revisits the definition, and is led to look up the word homosexual. After learning that there is a word describing the same sex desire that she has been feeling throughout the novel, Marci is still not willing to separate the sexual from the religious. She states, “so if being in church makes you a homosexual queer and, a man loving a man, or lady loving a lady makes you a homosexual queer, then this must be what I am. I’m a girl. I like Raquel. That makes me a girl liking a girl, which is a homosexual queer. And since I like God, Baby Jesus, and Mary and they’re the church, then I must be a double homosexual queer” (136- 7). Just as Marci does not want to become male literally through surgery as she sees in the autobiography of Christine Jorgenson, but would rather the transformation be enacted through appeals to spiritual/religious forces, she is not willing to separate her queerness from her belief in the power of the religious icons she worships. In her eyes, both liking girls and enjoying church makes her queer. She equates them as two parallel forces in her life that contribute to her overall queerness, and she seems somewhat unaware that there are potential ideological conflicts in her embracing of both religion and lesbian sexuality.

Late in the novel, after countless hours of entreaties to God, Mary and Jesus, Marci comes to realize that it is extremely unlikely that she will become a boy. After reaching this conclusion, Marci states, “if I’m gonna stay a girl, I better figure out what to do. Problem is, what?” (223). Shortly after posing this question, the reader learns that Marci stops going to church, but still thinks about God (238), signifying a shift in Marci’s spirituality in which she becomes the agent of her own transformation by exploring her lesbianism as displayed by the kiss she shares with Robbie on the last page of the book. She begins negotiating the spaces where his lesbian identity and spirituality interact from a position more on the margins of organized religion as opposed to the position she spends throughout the course of the novel from within the midst of it.

This change is partly due to the fact that Grandma Flor tells Marci that God doesn’t grant wishes, that she has to be the one to recreate her reality (239). Therefore even though Marci spends a significant amount of the novel demanding and creating a space for queerness within an institutionalized religious setting, the reader is left with the impression that by the end of the novel, Marci has decided that her gender and sexual identity would have more space to flourish outside of the formal church, although she expresses no intention of abandoning Catholicism at a cultural level. At this point she has perhaps moved closer to Moraga and Anzaldúa’s ideas about eliminating elements of Catholicism that are homophobic and sexist, and replacing them with something more in line with queer feminist political and social agendas, but at the same time, retaining the cultural, racial, and familial aspects that the church has historically provided in Chicana/o communities.

When reading *What Night Brings* it becomes painfully evident early in the novel that Marci is not receiving the spiritual, educational, and physical nurturance that she needs from her home, family, or school. One thing that she does have is the church. So she uses this as a place where she can determine the roles that God, Mary, and Jesus play in her life—indeed the church becomes one of the few venues in which she can

assert any sort of individualistic power. Since she is not receiving any signals from her secular community that being a lesbian is an acceptable lifestyle, she recreates religious symbolism and iconography so that it responds to her personal needs, something that, Trujillo notes, Chicana women have been doing for a long time. Since her religion lends itself to the re-appropriation and reassigning of meanings, Marci is able to structure a queer identity that is reliant and inextricable from her faith. She also, as Moraga would likely note, forms a version of queerness that is ethnically and culturally rooted in the Chicana/o community, rejecting white images and definitions of queerness, and again and again returning to Catholicism as a way to view and understand her sexuality. Through embodiment and personalization of a religion that in many ways is supposed to exclude her and her desires, Marci uses the tools she has been given to assert her right to be lesbian within a faith that, at times, would rather not accept or validate her identity.

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# Mythopoeica Today.

By Geoff Berry

Our ideas about myth have changed with time, and it is probably more accurate to say that such ideas indicate more about us than they do about the tales of origin, heroics and ritual that they supposedly define. The era of anthropology and psychology has furnished us with a way of interpreting myth that is comfortable when it is focussed on the other, but that seems to run aground when turned back upon itself. In contemporary Western terms, myth has come to mean the type of story that frames or structures a worldview, while it ‘places’ individuals and their groups within that wider cosmos. This advanced anthropological understanding can then be broken down into two distinct varieties – mythologies that supply a sacred dimension to their cosmos, and those that don’t. This second group is quite rare in world history, and most of us will recognise it as being a modern variety. Joseph Campbell disparages such a cultural story as ‘mere ideology’, believing that it cannot be known as myth proper without a sacred dimension.<sup>i</sup> While I agree with the criticism that my own cultural story is profane, and fundamentally ‘missing something’, my research leads me to conclude that if we proceed with an analysis of contemporary consumer culture as a mythologically informed way of life, we will inevitably realise that no style of consciousness or rationality, including ours, can escape the fundamental human instinct for the sacred that is the hallmark of the ‘truly’ mythic.

This is an important point for Western democracies today, as the conservative right threatens to reconstitute its white sky god as a protection against their new enemies. This harkening backwards to a deceased divinity, however, will not appease the drive toward the divine where it is felt by thinking people in a post-post-modern world. Although the need for shared values was never felt more keenly, a reconstitution of archaic forms simply cannot satisfy the intellectual and scientific advances that we inherit with our contemporary circumstances. Surely there is a paradigm that can cohere our material (scientific) understanding of the world, act as a vehicle for our appetite for the mythic, and offer us a vision wherein plurality, or diversity, is a matter of mutual respect within a system of relations that unites, rather than divides us? Before attempting to respond to this ideal, let’s consider a discovery from relatively recent literary critical analysis that has perhaps been too quickly turned aside.

Around a century ago a group that would become known as the Cambridge ritualists suggested that literature could hold vestiges of archaic ritual. In particular, they pointed out that mythic texts such as those concerning the Holy Grail could reveal transmuted traces of the rites surrounding an ever-living, ever-dying vegetation divinity.<sup>ii</sup> These discoveries were slowly leached of much of the richness of their potential, as the field of anthropology eschewed such generalising theoretical structures for the closer-in view of ethnography (à la Malinkowski) while the literary and wider world viewed such discoveries as an interesting vestige of a primitive past. The Cambridge ritualists themselves suffered from this pseudo-Darwinian



bias of evolutionary progress, seeing in their discoveries a kind of archaeological dig into literary history.  
<sup>iii</sup> It strikes me that subsequent developments reveal, as well as archaic bones speaking dustily of a long deceased reality, an insistent and endlessly relevant spontaneous arising of mythic symbol that in turn reveals our incessant (if repressed) instinct for a sacred relationship with, and within, our world.

Scapegoat kings being sacrificed for the fertility of their cultural collective are certainly common across world history. Although widely divergent in form, this rite is recognisable as an undeniable archetype.  
<sup>iv</sup> Could it be that we constituents of contemporary consumer capitalism indulge in a similar sacrifice, in a ritual stripped of its sacred vestiges, as part of a mythology that places us as individuals in a profaned system of exchange that is perpetuated by our participation? It is perhaps too easily overlooked that we continue to trade in the flesh of 'our holy mother, the sacred earth', every time we exchange the goods upon which our global market depends. Matter, held to be sacred in any cosmology that honours the body and the earth for the gift of life in which we all share, is not simply stripped of its share of divinity by a system that treats it as inert. Western consciousness, in shifting its focus from the nature upon which we depend to the mental prowess that operates upon it for our wealth, needed its vision of the sacred to likewise shift out of the web of immanence and into the stratosphere of abstraction. When we began to operate *upon* nature, with technologies that had their origin in the technological skills of agriculture and animal husbandry, we stepped outside of an empathetic relationship within it in order to extract a greater yield. Thus we began to worship our talent *over* the material web out of which we arise, and our mental potential to benefit from a body that can now be seen to be inert and yielding.

Nature fulfils our needs wantonly, randomly, without the mathematical ordering and constant supply that we can add to it with our constructions. It is unpredictable and we can order it to our benefit. But in this process we may also lose our reverence for it. As matter is inert and can be formed into our constructions, so it becomes known to us as 'dumb'. As animals are controllable and can be bred for our profit, so our respect for them diminishes. And as the body is of the same order as the earth, and the animal, so it too becomes a thing we can fashion to our abstract ideals, worshipped for the way it can be manipulated rather than for the living and breathing mystery it is, before we mentally format it into another vehicle of our desires. This process by which we profane matter is reflected in our mythology, where the distant sky god of our history (far from unique in world affairs) was loaded with the tools upon which our developing way of life depended. He was enthroned in an Elysium field that cannot be known in this life, but must be projected into the distances of past creation or future afterlife. He did not challenge the profanity of matter, but handed us over the power to treat it as we wish; a convenient fall guy for our desires toward undiminished dominion and a logical step towards His own ultimate demise. The God (or His representative on earth) will always be sacrificed for our benefit; it's just a matter of the consciousness that accompanies this exchange.

The benefit we accrue from this sacrifice is a transformation of nature, from sacred and living to profane and inert. The shift from earth worship to sky god encodes the transformation of consciousness necessary to the project of settlement living, or 'civilization'. The imminent style of spirituality embodied in pagan or native cultural modes is subjected to the same divorce from the land that is evident in this new mode

of material reality. As Marx saw, our cultural creations will reflect our physical mode of being – symbolic realities cannot be divorced from their material context, although both can be shifted away from one concept of the sacred to another.<sup>v</sup> Such a shift does not need to occur in traditional cultures that identify themselves with the land, as do the Australian indigenes. Although culturally complex and diverse, there is a common thread of wisdom coursing through Aboriginal mythologies (in this country and in others) that treat the land as a living entity. It displays intelligence, communicates with its animals, and is involved in a complex system of exchange with every part of itself that has a variable but undeniable kind of balance built in. Hunter-gatherer societies were structured such that each individual entered into this communication in a variety of intricate ways: listening for prey; sniffing for changes in the weather; sensing a good collection of tubers beneath an otherwise nondescript example of bush daisy. Such is life in intimate relationship with nature. It is not hard to imagine the checks and balances that are built into such a system, where the destruction of one element of a habitat affects others in a spiral of causality.<sup>vi</sup> This spiral of returning effects and linear, or unchangeable, paths is an intrinsic part of our system of exchange also, but the way we operate distances us from the signals of destruction, so that we do not necessarily understand the import of our actions until nature bites back. This is a communication we are now learning to re-read, as the damage we have visited upon our habitat begins to take its toll on our quality of living and indeed on our ability to live. The conversation we need to have with nature is not hard to discern and no longer takes any special skills to hear, as it becomes more blatant with each passing year.

The distressingly violent wake-up signals we now face reflect the crude way we have engaged with our habitat, and as the world follows the same Western technological proficiency to greater surplus, so the drama becomes global. As a collective we now hear the cries of a wounded earth that we have blocked out from our privileged existence in the cities. In a sense, we are being initiated, with a wounding to the body of the earth, in a similar way that individuals in traditional society are initiated with a wounding to their personal self. At a deeply intimate level, such wounding is accepted in primal rites of initiation. There, the adolescent mind is stripped bare in order that a more mature synthesis of complexity can be imprinted upon the initiate, and this process takes place in a perennial fashion in traditional societies where the ability to converse with nature is a respected and necessary trait.<sup>vii</sup> Comparatively, we are distanced from our habitat and the way it supplies us with our needs, and fail to maintain an intimate relationship with the process by which we feed ourselves. When we are delivered nourishment in a plastic wrapper, we give thanks (by way of silent consent) to the sky god of technology who enabled us to receive the food – the abstract mental principles by which we created the plenty.<sup>viii</sup>

Since our earlier image of that sky god has deceased due to its being too far distanced from our material plane of being, we have entered a whole new version of spiritual vacuum into which new forms of the sacred pour and are stamped with an allotted shelf-life depending on their comparative utility. The images that we chase into the transcendental afterlife of consumer yearning offer ephemeral satisfaction and keep us chasing for more, just as does the heroin that can now be picked up on any city street. Standing against this profane turnstile is an awareness within us all that we are embedded within nature, in a world that we cannot escape, and in a way that is both tortuous and liberating at once. The voice of nature, when heard over our self-involved chitchat and the swamp of internet porn, slowly loosens the cogs that drive our

profit machine until we are no longer able to sustain our unconscionable flight toward the teleological fantasy of endless consumer riches. Like the Native American saying goes, when all the trees are gone and the fish dead, will we learn that we cannot eat money?

There is a pragmatism at the heart of so much indigenous philosophy that we have been able to ignore as we have fought to extricate ourselves from an identification with nature. Our struggle towards individuation can in part be seen to have become self-defeating, and the way forwards does not need to preclude learning from the past. In our own humble beginnings, European culture also walked the earth with reverence, just as indigenous peoples of the land still do (or try to, against many odds). But the process of increase that we have focussed upon has tied the Western style of rationality up with the internal logic of our technology. As we recognise anthropologically, material and symbolic realms reflect each other – you cannot take Aboriginal Australian myth out of the way of life of its people and expect it to make much sense. The same rule applies to our own worldview and way of life. The way we envision matter is intimately tied- up with the way we operate upon it technologically, and this is reflected in our mythology. The light of God, and the abstract mind that he signifies, rules from above, while the darkness of ignorance and bodily sin (or at least discomfort) resides below (in the ‘unconscious’), and we are tormented in between. Freud stands as a development of this Judaeo-Christian vision, transforming its abstractions into a parallel internal framework of super-ego standing over id, with ego the battler in the middle. The secular scientific mind, in some ways coming full circle in its desire to rationalise an ontologically materialist approach to existence, does not challenge the hierarchy that forms its internal logic, it merely transmutes it to its own (and our own) benefit. As with any power structure, conservatism is the first rule of survival; as such, we continue to believe in the light standing over the darkness, only now it is in terms of inner life rather than anthropomorphic cosmic powers. There is now the potential for an understanding of this process to develop even further, as we explore the status of living matter from the perspectives of contemporary scientific theories.

Our technological (post-Christian) vision of distanced mental authority standing over an inert body of matter (the fantasy of the objective observer) could be seen as the zenith of our abstraction. But this observer is a cultural construct, and as such it can be *de*-constructed. Upon completion of this operation we find the *participant*, a conceptual role yet to be concretely defined within the Western paradigm because it threatens the very assumptions upon which we rely. The participant is interdependent within nature rather than standing outside of it; the rules they apply to their experiment determine its outcome, and what is done to nature is done to themselves—just as perennial philosophies maintained. The unutterable complexity and play of life within which the participant incarnates and experiments becomes their conception of the sacred – not divorced from their lived reality or themselves. Cognisant of the indivisibility between themselves and their world, they are awake to the care with which our investigations into reality and how it may benefit us must be tended. The participant in an experiment may certainly also observe, but they do so alongside their own part in the play, and this cannot be divorced from the results produced. This intimate poly-causality, where our attitudes and actions return to us in time, is recognised at a material and symbolic level by cultures that maintain their identity with the land. They remain a part of the web of life that they depend upon for their survival, assigning the same degree of respect to their power to affect it

by their actions as they do to its power to direct them. There is a pleasing humility here, as well as a high degree of conscious awareness about the delicacy of the web of life in its most intricate details.

This intensity of consciousness, ironically enough, is exactly what we lack in terms of our ability to maintain homeostasis. I say ironically because the history of Western colonisation has been marked by widely divergent attitudes toward native cultures: swinging from one racist pole of primitivism associated with the dumb animals to another of the noble savages who wandered the desert in a ‘not-really-conscious’ religious haze. Now that the dust has settled on these primitive attempts to define indigenous cultures, we see that they, in fact, are the ones who see the habitat more realistically, with greater conscious awareness and ability to make refined distinctions. The old cliché of the Inuit people having 43 words for snow holds true, in the sense that indigenous language in general shows a marvellous degree of attention to detail in the real terms of what this means to us. And here the argument over how language relates to reality can be refreshed with a simple but profound insight – language relates what reality means to us, not what it actually is, and as such it is not an arbitrary system of signs devoid of any intrinsic value. Like myth, it is a cultural construct indivisible from its environment. As we have settled, and concerned our mental habits with the regulation of surplus in the cities, our lived environment has become increasingly distanced from the land upon which we ultimately rely, and so has our symbolic language.

This shift, as it records the fundamental driving force behind our culture, can be recognised in our mythological history from early Mesopotamia onwards. When the rising male hero-god Marduk slew the previous highest power, the earth mother Tiamat, and carved up her body to create humans and their arts, he symbolised a recognition of our reliance on the environment even as he initiated a new socio-political order that placed our technology over the raw material that it transformed. The Biblical Fall from grace reiterated the schism that now underscored our division from the natural world, while further distancing our style of worship from culture hero to abstract sky god. Scientific paradigms that assert an objective observation of inert matter transmute this distance to our benefit, while reassuring us that a stable human vision can be maintained against the encroaching vastness and emptiness of the universe that we slowly uncover. Along the course of recent European history, we may recognise in Modernism a similar quest for established codes and structures that could retain such stability. Since then, our self-assurance has dropped away to be replaced by a radically subjective perspectivism that appreciates that any so-called reality can only be known as a construct that is not only partial but in-built with often undisclosed postures concerning the nature of power relations. The gift to be found here, as we reconstruct our cultural vantage point to allow for a balance of stability and flexibility, is in the recognition that this position also reveals a web, or network, within which an idea, symbol or meaning operates and without which it cannot be said to have any intrinsic value whatsoever.<sup>ix</sup>

Language is thus returned to a web of relationships not indistinct from the cultural world within which it arises, and this social reality is deeply embedded in its material, or natural, circumstances. An awareness of the way ‘the Word’ directs the mind first to the rules within itself, then to the web of relations within which these rules operate, and thereby to the gap between, gives us a clue as to one way in which our conscious minds are held away from the sacred. When we focus on what is conscious before us, the holistic is lost to

the world of detail. When we loosen up our grip on the detail to recognise the system of relations within which things attain meaning, there is nothing to pinpoint – and we are lost in that haze. Meaning resides somewhere between the two, but not intrinsically in either, and our monolingual conscious awareness struggles to ground itself in such a wobbly postmodernism. This inability is compounded by the division we suffer from our habitat. As our talent for abstraction convinces us that we can consciously control inert matter to our own purposes, so it has come to convince us that we can likewise force the concrete signs of language in any direction that suits us. We are in a quandary when this turns out to be not the case. Language *won't* in fact reveal reality... Egad! And reality, or the natural world within which we find ourselves, won't endlessly yield to the abstract principles of profit we demand of it. We are not an innocent observer distanced from our actions by our intellectual principles, although this theory has so often allowed us to avoid our responsibility to the earth across the trajectory of our technologically brilliant and highly profitable project of civilization.

The talent of the technological, civilizing and colonising mindset cannot be divorced from the spiritual misery that accompanies it, just as the Shadow of our potential Wasteland cannot be seen as separate from our throne of plenty in the cities. But the double-edged sword, by definition, cuts both ways. Just as we yearn for an experience of a lost *participation mystique* that will absolve us in an effulgence of atonement, so we seek to reopen the wound and the sacred in one. And the only way this wounded sacred can be convinced to appear before us is if it is recognised in reality, reconstituted here from its distant home in the abstract heavens of our transcendental yearning to be elsewhere, newly invited to be present with us as we recognise the sacred in the act of being and becoming at once. If the way we interpret meaning reflects the way that we define material reality, then our idea of ourselves cannot be divorced from our habitat or what we do to it, no matter how cleverly we convince ourselves that we are no longer dependent upon it. There is a space between the mind with its language and the body in its mute aliveness where an intersection brings matter to consciousness. But because we cannot name this place, or control the way it comes into being, we sit back on our (well padded) laurels and identify ourselves with what we can name and control.

In this action we accept the power of technology and rationality divorced from its ground of being, accepting the benefits of muting a matter that is intelligent and receptive by defining it as inert. Like the body, like animals, and like those less 'civilized' than ourselves, the earth *can* be forced to accept the definition that we apply over it. But until we recognise ourselves in the web of relations that embrace all of the things of the world, we continue to condone this wound while initiating ourselves into a conflicted world. One way through this conundrum is to accept the paradox of indivisible identification between self and world that is couched in the language of mysticism and imminent spirituality, and the only way to realise this paradox is to realise that we act upon ourselves as we act upon the world. This recognition only gains depth as we accept complicity in our collective agenda, and this complicity cannot be accepted without suffering. And so it goes, finding the sacred in the wound and the wound in the sacred. For this is what we have done to the world, and what we have done to the world we do to ourselves, and what we find in the world and in ourselves is the mystery incarnating, melding, exchanging across boundaries, and regenerating against all reason. What we find, at the intersection of self and world, mind and body, is a flow of interdependent, mutually supportive, and poly-causal life. The way we interpret that flow from the vantage point of the



‘civilized world’ is, generally speaking, another thing altogether.

## Notes

<sup>i</sup> Joseph Campbell, *Transformations of Myth through Time* (New York: Harper & Row, 1990) 47.

<sup>ii</sup> See especially Jessie L. Weston, *From Ritual to Romance* (New York: Dover Publications, 1997).

<sup>iii</sup> See Michael Groden and Martin Kreiswirth, eds., *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994) 128-131.

<sup>iv</sup> As catalogued in Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough; a History of Myth and Religion* (London: Chancellor Press, 2000).

<sup>v</sup> When he criticised European philosophy’s atemporal posturing, or ‘descent from Heaven’ model of knowledge, Marx pointed out that the relationship between ideology and social structure must be switched as if in a *camera obscura*, so that we see our ideas as formed by our material reality and not vice versa. Karl Marx, *Karl Marx Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) 164. Barthes follows this insight through to comment that myth eternalises our temporal products: ‘... myth is constituted by the loss of the historical quality of things: in it, things lose the memory that they once were made.’ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (London: Jonathon Cape, 1974) 142-3.

<sup>vi</sup> Kane calls this ecological imperative a system of poly-causality, with ‘causes-causing-causes- to-cause-causes.’ He goes on to point out that ‘it is all process – unending. The later myths of organized agricultural humanity lose this openness to the circuits of meaning in wilderness, to copy instead the imposed order of the garden.’ Sean Kane, *Wisdom of the Mythtellers* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1994) 166.

<sup>vii</sup> See especially Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969).

<sup>viii</sup> Campbell, *Transformations of Myth through Time* 10.

<sup>ix</sup> I am following Saussure, Derrida, and the late Heidegger here.

# Translating Music and Supplanting Tradition: Reading, Listening and Interpreting in *Tristan*

By Blake G. Hobby

*Considered as an artistic force, Wagner is something almost without parallel, probably the most formidable talent in the entire history of art.*—Thomas Mann, “Wagner and the Present Age,” 1931 (*Pro and Contra Wagner* 88)

In *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man* (1918), 43-year-old Thomas Mann looked back on his early works, notably his novel *Buddenbrooks* (1901). Reflective yet ardent, Mann ruminated about his artistic formation and the three German spirits who constellated his artistic cosmos—Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Richard Wagner:

In an artistic and literary way, my love for German tradition begins exactly where Europeans find it credible and valid, where it can influence Europeans, where it is accessible to every European. The three names I must acknowledge when I search for the basis of my intellectual-artistic development— Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Wagner—are like a triple star of eternally united spirits that shines powerfully in the German sky. (*Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man* 48)

Mann recalled reading Schopenhauer’s *The World as Will and Idea* as a “lonely, erratic youth, passionately craving the world and death” and discovering “the spiritual source of the music of *Tristan!*” (*Reflections* 49). Intoxicated with Wagner’s music and with Schopenhauer’s and Nietzsche’s philosophy, Mann experienced an aesthetic communion. He recognized his own pessimistic “psychological mood” in “Schopenhauer’s morality” and observed that Nietzsche’s “ethical atmosphere” was “also to be found in Wagner” (*Reflections* 54).

Philosophy and music inspired many of Mann’s creations. Drawn by music’s effect on listeners, Mann admired its mystical, intangible qualities that stirred the soul, created yearning, blurred ethical and moral lines, and led to acts of passion. Enticed by the beauty of the world portrait philosophy granted, by the

authority it invested in art, and by the ethical demands it placed on the artist, Mann understood philosophy's concern with value, morals, virtue, and the welfare of the State. From the twin arts, Mann, the intellectual and artist, wove narrative forms, granting them an open-endedness, a delicate irony, an in-between mode about which so much has been written. Lured by ideas and sounds, Mann responded with religious zeal, crafting musical narrative forms that raised ethical concerns and at the same time expressed a desire to transcend them. His works often include harmonically rich and chromatically ambiguous music and frequently include the music of Wagner; Mann's works often draw upon Nietzsche's and Schopenhauer's philosophy as subjects for narrative exploration.

Schopenhauer's lyrical meditations describe "life as an episode unprofitably disturbing the blessed calm of nothingness" (*Essays and Aphorisms* 48). "Life," for Schopenhauer, "presents itself first and foremost as a task," yet this task is also a "kind of mistake" in which our needs are never satisfied: "nothing but a painful condition" (53). The resulting boredom or weariness "is a direct proof that existence is in itself valueless, for boredom is nothing other than the sensation of the emptiness of existence" (53). To understand the world, Schopenhauer insists that "you start from the thing in itself": the will to live (63). At "its kernel, its point of greatest concentration, is the act of regeneration" (63-64). Life is flux, with the will to live animating our restlessness and fueling our sexual desires. Only from time to time can we step "out of life so as to regard it from the outside, like spectators at a play" (54). Stepping aside, in moments of artistic reflection, brings us to rest. Schopenhauer's aesthetic philosophy remains super-historical, inviting one to step out of the world's rushing motion, and, as an aesthetic contemplative, let the world go by. For Schopenhauer, aesthetic contemplation also facilitates an awareness that the temporal world in which we suffer is merely a temporary absence, consciousness itself a survival tool for navigating the field of time, and life, ultimately a dream:

All this means, to be sure, that life can be regarded as a dream and death as the awakening from it: but it must be remembered that the personality, the individual, belongs to the dreaming and not to the awakened consciousness, which is why death appears to the individual as annihilation. In any event, death is not, from this point of view, to be considered a transition to a state completely new and foreign to us, but rather a return to one originally our own from which life has been only a brief absence. (*Essays and Aphorisms* 70)

Consciousness, heightened by aesthetic reflection, traverses the inner nothingness of the dream we dream, the one we originate from and return to, and the outer appearance of struggle we confront in the field of time. But what would it mean to combine Schopenhauer's aesthetic contemplation with historical possibility? Nietzsche explores this potentiality in *The Birth of Tragedy*, tracing the ideal aesthetic synthesis to Ancient Greece.

Nietzsche, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, sees art as a dialectic between two poles: the Apollonian (the realm of restraint, measure, and harmony) and the Dionysian (the realm of restlessness, passion, and destruction). Art becomes a medium through which the two fuse. In this dialectical movement art redeems. As *The Birth of Tragedy's* dedication implies and the later sections of the book make clear, at this point in his life

Nietzsche greatly admired Wagner's music and his thinking. Nietzsche, later in life, will rethink the ideas he presents in *The Birth of Tragedy* and will eschew dialectical thinking altogether, attacking the dialectical mode of reasoning from its Socratic foundations to Hegel to Wagner. While Mann, the intellectual and essayist, sees beyond Nietzsche's early dialectical synthesis, this synthesis remains a source of inspiration, an artistic muse.<sup>1</sup> It is not only compelling, it is also beautiful, inspiring works of art, and empowering the artist with a "magical role as broker between the upper and lower world, between idea and phenomenon, spirit and sense" ("Schopenhauer" *Three Essays* 376). But Mann also senses that it is dangerous. While as a young man he was enamored with Wagner's aesthetic creations, in *Reflections* Mann questions his naive enthusiasm for the Bayreuth master.

Although he would later call Wagner "the most formidable talent in the entire history of art," in *Reflections* Mann is divided about Wagner's "extremely modern art" that places great demands on the listener. Complex, this art fuses intricate compositional techniques with Dionysian energy. According to Mann, Wagner's music, like a drug, can be all consuming. By exploring the limits of expression and by requiring a "reckless ethical dedication" from those who listen to it, Wagner's art "becomes a vice":

Wagner's art, no matter how poetic and how "German" it may seem, is in itself, of course, an extremely modern art that is not quite innocent: it is clever and deliberate, yearning and cunning; it can combine stupefying and intellectually stimulating techniques and qualities in a way that is in any case demanding on the listener. But involvement with it almost becomes a vice, it becomes *moral*, it becomes a reckless ethical dedication to what is harmful and consuming when it is not naively enthusiastic but fused with an analysis whose most malicious insights are finally a form of glorification and again only the expression of passion. (*Reflections* 51)

As he questions his own youthful love of Wagner and talks about Wagner's dangerously modern aesthetic, Mann reveals his lifelong obsessions. In *Reflections* Mann examines these obsessions from a mid-life perspective, observing the formative role that philosophy and music have played in his development. For Mann, Schopenhauer and Wagner are complementary temptations, thinkers whose ideas Nietzsche seductively joins.

To understand Nietzsche's and Mann's attraction to Wagner, one need only turn to Wagner's writing on art and religion. In "Religion and Art," an article that originally appeared in the *Bayreuther Blätter* in October 1880, constituting all of the material for that issue of the journal, Wagner wrote on the mythic power of art, opening with a quote from Schiller that points out a dichotomy between Christianity's high and noble aims and its "vapid" and "repugnant" manifestations in life (Religion and Art 212). For Wagner, art reawakens the symbolic power of religion, and, in its dramatic modes of representation, brings them back to life:

One might say that where Religion becomes artificial, it is reserved for Art to save the spirit of religion by recognising the figurative value of the mythic symbols which the former would have us believe in their literal sense, and revealing their deep and hidden truth through an ideal presentation. (*Religion and Art* 213)

For Wagner the historic moment, the present, becomes the field of action in which to counter “degeneration of the human race” (237). Without action mankind falls short of “Constant Progress” (237). Unlike Schopenhauer’s ahistorical, aesthetic resignation, Wagner adopts a concrete plan of artistic action to enact historical change. In bombastic language, Wagner describes the fall of modernity and places himself as a modern prophet, calling himself the one who hears the great redemptive prophecies of the poetic past: “the great Cassandra of world history” (248).

Elated with the historical moment, Wagner fuses Germany’s mythic past with an idealized vision of the art of Antiquity, combining drama, music, and poetry in grandiose stage productions. He attempts to resurrect the power of Greek drama, fulfill the nationalistic vision given by Hegel in *Philosophy of Right* (1821), and achieve the dream of progressive enlightenment, the movement from barbarism to culture (*Bildung*), given by Kant in the late essays “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent” (1784), “Speculative Beginning of Human History” (1786), and “To Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch” (1795).<sup>2</sup> Wagner wants to redeem not only the present but also all of human history. With this exalted vision he stakes an aesthetic claim, becoming a model for the critic of modernity’s spiritual sickness: Friedrich Nietzsche.

In his late work, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche sees before him a world in the grips of a “new Buddhism”: nihilism (19).<sup>3</sup> The expression “new Buddhism” describes a darkened, demoralized world where man lives without grounding or purpose. Nietzsche describes modern man as isolated, helpless in the grip of forces he does not understand, prey to inner conflict, tension, anxiety, and fear. Lost, modern man perceives life as an inescapable labyrinth of pain, where constant pressures and ceaseless activity weigh down upon him, pressing him out of life and into nothingness. According to Nietzsche, modern man is chained to the rock of nihilism by the Western philosophical and theological tradition, whose core centers on an “ascetic ideal.”<sup>4,5</sup> Nietzsche posits this ideal, the practice of rigid self-denial and self-sacrifice, in which suffering not only forms the “what” but also the “how” of existence. Instead of mediating life and enabling man to achieve ultimate happiness, however, this ideal places him before a pool of inner reflection and the unfathomable specter of guilt. Nietzsche’s enterprise in *On the Genealogy of Morals* is, therefore, to trace the societal origins of the ascetic ideal and to dismantle it. After effectively dissolving the ascetic ideal, Nietzsche presents an aesthetic ideal based on art and a massive re-creating of the world that would be accomplished by a Master Artist, an *Übermensch*, who might deliver the world from nihilism.

Nietzsche calls for a poetic re-making of the present ascetic-bound reality that he believes will come about through the *Übermensch*. Nietzsche speaks of the coming of this new, creative man:

But some day, in a stronger age than this decaying, self-doubting present, he must come to us, the *redeeming* man of great love and contempt, the creative spirit whose compelling strength will not let him rest in any aloofness or any beyond . . . when one day he emerges again in the light, he may bring home the *redemption* of this reality: its redemption from the curse that the hitherto reigning ideal has laid upon it. This man of the future, who will redeem us, not only from the hitherto reigning ideal but also from that which was bound to grow out of it, the great



nausea, the will to nothingness, nihilism; this bell-stroke of noon and of the great decision that liberates the will again and restores its goal to the earth and his hope to man; this Antichrist and antinihilist; this victor over God and nothingness—*he must come one day*. (96)

Thus Nietzsche holds art and the artist as a way out of nihilism. He yearns for a redemptive artist who will come and re-create the world, delivering it from its present nauseated state and restoring the hunger for life that mankind presently lacks. While he desires a new man to free the world from the deadly plague of nothingness brought on by the ascetic ideal, Nietzsche also writes of the artist's distinct otherness, his eternal "separation from the 'real,' the actual" (101). Nietzsche presents the aesthetic as not being anchored in history. According to Nietzsche, history is always open to re-creation. It is not the linear-bound reality described by Kant.

Schopenhauer, Wagner, and Nietzsche offer Mann aesthetic and philosophical temptations. The three laud artistic expression and give it an ethical justification, each addressing the world and offering aesthetic solutions. Each presents an intersection between aesthetics and morality; each attempts to deal with this intersection without slipping into relativism or nihilism and without eclipsing the world. Yet positing aesthetics as a way of stepping away from the world (Schopenhauer), as a way of recovering the mythic aspects of religion (Wagner), or as an escape from the adamant chains of asceticism (Nietzsche) is dangerous and uncertain. This uncertainty haunts Mann. Although in *Reflections* Mann glances back over his early works, this backward glance locates pivotal moments from which to examine his corpus. One such defining moment is Mann's novella, *Tristan*, in which the three German idols intersect. In *Tristan* a German legend supplies the story over which the narrative is written, Schopenhauer's and Nietzsche's philosophy and aesthetics become part of the narrative's subject matter, and Wagner's music takes center stage. *Tristan* helps define the narrow course between aesthetics and ethics that Mann's musical narratives chart. A story of the modern aesthete, *Tristan* presents a modern artist in exile, although he is an unsuccessful writer. He follows a self-enclosed aesthetic, placing value on ambiguity and exalting art as a new religion capable of seeing beyond the social values and beyond organized religion and traditional philosophy. This artist, Detlev Spinell, is, however, more of an impersonator or conniving dissembler than a Nietzschean superman.

Like many Modernist texts, Mann's *Tristan* pays homage to tradition. Just as Joyce's *Ulysses* honors Homer's *Odyssey* and the tradition of epic, so Mann's *Tristan* honors a long-standing legend that already has sustained many powerful readings, transformations, translations, and adaptations. Like Joyce, Mann acts as a modern scribe, translating the legend of Tristan and its many textual and musical readings. The narrative, itself a writing over or commentary upon the Tristan legend, brings the previous versions of the legend to be re-read. Not only does the work pay homage to the past, it also inscribes the process of creating from a palimpsest<sup>6</sup>. Behind *Tristan's* outer narrative framework, which is a story of "heart cases" in a secluded asylum, lies Wagner's opera *Tristan und Isolde*.

A palimpsest is generally thought of as writing material (as a parchment or tablet) used one or more times after earlier writing has been erased. This material often contains evidence of the ideation process: stray

marks, marginalia, sketches, and allusions. The initial writings and rewritings form layers of the creative process that are ultimately erased and written over. The term may be applied to any of the arts. Thus Ravel's orchestration of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* turns the original Mussorgsky composition into a palimpsest, as do the variant forms of William Blake's *Four Zoas* turn the original manuscript of *Vala*, still visible underneath several layers of sketchings, into a palimpsest. As in the restoration of art works, questions of authenticity arise. Should the original work be allowed to influence the interpretation or understanding of the palimpsest? Will the latter work supplant the earlier? If more than one layer can be viewed, as in the case with *Tristan*, it is difficult to dismiss any of the visible layers, whether they are the French, German, or Irish versions of the Tristan legend or Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. Study of works that contain prior, palimpsest versions, therefore, necessitates the study of other layers, other forms upon which the work draws. *Tristan* is not, however, simply a parody of Wagner. It is an artful reworking of the Tristan tradition. An abridged form, *Tristan* does not destroy the tradition on which it draws; it becomes an inseparable part of that tradition, a piece of the legend that causes readers to re-read the Gottfried von Strassburg legend and Wagner's opera.<sup>7</sup> Mann's novella is a trace of the legend that dislocates, displaces, and refers beyond itself. *Tristan* is an intertextual form in the strongest sense of the term. Without references to the legend and the Wagner opera, the narrative is almost indecipherable. Thus, terms such as "primary" and "secondary," used in discussions of a dialogue between texts, cannot easily be applied because *Tristan* is superimposed over other works. It cannot be understood without understanding the thing over which it is written, the legend it supplants and from which it differs.

In *Tristan* Mann creates a subtle form that presents aesthetics as alluring and seductive. Music becomes a metaphor for the role of the aesthetic in artistic creation. The novella's music caricatures the struggle that the modern artist undertakes with the outer world and the relationship between art and society, which is often fraught with complications. The encounter between Gabriele Klöterjahn and Detlev Spinell at the narrative's center is a pathetic portrayal of the modern artist. Mann places the reader of the novel in the position of Gabriele Klöterjahn,<sup>8</sup> the Isolde figure, the figure seduced by the modern aesthete. The theme of seduction encompasses the narrative's many themes and forms a shifting commentary on the narrating of the novella. *Tristan* is a seduction narrative. Its content is filled with *pathos*. Yet the act of seduction in the story is not only pathetic but also parodic. The narrative's form, the way it is narrated, mocks not only the seduction of a woman, but also the seduction of the listener or receiver in an aesthetic experience, the one who willingly participates in his or her own seduction. While the narrative's content affects the reader, bringing him or her to see the story as a pathetic, heart-wrenching tale of a woman wronged, the narrating process mocks both Gabriele Klöterjahn's seduction and the reader's response to her seduction as *pathos*. Just as Spinell pre-supposes Klöterjahn's knowledge of Wagner and Chopin, so too does the narrative suppose that its reader will be familiar with the Tristan legend, the nocturnes of Chopin, and Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. The reader must come to the text with a considerable musical knowledge before the text can be conceived of as music, knowledge that draws upon musical repertory and music theory. Thus the narrative insists that the reader become a co-creator, one who supplies the portion of the text that is not written. A good example of this occurs in the sixth narrative division of *Tristan*, during which Klöterjahn renders a piano reduction of Act II of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. Gabriele plays a piano reduction, a form that makes the original Wagner score a palimpsest. Yet the opera itself is a work written over the

Gottfried legend and over the philosophy of Schopenhauer. The Gottfried legend is text that supplants an oral form told throughout the ages, each time making its previous version a palimpsest. By transforming Wagner's world of sound and drama into a textual form, Mann presents the drama of the modern artist, Spinell, who, as a sickened parasite, feeds off others.<sup>9</sup>

The sixth narrative division of *Tristan* opens on a cold February day as the doctors of the Einfried asylum prepare to take all of the institution's "heart cases" on a sleigh ride.<sup>10,11</sup> It corresponds to Act II of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, in which the two lovers are left alone while the royal company of King Mark goes on a hunting excursion. The *New Grove* describes the mystical, erotic ambiance that the music sets at the beginning of the opera:

The curtain rises to reveal a garden with high torch stands at the open door. A volley of horn calls gradually receding into the distance signifies the departing hunt of King Mark and his courtiers. The cautious Brangäne warns her mistress that the horns are still audible, but all Isolde can hear are the sounds of the balmy summer night: the horn calls are transmuted into a shimmering orchestral texture by clarinets, second violins and violas, a sweet sound to the lovers ("Nicht Hörnerschall tönt so hold"). (818)

Unlike the setting Wagner creates at the beginning of *Tristan und Isolde*, Mann's setting is parodic. He places the young aesthete in an asylum, a place of instability, a location that mocks Wagner's tonal instability in the opera, a tonal instability formed around highly ambiguous melodic lines and unstable harmonies. Spinell, the Wagnerian and Tristan figure of the story, appears as a "dissipated baby," the product of an unnatural ideology (336). As the sleighing party departs, leaving Frau Klöterjahn and Herr Spinell and the "serious cases" at the asylum, the couple rendezvous in the inorganic realm of the bourgeois, the salon (336). There, in a fabricated environment, they gaze out at the garden. As they look through the window, a mysterious cloud comes over the sun in the middle of the day, creating an artificial night that echoes Wagner's lovesick couple meeting at midnight under the moon. Removed from the outer world, Spinell, whom the narrator describes as having unnatural "cariou teeth," tries to mythopoeticize the disappearance of the sun. In doing so, his language—"when there is no sun one becomes more profound" (338)—echoes Macbeth: "I 'gin to be weary of the sun / And wish th' estate of the world were now undone" (V. 5. 55-6). Spinell spins a poetic yarn, equating "the lovely and the commonplace" united by nature and then remarks that he "is grateful" for the sudden eclipse. He finds the grayness of the sky comforting, a symbolic sign of his own love of ambiguity. Thus, the external world reflects the unnatural setting and the manner in which Mann emulates the *Tristan und Isolde* story.

A man who is in physical stature an anti-Tristan, Detlev Spinell has "great feet . . . a beardless face, and greying hair" (339). The narrator describes Gabriele Klöterjahn as a passive vessel, one who is lost, like Gretchen in *Faust*, in a romantic world of sewing. Consumed by an Emma Bovary-like Romantic imagination, Gabriele is prey to her own fantasies. But while Emma is the victim of the romantic aesthetic as she cultivates it by reading, Gabriele becomes the victim of the aesthetic in its pure, seductive, and sensual form: music. Spinell manipulates her, playing with her fears and desires: "If you are afraid it will do you

harm, then we shall leave the beauty dead and dumb that might have come alive beneath your fingers. You were not always so sensible; at least not when it was the opposite question from what it is today, and you had to decide to take leave of beauty” (339). Tempting her with Romantic visions that he has been cultivating for quite some time, he convinces Gabriele to play. Spinell appears as a music master, an orchestrator, a conductor. He provides the music with which she brings about her own demise.<sup>12</sup> Spinell presents music in a printed form, a form that necessitates a reader, an interpreter.<sup>13</sup> Both Gabriele Klöterjahn and the reader of *Tristan* encounter an aesthetic world of their own choosing, entering an abyss of ambiguity. Spinell’s first choice of music is Chopin.

As with all of the music to which he alludes, Mann’s use of Chopin is symbolic. The *Nocturnes* are intense, brooding, intimate, and passionate pieces that are just the opposite of what Klöterjahn’s doctor has prescribed. As Ignace Feuerlicht points out, “it is characteristic not only of Mann’s musical taste, but also of the antithesis night-day that she plays three Chopin nocturnes before *Tristan*” (116). Further, Chopin originally borrowed the Nocturne form from the English composer John Field; *Tristan* is himself an English import in Ireland, a non-native thing introduced into foreign soil. The *Nocturnes* contain long, seductive, operatic lines that resound over string-like flowing left-hand accompaniments. Frau Klöterjahn’s seduction begins with a musical form that can be compared with the lyrical, seductive quality of Act II of Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde* in which the lovers sing the famous love duet, enfolding in the raptures of passionate bliss and the longing for death. Even the sound of the music is symbolic, like the setting, for Chopin’s music is broadly considered to be the beginning of the deterioration of tonality and thus serves as the perfect accompaniment to a mental and physical breakdown.

As Gabriele gains more momentum, Spinell asks her to play Act II of Wagner’s *Tristan*. Thus the chromatic music of the night leads from one composition’s seductive harmonics to another composition’s harmonic and textual evocations of Eros and the darkness of death. The narrative discloses the very thing that it mimics, as Spinell and Gabriele perform a bourgeois, salon imitation of a grand Wagner moment, creating the music’s erotic force in their overly active imaginations.

Thomas Mann, in a letter to Emil Preetorius, some forty-five years after writing *Tristan*, disparages the emotional and sexual power of Wagner’s Act II:

The second act of *Tristan*, I find now, with its metaphysical ambiance of ecstasy, is more suited to young people who don’t know what to do with their own sexuality. (*Pro and Contra Wagner* 210)

While late in life Mann was critical of his own youthful adoration of this famous scene, in *Tristan* he captures the yearning of the “*Sehnsuchtsmotiv*” to which the text directly refers.<sup>14</sup> The text asks the reader to recreate the suddenly loud bursting-forth, heart-throbbing sections of the opera, the erotic rendered in music by “that marvelous muted *sforzando*” (341).<sup>15</sup>

The narrator describes the *Sehnsuchtsmotiv* rendered by Gabriele Klöterjahn as “roving lost and forlorn

like a voice in the night” and lifting “its trembling question,” followed by periods of silence and a “lonely answer” that is broken by the ecstatic *sforzando* of “mounting passion” that “rear[s] and soar[s] and yearn[s] ecstatically toward its consummation,” only to sink back in a half resolution as “the cellos take up the melody to carry it on with their deep, heavy notes of rapture and despair” (341). As Feuerlicht indicates, “There is a complete change in atmosphere and a break in style when Mrs. Klöterjahn plays *Tristan*. Mann has always been a master in knowingly analyzing, as well as poetically suggesting, music. The style becomes rhythmical, exalted, and contains exclamations, apostrophes (‘O night of love’), alliterations, onomatopoeia, rhymes, questions, repetitions, and metaphors” (116). Yet there are no cellos or mountains of strings playing in the asylum: only a lone piano in the salon. Detlev Spinell and Gabriele Klöterjahn administer the love-philter to themselves. They lose themselves in the piano music. By supplanting their present experience with the memory of Wagner’s music, they lose all awareness of where they are and enter a distant, unreal world, a world of beauty that has no genuine correspondence. The aesthetic with which Spinell tempts Gabrielle becomes the love-philter of Tristan and Isolde.

As Gabriele nears the end of the prelude, the narrator again alerts the reader that Wagner’s opera is to be superimposed: “she stopped at the point where the curtains part, and sat speechless, staring at the keys” (341). While it is unlikely that even an excellent pianist could do a good job of sight reading the *Tristan und Isolde* orchestral score, with its 21-different musical staves—many of which contain difficult transpositions and obscure clefs associated with the various families of orchestral instruments—a piano reduction of the opera could be played by a skilled pianist. And yet part of the narrator’s play is to insist that what Gabriele is looking at is the orchestral score itself, complete with stage directions or that she and Spinell are remembering memorable details, such as the parting of the curtains. Although Spinell is both the Tristan and the Wagner figure of the story, Gabriele renders the signs on the score. Spinell translates what the signs mean and insists that Gabriele not be content with the prelude to the opera but that she actually play Act II, the scene in which Tristan and Isolde rendezvous at midnight. In another one of the novella’s metanarrative moments, Gabriele renders the scene that she and Spinell have already been acting out. While the parallel between the Einfried couple and Wagner’s Tristan and Isolde is clear at the beginning of the chapter, the playing of *Tristan und Isolde* in the middle of the chapter is a bold moment in which the text calls attention to itself through the very seductive, musical, philosophical, and aesthetic elements it mocks.

In *Tristan*, Mann creates a musical burlesque. Filled with musical allusions and imitative voices given in the form of a labyrinthine maze of Spinell’s impressions and associations, it is a written work that, when realized in the reader’s imagination, becomes a musical composition. The voices of the musical drama come from a limited perspective, that of Herr Spinell. He is the strange director/conductor of a musical drama filled with longing and pathos, isolation, loneliness, humiliation, and determination. Yet we recreate Spinell’s musical drama from a tenuous interpretive position, realizing his limited perspective, his solipsistic nature, and the absurdity of the artificial musical moment he engineers. Spinell remains an uncomfortable representation of Dionysus, the ironic interpreter capable of evoking a prelogical, prephilosophical, and mythic world. This poet-creator is a pathetic incarnation of the Nietzschean Übermensch, a Wagner character and perhaps even a wish-fulfillment for Mann, at this early point in his career. Here



interesting self-reflexive considerations arise.

Interjecting a moment where the narrative's artist himself renders the events, Mann's *Tristan* raises questions about art and interpretation, the increasing awareness that what accounts for aesthetics is the interpretive stance that art works impose. And part of this developing modern aesthetic is indeterminacy, a dizzying play of intertextual and self-referentiality leaving the reader wondering what is significant: the narrative event itself or the superceding appropriation of the narrative? In this dichotomy we encounter *Tristan's* significance, its importance in Mann's literary career and in modern narrative. The narrative, as John Fetzer describes, establishes a bridge or path between the past and the fragmented present, one that parallels Wagner's groundbreaking opera:

Just as Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* inaugurated a radically new trend in music away from traditional tonality and paved the way for the demise of the harmonic "center" which had held sway for many centuries, so Mann's *Tristan* stands as a milestone on the road leading from thought patterns of the past to the disinherited mind of the present. (19)

Here artifice and theory collide in an early narrative designed to be a quick and comic work after writing the tragic *Death in Venice*.<sup>16</sup> The novella surfaces fundamental concerns, increasing anxieties that Mann harbors about aesthetics and ethics and about the role of the artist. Spinell's evasive translations reveal how the artist is capable of employing linguistic systems that conflate fiction and reality. To Nietzsche the great artist is an ironic interpreter, one who spins the reader into an experience of vertigo from which no one meaning can be derived, a Dionysian figure. Yet here, early in his career, Mann parodies the Dionysian qualities of artistry. While Mann critics often praise Mann's masterful use of irony, *Tristan* calls into question the shifting mode that Spinell and Mann invent.

*Tristan* presents the aesthetic world's limits as well as its anti-rational paradoxes. If creating artifice means working within limits and seducing readers into projecting presence, then reading always brings dissolution, a radical split between the thing that is being woven (the text, the thing woven to seduce) and the one who unweaves it (the reader, the one seduced). The novella presents the aesthetic experience's moral ambiguities and ethical conundrums—the "what ifs" and possibilities that poetry evokes. In the aesthetic world it is possible to imagine different ways of being and even to imagine the loss of being. It is possible to step outside of the given social reality, but that also may mean encountering difficulty in further social transactions. Herein lies the inside/outside dichotomy of aesthetics. It increases Gabriele Klöterjahn's sense of dislocation, her radical disjunction from reality. Aesthetics affords Frau Klöterjahn a vertiginous experience, one that threatens loss of stability yet also affords radically new possibilities: becoming what she has never been before, someone who refuses to accede to the ethical obligations and philosophical temptations that have made her interactions with the world so difficult. But Gabriele Klöterjahn is also a passive vessel through which the world of aesthetics (Spinell) and the world of Bourgeois ethics (Klöterjahn) meet. Spinell and Herr Klöterjahn commune through Gabriele. She is a text they both weave, a fictive creation that, on the one hand, is fraught with Mann's repressed homosexual desire. On the other hand, like Mann's narrative, Gabriele is used in the manipulation of desire.

Gabriele Klöterjahn, reader, and writer (Mann) intersect, three fuzzy dimensions of a narrative hologram beyond the printed page, ghostly demarcations outside of reason's reach (or beyond which, just off the printed page, reason's ever-present eye watches). If, as Quentin Crisp tells us, "health is having the same diseases as one's neighbors," then the reader shares Gabriele Klöterjahn and Mann's sense of wellness, their "rational" maladies (*The Naked Civil Servant* 143). But what would it mean to step not beyond reason's demarcation and to simply refuse its primacy, to admit ambiguity, contradiction, and paradox? In *Tristan* the move not yet beyond presents an encounter with the ultimate instability and uncertainty: death. Here the danger of art and the danger of ideas are most real. To stand neither inside nor outside is to be without freedom, for freedom imposes a need for order, the necessity of constructing boundaries within which the liberated self creates. But what happens if there are no bounds?

The utopian dream of stepping outside the political world's ethical norms, ridiculously reflected in Detlev Spinell and then described in *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man*, haunts Mann for the remainder of his writing career. While many critics remark on his use of corrective irony, Mann's narrative genius creates a mode, facilitated by music, that is not simply corrective or dissolving. To juxtapose pathos and parody is to stand in an uncanny position, one that is neither inside nor outside. Detlev Spinell seduces Gabriele Klöterjahn with self-presence, that alluring temptation aesthetics so often presents. Her confusion over how to render Wagner's score parallels the confusion the reader faces in deciphering the narrative's posture—pathetic, comic, and absurd are all viable possibilities. The narrative evokes an acute awareness that philosophy—the world of ideas, the world of universal understanding and belongingness—derives its efficacy, its power, from our desires, our loneliness, our inadequacy, our curiosity, and our inability to understand. To step beyond these desires would be to step away, to let the outer world of thoughts and ideas go by, to be released from the influences of the past and the tyranny of the present.

But is stepping away really possible? It certainly is tempting to think that we can step outside the world when we read, but even the most fantastic aesthetic creations confront the world in the reader's gaze. There they meet our difficulty in transcending what is given, the impossibility of breaking away. Stepping aside means confronting life's absurdities and delving into aesthetic and moral ambiguities. These possibilities aesthetics affords. Yet *Tristan* locates another narrative tension, another ghostly idea that plagues Mann. To delve into aesthetics one must have at one's disposal what for Mann was a bourgeois commodity: leisure, the time to contemplate. The Einfried sanatorium's structural, bourgeois routine affords moments to contemplate life's absurdities. Similarly, Camus' Sisyphus lives an orderly routine that affords moments to "pause." In these moments Sisyphus, as the stone he has pushed to the height of a steep incline descends, "thinks" (Camus 121). As Camus does with Sisyphus, it is possible to imagine one can be happy contemplating absurdity. But happy at what cost? And is this contemplative aestheticism, like Emma Bovary's adulterous escapades, simply a bourgeois game, another form of imitative desire?

A parody of art for art's sake, *Tristan*, with its recreation of Wagner's love-duet, is unresolved, uncomfortably pathetic and comic. As the tale's modern artist tries to escape at the novel's close, pursued by "the youthful Klöterjahn's joyous screams," questions for the modern artist remain: is the retreat into the inner world and away from the outer world something laudable—is it part of a process of new creation from

which, as with Nietzsche's Übermensch, a new moral norm may be established in which it is possible again to say "yes" to human life—or is it a retreat from the political world that will have horrible consequences, a cowardly "running away" that is the abandonment of morality and social responsibility? (357). Far from simply satirizing Wagner's appropriation of the Tristan story, *Tristan* seduces the reader into interpreting the novella's relationship to the other Tristan textualities. To meet the seduction of philosophy, the seduction of bourgeois aestheticism, and the seduction of morality is to know Gabriele Klöterjahn's overwhelming experience, one where interpretation negotiates aesthetics and ethics, the space that *Tristan* occupies and the radical disjunction that Mann's musical narratives explore. In exploring this space, Mann, in *Tristan*, and then later in *The Magic Mountain* and *Doctor Faustus*, uses music. With sound Mann draws readers into his texts, creating and commenting upon the ambiguities one encounters when interpreting Modernist creations: the necessary yet often uncomfortable intersection between aesthetic ambivalence and moral obligation. As Mann's disparate, always seeking and shifting narrative forms demonstrate, moral equivocation remains both the blessing and the curse of reading, listening, and understanding. To read his works listening for music is to move toward the space where writing attracts us, encourages us to disappear from ourselves, and seduces us to step not beyond.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> In the 1930s Mann's wrote extensive essays on Schopenhauer, Wagner, Goethe, and Tolstoy. Mann's command of philosophical thinking and its relation to aesthetics is unparalleled among artist-thinkers. By this time Mann, as a thinker, understood philosophy's limitations. Yet, beyond the limitations that he clearly identified in Schopenhauer's and Nietzsche's philosophy and in Wagner's music, Mann was haunted by the beauty of their ideas, their aesthetic charms.

<sup>2</sup> These essays are collected in the *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, trans. by Ted Humphrey.

<sup>3</sup> Nietzsche critiques a world burdened by the weight of existence, suffering under a "dreadful heaviness" brought on by a society which suppresses man's forgetfulness, his own "unconsciousness," and reduces him to a "thinking, inferring, reckoning" creature who forever "co-ordinat[es] cause and effect" (84).

Society binds man to a dark world of “consciousness” in which all instincts that have previously enabled man to be happy have disappeared, and in which man has retreated to [a] darkened inner world” (84). Nietzsche believes that the modern world suffers under a curse and, in its overly-conscious, inner world reality, views life as a task, a drudgery, a pain-ridden existence in which only a blind “will to live” based on a fatal ascetic ideal remains, the most recent incarnation of which is Schopenhauer’s *The World as Will and Representation*.

<sup>4</sup> On the Genealogy of Morals posits three ascetic ideals through which modern Europeans try to find meaning: 1) Christianity, 2) Science, and 3) History. Christianity, according to Nietzsche, focuses on “other worldly” ideals, lauding the ascetic and denying the goodness and beauty of human life, thus leading to nihilism. Similarly, science, especially positivism and utilitarianism, diminish man according to Nietzsche. He calls the scientific conscience “an abyss” that “has absolutely no belief itself, let alone an ideal above it” ...“the latest form of [the ascetic ideal]” that leads man to nihilism (147). Finally, Nietzsche states that history or a notion of history as progress, a notion of history as moving towards a destination and as advancing towards some goal, leads man to nothingness. In fact, Nietzsche labels Kant’s categorical imperative as “smell[ing] of cruelty” (65) and criticizes Kant, one “heavier with future” (96), as bringing the weight of existence to bear upon humanity.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Willey, in *Back to Kant: The Revival of Kantianism In German Social and Historical Thought, 1860—1914*, comments that both Nietzsche and the neo-Kantians shared “the incipient crisis in values and the search for ethical ideals beyond the accommodating bourgeois values of the era” (27).

<sup>6</sup> “Palimpsest” is the term Gérard Genette uses to describe transtextuality or intertextuality in Proust. Genette’s works *Seuil* and *Palimpsestes: la littérature au second degré* contain extensive information on palimpsests. Part of *Palimpsestes* exists in English translation: “Proust Palimpsest” from Genette’s *Figures of Literary Discourse* translated by Allan Sheridan.

<sup>7</sup> As the *New Grove* notes, “The ancient Tristan legend, probably of Celtic origin, achieved its first literary form in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The version used by Wagner as the basis for his drama was that of Gottfried von Strassburg” (Sadie 815).

<sup>8</sup> Anthony Heilbut notes that “Klöterjahn” is a “local idiom denoting ample testicles” (158).

<sup>9</sup> Richard Winston points out that “spinell” is the German word for an oxide of magnesium and aluminum. “It has a red variety which resembles and is often found with a ruby.” Thus, the “writer looks like, but is not, a precious stone” (150).

<sup>10</sup> Einfried, as Anthony Heilbut points out, is “a pun on Wagner’s Bayreuth residence, Wahnfried” (157-158). As “Wahn” means “madness,” the name also fits the sanatorium.

<sup>11</sup> Mann numbered the narrative divisions of the original German edition. The standard English edition

translated by H. T. Lowe-Porter has unmarked narrative divisions.

<sup>12</sup> Klöterjahn mirrors the reader of an aesthetic literary experience; she also mirrors the reader of this chapter who, especially on the first reading, is likely to take the narrative on the literal level and not pick up the underlying ironic narrative lines.

<sup>13</sup> As John Fetzer observes, “the lush, romantic spectrum of sound associated with Chopin’s emotionally charged nocturnal music is followed . . . by the progression to the even darker sonorities of the *Tristan* score (the binding of which is black)” (16).

<sup>14</sup> Anthony Heilbut remarks that “As the Vinteuil theme trails Proust’s lovers, so Wagner’s *Sehnsucht* motif haunted Mann” (157).

<sup>15</sup> In an intriguing although far-fetched reading of the narrative, James Northcote-Bade’s “Thomas Mann’s Use of Wagner’s ‘Sehnsuchtsmotiv’ in *Tristan*” attempts to prove that the novella’s narrative structure is patterned around the *Sehnsuchtsmotiv*. Northcote Bade applies the idea literally, detailing how “*Tristan* in its action and forms follows Wagner’s ‘Sehnsuchtsmotiv’ note by note, each chapter in the nouvelle representing a musical symbol in the motif” (57). He makes each of the novel’s twelve chapters correspond to what Paul von Wolzogen defines as the twelve notes of the *Sehnsuchtsmotiv*.

<sup>16</sup> In a 13 February 1901 letter to Heinrich, Mann states that he intended to create a “thin volume” that is “meant to yield no more than a quick refreshing of [my] name and some pocket money” (210).

# “Deliver us from Kant” Rereading Hegel’s *Science of Logic* in a Post-Kantian World.

By Ryan McIlhenny

*“The world is my idea”: this is a truth which holds good for everything that lives and knows, though man alone can bring it into reflective and abstract consciousness. If he really does this, he has attained to philosophical wisdom. It then becomes clear and certain to him that what he knows is not a sun and an earth; that the world which surrounds him is there only as idea, i.e., only in relation to something else, the consciousness, which is himself.*

—Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Ideas* (Book I)

By extending Kantian thought to its logical limit, Schopenhauer’s objective as professor at the University of Berlin was to overturn the work of his contemporary, G. W. F. Hegel. While Kant’s epistemology—viz., that our “modes of knowledge” are “awakened into action,” giving “coherence to our sense-representations”—stands as a critical turning point in the history of philosophy, it nonetheless leads to an irreconcilable dilemma: the existence of the realm of appearances (*phenomena*) and the realm of things-in-themselves (*noumena*).<sup>1</sup> Schopenhauer sharpened Kant’s spheres and highlighted the fact that the latter—where beliefs like God, freedom, and justice reside—is not something that exists in the abstract, but as an ideological projection that hides the will’s desire for “more.” Consequently, science, art, religion, and philosophy are mere sublimations that divert the primitive emotive drive of the subject into a highly sophisticated but nonetheless specious enterprise. “The truth,” Schopenhauer continues, “is that a man can also say and must say, ‘the world is my will.’”<sup>2</sup> Humans are shut up in their own solipsistic blockhouse. The above passage illustrates the perennial gulf between epistemology and ontology inaugurated by Kant’s Copernican revolution. To the present writer, it seems that contemporary thought has done more to dismantle the legacy of Kant than it has Hegel, Nietzsche, Marx, or Freud.

The goal of Hegel’s ontology, outlined in the *Science of Logic*, is to overcome the problems of Kantian epistemology. Upon closer examination, according to Hegel, the dichotomy between *phenomena* and *noumena* is a false one. Cognitive faculties, the ego, even Being fall into the world of the

unknown—things-in-themselves. The conflation of the two realms paralyzes Kant. While our categories make “knowing” possible, for instance, what is it that we see when we think? Can we see the *a priori* category that makes seeing possible? The categories that make appearances possible can’t be known in themselves. The *phenomenal* is identical with the *noumenal*. According to modern and postmodern Kantians not only is God dead (Nietzsche), so is man (Foucault). What, then, can be known? The answer is a bit disappointing—nothing.

In a real sense, Hegel invested in Kant’s problem and made a killing. Central to the *phenomenal/noumenal* identity is pure being, the ground of reality. Let’s revisit the post-Kantian questions. What *is* it that we can know? What *is* it that we cannot know? What *is* and *is not*? (Are you getting the picture?) As Hegel points out, what emerges from the dualism is the linking verb to be—“is.” Thus, he begins the *Logic* with the most important proposition: “*Pure being and pure nothing are the same.*”<sup>3</sup> The “is,” in reality, unites being and its negative. Being is (to be) Nothing:

Nothing, taken in its immediacy, shows itself as affirmative, as *being*; for according to its nature it is the same as being. Nothing is thought of, imagined, spoken of, and therefore it *is*; in the thinking, imagining, speaking and so on, nothing has its being” (*SL*, 101).

It’s worth repeating that the two are not separate from one another, but identical. Hegel offers a good example of this at the end of chapter one of the *Logic*: “Pure light and pure darkness are two voids which are the same thing” (*SL*, 93). When we stare into pure light—light that allows us to see—we tend to become blind. Even flighty jocks can appreciate Hegel’s dialectic. Repairing sore muscles, BEN GAY ointment is both hot and cold at the same time, the perfect household Hegelian product.

Being and Nothing serve as the initial starting point for Hegelian ontology. If Kant and Schopenhauer are correct—that there *is in fact* or *in reality* the unknown outside the mind—then, by Hegel’s redefinition, there is something. The world is not—indeed, cannot be—the mere imposition of my categories or the projection of my will. Humans do not organize the spray of phenomena arbitrarily. The ontology (being or reality) of Nothing proves that there is something. Saying that there is nothing outside my own mind is equivalent to saying that there is something outside my mind. Thus, one can know truly that there is an external world. This is the beginning of all knowledge: “the unity of being and nothing as the primary truth now forms once and for all the basis and element of all that follows...determinate being, quality, and generally all philosophical Notions” (*SL*, 85).

Such a situation, however, is never stable. Think about it. If there is immediate being, there is immediate nothing and vice versa. It’s almost like thinking about two sides of a coin at the same time. Thinking about heads means nothing without tails. When you spin the coin the two images merge into something qualitatively different. Individual abstractions cannot stand. Things are produced by their positive and negative. Think about it this way: place your hand in front of a television set and wave it back and forth. What happens? Although your fingers are present, they also “disappear” but nonetheless place a darker film over the projected image. Consequently, the identity of being and nothing is the dynamic “movement



of the immediate vanishing of the one in the other: *becoming*” (SL, 83). The active unrest or moment of *becoming* necessarily produces something. That something in turn is “sublated only in so far as it has entered into unity with its opposite; in this more particular signification as something reflected, it may fittingly be called a moment” (SL, 107). Concepts of knowledge (i.e., facts, propositions, basic beliefs, or common sense truths) are only moments—moments of becoming. We must remind ourselves that the beliefs we take as transcendently constant may not be. Consider the various paradigm shifts in Western thinking, from Newton to relativity in physics, from positivism to the linguistic turn in philosophy, from comity and consensus to fragmentation and conflict in history, or from six-day to framework in theology. Fundamentalists of both the left and the right—yes, there are rank liberals that are akin to narrow minded despots—should be mindful of dialectical uneasiness. I’m not suggesting that one should be “open-minded” in an unbounded sense, but that one should be open to the possibility of error. To err is human.

It is important to note, however, that Becoming is the “unseparatedness of being and nothing, not the unity which abstracts,” which Kantians assume it to be (SL, 105). It is incorrect to think of the dialectic as separated phases of “thesis,” “antithesis,” and “synthesis.” Since “*Becoming* is the immanent synthesis of being and nothing,” Hegel warns against using the term “synthesis” as “an external bringing together of mutually external things already there” (SL, 96). You can now reconsider what you’ve learned in your history of philosophy class.

How, then, can we make a distinction between things? When I see someone or something, I assume that I know them immediately as a real being apart from me—an “other.” If this is true, then, according to Hegel’s identity, the negative is also a part of me. This is Hegel’s notion of determinate being that will work its way down to the specific quality of a thing. “Determinate being,” Hegel writes, “is the sphere of difference, of dualism, the field of finitude” (SL, 157). Each being is the result of the dialectic. A better way to think of this is to say that a subject, say *A*, is defined by what it is not. *A*’s being is defined in *relation* to what it is not, namely, not *being B*. *B*’s being necessarily defines *A*’s being. It is *A*’s negation. Yet if *B* is a pure nothing, then, an absolute “other” would exist. This is where Kant hits the railing. It is incorrect to assume a mere differential relationship, which presupposes isolated things. *A* has within itself the seed of its own negation, what Hegel calls “the relation to its otherness within itself” (SL, 408). The same is true for *B*. In the final analysis, *A* and *B* are defined respectively by their own negation, which is retained in their opposite. Thus, “something and other are, in the first place, both determinate beings or somethings ... each and every something is just as well a ‘this’ as it is also another” (SL, 117).<sup>4</sup>

At first glance, however, this presents a problem. If my finite qualities are defined in relation to an infinite number of other predicates (i.e., determinate being opening up to the infinite), then my specific being diffuses and becomes swallowed up by the whole, for *A* will be defined by its infinite negation—namely,  $\sim B$ ,  $\sim C$ ,  $\sim D$ , *ad infinitum*, such that *A* disappears, privileging the “One” over the “Many.” This is a common critique leveled against Hegel—viz., that he is concerned only with the whole, the parts don’t matter. But if we end here, we return to Kant’s dichotomy, for *A*’s being would become an abstract nothing and thus subject to the whims of creative will. To avoid this problem, Hegel returns to the dialectic. Each individual thing retains being/nothing and becoming, which means, for instance, that if a thing retains its

own contradiction, then it must retain an aspect of being that is unique to itself. The parts and the whole maintain their position in the cosmos. A thing strives (another word for becoming) to maintain itself by overcoming its negative —i.e., overcoming the other (immediate or abstract negation) and its own identity (the negation of the negation).

Things must retain specific characteristics that are different from other beings. If all beings were qualitatively the same, then how could one define anything? Here again Hegel offers another “sublated” concept: “The negative relation of the one to itself is repulsion,” which provides “the material for attraction” (*SL*, 168, 173). The force of pulling toward and pushing away, like two magnets, creates a something in between. The double negation is the difference that makes a thing unique, which leads to Hegel’s explanation of Quantity (i.e., uniform space) and Quality (i.e., the specific characteristics of something):

Quantity is sublated being-for-self; the repelling one which related itself only negatively to the excluded one, having passed over into relation to it treats the other as identical with itself, and in doing so has lost its determination: being-for-self has passed over into attraction (*SL*, 187).

Frederick Engels illustrated the relationship between quantity and quality in *Landmarks of Scientific Socialism*: “water...at 0 C changes from a liquid to a solid and at 100 C from liquid to gas...thus at both of these points of departure a mere quantitative change in temperature produces a qualitative change in water.”<sup>5</sup> While a change in quantity engenders a qualitative change, the essence of the thing (e.g., water) remains the same. Thus there is difference with sameness or, like the continuous points on a line, continuity and discreteness (*SL*, 187). The relationship between quantity and quality can also be applied to studies in the humanities. Hegelians have extended this to concepts of racial identity: change over time (quantity) produces a qualitative change in identity. The same could be said of class and gender.

The idea that objects necessarily exist and are both same and unique in their becoming presupposes that one can distinguish between them at given moments. Defining something means to delimit or trace its boundaries against the line of another thing—“the *being beyond it*” (*SL*, 134). How does Hegel account for the line of demarcation between things? “Limit is the mediation [middle between or frontier] through which something and other each as well *is*, as *is not*” (ibid). For a Kantian, where does one thing end and another begin? This, for the Hegelian, is the wrong question. One could argue that the limit is the blended field whereby Being and Nothing fuse and thus blur any explicitly recognizable line. Does this mean, then, that there is no distinction between things, that everything is the same? Not necessarily. To illustrate this point, think about the grain-pile paradox. At what “point” does a pile disappear when sequentially taking away (i.e., negating) a single grain? The logic of such repetitious abstraction, in this case separating a grain from the pile, remains constant, despite the fact that there is a qualitative change. No line exists. Thus, one can be epistemologically justified in believing that something exists, that it is limited, without having to show the exact point of its beginning or its end.

To a large degree, the pursuit of concrete borders, what can and cannot be known in a Kantian sense, has undermined the efforts of twentieth-century analytic philosophy. Attempts at fixing the limits of what

can be known have in many instances led to contradictions. The logical positivists of the Vienna Circle failed to see the inherent contradiction of their own system. The two part strategy for determining true propositions—namely that a statement has to be either analytic or synthetic—cannot be verified by its own criteria. Their standard for truth is neither analytic nor empirical. Indeed, to paraphrase Kurt Godel, a mathematical system pushed to its limit leads to absurdity and complete misunderstanding. The early Ludwig Wittgenstein is a good example of an analytic philosopher who honestly—yet with great anxiety—recognized the inability to arrest the concepts in reality. The error of the positivists was that they reduced everything down to the world of quantity; they tried to fix borders. Once again as the *Logic* shows, thinkers can only posit moments of truth—that is, once a thing is defined, its limit is transgressed and thus becomes a partial or deficient truth. Many scholars find this constant flux unsettling, but for Hegel it is the ground of all existing things. Even analytic logic is refined by Hegelian logic.

But why stop with mid-twentieth-century positivism? What about the contemporary environment? While shattering the hubris of modernism, Hegel's *Logic* warns against the skepticism of studies loosely labeled "post-modern." Arguably, Kantianism is culpable for the specious construction of the alien or marginalized "other." Subjective categories galvanized by dominant mainline discourses are imposed on bodies which over time crystallize and to a degree enslave. Poststructuralists, for instance, are reluctant to "ground discourse in any theory of metaphysical origins" and express incredulity toward both metanarratives and notions of essentialism.<sup>6</sup> Individual subjects are always already constructed by discourse (systems of meaning). Social texts are immediately imposed on individuals. Cultural and political constructs, for instance, categorize notions of sex, race, and ethnicity.<sup>7</sup> Thus, claims of autonomous individual agency are self-contradictory, given the fact that such naive appeals have already been presupposed by the one making them. Transgressing the boundaries of language to get at the real—"the true or permanent nature of being"—is either impossible or presupposes that an actual realm exists outside the subjective mind.

Yet at the same time, poststructuralism's opposition to hegemonic discourses contributes to essential identity. Remember, an individual subject contains its own contradiction; it *is* and *is not*. In his book *Identity\Difference*, William Connolly argues that

Identity is established in relation to a series of differences that have become socially recognized. These differences are essential to its being. If they did not coexist as differences, it would not exist in its distinctness and solidity. Identity requires difference in order to be, and it converts difference into otherness in order to secure its own self-certainty.<sup>2</sup> (William Connolly, *Identity\Difference*, 64).

Such contention shares an affinity with Hegel's determinate being, in which being unfolds in the realm of difference and opposition.<sup>10</sup> "Difference is the essential moment of identity" (*SL*, 417). It is a "*positedness*, a determinateness" (*SL*, 418). The tension between difference (negation) and the idea of being engender—albeit in an unstable fashion—something. Following Hegel one would have to conclude that a moment of essence within specific historical contexts could be posited. The inability to trace the limits of or define essence does not mean that essence does not exist.

Hegel's *Logic* saves us from Kant. It provides a cogent ontological argument for the existence of the external world and an epistemological balance between logical extremes. More importantly, it keeps knowledge perennially fresh and vibrant. As we've seen, analytic positivism's inability to limit things and poststructuralism's incredulity toward essentialism makes it ostensibly difficult to establish epistemological satisfaction. This shouldn't cause us to panic, however. Thought and object are in constant motion—becoming. Both are, in a sense, centered by repulsion and attraction, difference and unity. Indeed, the dialectic is the very basis for rational and universal inquiry:

All that is necessary to achieve scientific progress—and it is essential to strive to gain this quite simple insight—is the recognition of the logical principle that the negative is just as much positive, or that what is self-contradictory does not resolve itself into a nullity, into abstract nothingness, but essentially only into negation of its particular content, in other words, that such a negation is not all and every negation but the *negation of a specific subject matter*, and therefore the result essentially contains that from which it results (*SL*, 54).

This is the essence of the dialectical method and the ontological blueprint for absolute knowledge. As Hegel stated in the *Introduction to the Encyclopedia: Logic*: “Each of the parts of philosophy [as well as thought and existence together] is a philosophical whole, a circle rounded and complete in itself... [t]he whole of philosophy in this way resembles a circle of circles” (*Encyclopedia*, 30).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* translated by Norman Kemp Smith; with a new introduction by Howard Caygill Houndmills, rev. 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 41-42.

<sup>2</sup> Schopenhauer's quote from Monroe Beardsley ed., *European Philosophers From Descartes to Nietzsche* (New York: Modern Library, 1992), 649.

<sup>3</sup> Hegel, *Hegel's Science of Logic*, A.V. Miller trans., (NY: Humanity Books, an import of Prometheus Books, 1969), 87. From here on references to Hegel's *Logic* will be placed in the text as *SL*.

<sup>4</sup> Hegel says much the same thing in his Lordship and Bondage discussion in the *Phenomenology*: “Each sees the other do the same as it does; each does itself what it demands of the other, and therefore also does what it does only in so far as the other does the same. Action by one side only would be useless because what is to happen can only be brought about by both” (Oxford, 1977), 112. Both subjects are, to use of the words of Yale historian David Brion Davis, “undifferentiated extensions of the self.” Their qualitative difference changes—the one becoming master and the other slave—when they risk or negate their lives in a “life-and-death struggle” for freedom.

<sup>5</sup> Engel's quote from Robert Carneiro's "The Transition from quality to quantity: A neglected causal mechanism in accounting for social evolution" (September 2000), 1. <http://www.pnas.org/cgi/reprint/97/23/12926.pdf>. Carneiro uses Hegel's notion of quantity and quality to discuss social evolution.

<sup>6</sup> David Macy, ed., *Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 309.

<sup>7</sup> See Judith Butler's *Gender Troubles: Feminism and The Subversion of Identity*, Michael Omi and Howard Winant's *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, and Edward Said's *Orientalism*.

<sup>8</sup> Macy, 309.

<sup>9</sup> William Connolly, *Identity\Difference: Demographic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1991), 64.

<sup>10</sup> Professor John Smith, in communication, University of California, Irvine, February 11, 2004.



# “The Developing Underdevelopment”:<sup>1</sup> Democracy, New Political Elites and the Emergence of Mountain Tourism in Nigeria.

By Paul Ugor

*“Geography and identity seem always to have been closely related” (Dirk 1992:07).*

## I. Introduction.

The significant point has been made severally that geographical exploration, geological survey and mountain culture as begun by the British was inextricably tied to imperialism (Slemon 16; Said 21-29; Mills 1991; Pratt 1992). The declaration by Walt Unworth that “the spirit which animated the attacks on Everest is the same as that which prompted arctic and other expeditions, and in earlier times led to the formation of the Empire itself” (Qtd. in Slemon 21) justifies these “discourses linking science, empire and exploration” (Sparkes 216). Wherever British civilization “extended its imperial arms” (Hammer ix), especially at a time when the scramble for colonies by Europe was at its feverish zenith, it sought to maintain absolute control over its territories through the extraction of data that enabled it to keep tabs on conquered places. Stephen Slemon’s interpretation of this as “a specific form of symbolic management” (16) has clarified the practice described by Thomas Richards as “archival confinement,” that brand of colonial surveillance during the “developing sense of crisis over the actual administration of an expanding British Empire in the latter nineteenth century” (Slemon 16). British geographers, explorers, surveyors and geologists (mostly mountaineers), were at the heart of this imperial surveillance model. Mountain cultures therefore were not those innocuous pastimes or sports begun by the Victorian middle class. In the words of Claire Engel, mountain culture “was never an unrelated kind of activity, having no connection with contemporary trends of thought” (21). It fed into the contemporaneous Victorian sensibilities of the time, which were those of imperialism.<sup>2</sup>

But many decades after Britain's exit from the colonies however, whether in the Pacific or Africa, its empire has left indelible cultural marks in its wake. Vestiges of Victorian culture, including mountaineering and mountain leisure and (or) tourism, have remained ingrained in both government institutional structures and the popular middle class culture of former colonies.<sup>3</sup> In terms of mountaineering and mountain tourism as a Commonwealth culture, for instance, it has been observed that "with the globalization of sports competition, it has become de rigueur for countries seeking to relocate their position on the post-colonial world stage—for countries hoping to send out the message that they have redefined themselves in relation to a colonial past and have fully arrived within the ambit of unquestionable self-determination—to invest very heavily in trying to put a national team of climbers on Everest" (Slemon 22). John Krakauer for instance in his book *Into Thin Air* (1997) has noted different expedition teams from Taiwan and even South Africa who came to climb Everest for the sake of making national statements. This cultural phenomenon is not difficult to trace.

Apart from its remote economic intents in the colonies concerned with feeding and sustaining the growing industrial capitalism in Europe, the British empire also sought what the pre-eminent German political scientist Von Trieschke<sup>4</sup> saw as Europe's engagement "in creating all over the globe a wholesale aristocracy of the white race" (Henderson 31). This civilizing agenda implied the nurturing of a new worldview in the realms of culture, social values, religion and politics in the conquered territories. Indeed, it succeeded to a remarkable extent. As western education became the determining index for participation in public service, recruitment into British colonial bureaucratic institutions was determined by a seemingly sufficient mastery of British middle class etiquette. Ali Mazrui in his seminal study *Political Values and the Educated African* also echoed this position when he observed that "The very process of acquiring aspects of the imperial culture came to open the doors first of influence and later of affluence itself" (xiii). Michael Echerou (1977) for instance has conducted a seminal study on this phenomenon in Nigeria entitled *Victorian Lagos: Aspects of Nineteenth Century Lagos Life*.

The aping of British middle class culture, whether for economic or aesthetic purposes, has continued to persist in contemporary Africa in different institutional and individual forms. This paper attempts to examine the case of mountain leisure/tourism culture amongst one of Africa's leading nations, Nigeria. It traces the emergences of a new political elite class in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and evinces how this emergent ruling class is creating a distinct form of modernity through mountain patronage and tourism. But this erection of new modernities I argue is a flawed one that perpetuates underdevelopment rather than development. Needless to say then that this work is not about mountaineering as mountain tourism or leisure. But I have surveyed mountaineering culture in British colonies generally to gesture towards its genealogy as a middle class culture and as a way of sign-posting the roots of mountain tourism's modern forms in the former colonies such as Nigeria. Though the patronage of mountains began purely as a kind of sport amongst the middle class in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and has so continued even into the 21<sup>st</sup> century in different parts of the globe, mountain culture has undergone mutations in different places and times, producing new forms of identity fabrication. But what has remained constant on the compass however, is that whether as sports (mountaineering) or leisure (tourism), mountains remain metaphors for making larger cultural statements at continental, national, regional, local, and, not the least, individual levels. As a point of entry into this

critique then, I propose to trace the emergence of the new middle class in late twentieth century Nigeria, and then proceed to triangulate the relationship between this class, their new economic status, and a new mountain culture.

## II. The Military, Democracy, and the Emergence of New Political Elites: The Roots of Contemporary Mountain Culture in Nigeria

Nigeria as an independent nation remained a quintessential example of a political laboratory for more than thirty-nine of its forty-five years of existence. So illusive and precarious was the notion of Nigeria that by 1996, Wole Soyinka, that fine and erudite writer, scholar, and Nobel Laureate from the country described Nigerian nationhood as “that mangy, flea-infested flag that the sanctimonious nationalist drapes around his torso to cover a repulsive nudity” (126). For almost four decades, the military’s firm grip on the nation’s machinery of state seemed not to have abated in spite of growing international pressure and global democratization. A brief mapping of this sordid national history is salient to the arguments that this paper advances in later pages. As j’kayode Fayemi has observed, “it is important to trace the sociological and institutional underpinnings of the military’s role in Nigeria’s chequered history of political transition, to enable us access ... [to] the conditions, ingredients and consequences of military projects for nation-building” (205). Bayo Adekanye has also reinforced this need for the proper appraisal of the economic imports of the military’s incursion into nation-building noting in his insightful study of the Nigerian military that “the role of the military in the transition cannot be adequately analyzed without considering the impact of ... socioeconomic factors and forces” (55).

After gaining its independence from Britain in 1960, Nigeria has had at least six successful military *coup d’état*; two in 1966, one in 1975, one in 1984, another in 1985, and the last in 1993.<sup>5</sup> This harvest of coups has meant that of the nation’s thirty-nine years, twenty-eight have been under military autocratic governance. Of course when the military first made its foray into the political stage it was hailed by the masses because “their action was claimed as a nation-building project aimed at eradicating corruption and reordering the state” (j’kayode 208) thus reforming the crass political ineptitude and charlatanism of the early Nigerian political elites. Hence for a long time “military politics became the rule rather than the exception” in the country (Koonings and Kruijt 1). Indeed, what Koonings and Kruijt call “Political Armies” (9) was a proliferating mode of governance in the entire African continent in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century ostensibly due to what they have characterized as “the ineffectiveness of civilian politics” (5). Unfortunately, however, the promises that the “political armies” held for the people were no more than a flash in the pan as the military leaders turned out to be worse than their civilian predecessors; they became implicated in the same rot that they sought to rid the nations of. As Diamond, Kirk-Green and Oyediran have it,

Although it began with much promise and participation...the military’s political transition in Nigeria must be judged as sweeping and unambiguous failure. It failed to return the nation to civil rule (much less to democracy). It failed to bring forth a new political culture. It failed

to control corruption and improve accountability. It failed to mitigate ethnic, regional, and religious conflicts and cleavages ... in the end it failed miserably to reform and revitalize the economy. After almost four decades of military rule, it was as one analyst had noted in the South African case “a long journey” that only achieved a “small miracle (3).

How did this come to be? The military, concussed by enormous centralized state power, became *squandermaniac* and the immediate result was a degenerating economy and depleted national reserves. In spite of Nigeria’s huge wealth accruing from crude oil amounting to about 96% of the nation’s export earnings, external debts rose at a meteoric rate: “Per capita income fell from U.S.\$800 in 1985 to U.S. \$380 in 1987” (Diamond *et al* 8). By the late 1990s when the military handed over control, income was at an all time low of about U.S.\$120. As the country’s currency continued its downward plunge in the foreign exchange market, its purchasing power also saw a rapid descent to near worthlessness. Of course this dire state of the economy had direct impact on the masses: “As the purchasing power of the Naira relentlessly declined, the salaried middle class was plunged back to subsistence living...workers fell back to earning the equivalent of a few hundred U.S. dollars a year, with prices of basic commodities much higher” (Diamond *et al* 8). Instinctively, professionals such as university professors, doctors, engineers, pilots, lawyers and the like left the country for greener pastures in Europe, North America, and the Arab world in the Middle East. Furthermore, public infrastructure and services degenerated, with no electricity, pipe born water, functional health facilities and even food. Amidst this sordid social experience of the masses, the “ruling military officers (and their cronies) grew visibly rich and rumors circulated of their stupendous wealth” (Diamond *et al* 8) stacked in foreign banks in the west.

As the military stayed in power under the guise of political reform and reconstruction, they became the sole dispensers of the wealth of the state. The striking of crude oil in the late 1950s and another in the early 1970s brought about what became known in popular parlance as the “oil boom.” The billions of dollars accruing to the nation became alluring bait for the military to continue its rule in spite of growing disaffection amongst the masses. Gradually, the regime evolved ingenious strategies to keep its administrators in power, mowing down dissent from within and without the army. The military thus became the surest route to power, wealth, and the good life, hence “those who felt excluded from the competition for political power also courted the institution” (j’Kayode 207). Alliance with a tiny segment of the civil population opened up opportunities for huge money-making businesses through inflated contracts and all kinds of administrative fraud. Furthermore, “an increasing number of retired senior officers ... combining chairmanships/directorships of their own private businesses, with part-time appointments to key governmental posts and parastatals relating to agriculture, commerce, and industry, in addition to interlocking directorships of many companies incorporated in Nigeria”(Adekanye, cited in j’Kayode 213) became the single social segment benefiting from the state. In all, the military, and its small group of cronies remained the sole possessors, dispensers and benefactors of the wealth of state while a large national population of about 150 million groveled in poverty and avoidable want.

This was the state of Nigeria’s political economy until 1999 when the military reluctantly handed down power through a general election to its very own former dictator, General Olusegun Obasanjo. The new

democratic dispensation has meant the election of approximately seven thousand officials at local, state and national levels. In addition, significant numbers of government appointees hold important nominative positions at federal, state, local and ward levels. A burgeoning economy has thus suddenly emerged due to the creation of thousands of political jobs with huge remunerative packages. The new political class, which is less committed to democratic practices than to the political expediency of its principles, is also steeped in endemic corruption, fraud and unaccountability to the masses of people they represent. To signify their newfound economic status, after almost four decades of alienation from the political stage these emerging classes of elites are beginning to emblemize their improved means through varied social and cultural signifiers. Just as “the development of industrial capitalism in Britain had by the mid-nineteenth century created both an industrial bourgeoisie and an expanded professional middle class” (Robbins 584) who expressed their new status in mountaineering, Mountain tourism and patronage in Nigeria is now one of those new middle class pursuits of a prosperous era. I critique this emergent middle class culture using the Obudu Ranch Mountain as a case study.

### **III. The Obudu Ranch Mountain**

The Obudu Ranch Mountain, formerly known as the Obudu Cattle Ranch and currently referred to as the Ranch Resort, is located in Obanlikwu North of Cross River State, South-South of Nigeria. The Obudu Mountain, which is the highest in the state and the hilly lands of the Obudu and Obanlikwu areas, is “located on a plateau of about 1, 575.76 ...with an altitude of 1,716 meters above sea level” (“The Land” 18). The mountain also has a unique climatic condition in a predominantly tropical zone. The temperature in the mountain is “between 26-32 degrees centigrade between November and January while the lowest temperature range of 4 to 10 degrees is recorded between June and September” (“The Land” 18). Leading up to the Obudu Mountain summit is an 11-kilometer windy route with perilous bends amounting up to twenty-two in numbers.<sup>6</sup>





Figure 1:<sup>7</sup> One of the 22 sharp bends leading up the Ranch Mountain Resort.

The “discovery” of this mountain summit, said to have been in 1949, remains largely conjectural. There are indeed two possibilities. The first is not unconnected with the usual geographic explorations and geological surveys contemporaneous with “Town Planning” offices in the colonial era. “In the interests of imperial expansion dating back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century” (Bayers 174), colonial powers (such as Britain that colonized Nigeria) always explored and surveyed the geographical perimeters of their colonial strongholds for protection from other marauding colonial powers, for the purposes of enhancing markets overseas and for local surveillance. The late 1940s particularly was a period when the present Southern Cameroon opted in a referendum to be severed from Nigeria to the Cameroon. And Cross River State shares a boundary to the east with Cameroon extending into the Ranch Mountain axis through Becheve (the border town in Nigeria) and Akwaya (the border town) in Southern Cameroon. My conjecture is that the “discovery” of the Obudu Mountain must have been during this process of demarcating boundaries with the French who were the colonizing powers in Cameroon.

Another possibility is the work of missionary agents. Calabar, the capital city of Cross River, lies at the coastal bed linking the State through the Cross River estuary to the Atlantic Ocean. This position made Calabar vulnerable to colonial incursion. Commenting on this proximity of the state to the Cross River Basin, Clement Unimna believes that “the State’s advantageous geographical location on the Calabar river estuary, was then a factor to the state becoming a pivot in religion, culture and civilization, exerting tremendous social, cultural and economic pull on all the societies of the region and beyond” (49). European traders and missionaries made their way through the town to the hinterland in the South East of Igbo land and even far North of Obudu. The first churches to infiltrate this region were the Catholics, the Christian Missionary Society (CMS), and the Assembly of God’s Mission. For the sake of proselytization, they made daring forays into remote terrains not frequented by even indigenous peoples. It may have been in the effort to reach the Becheve and Utanga people living in the summit of the Obudu Ranch Mountain that the place was “discovered.” Of course as the “naming or renaming of a place [or] ... region ... [is] an

act of possession” (Deane qtd. in Bayers 178) in the imperial ethos, it was christened the “Obudu Cattle Ranch” by the “discovering” missionaries as a sign of its claiming.

Today the Obudu Mountain has been transformed from its humble beginnings to an exquisite tourist site of international standards with “85 luxurious bedrooms ... an international conference center ... a 9-hole natural golf course, a standard squash court, two tennis courts, a water treatment plant, restaurant and bar, gymnasium and health space and a night club” (Adeniyi 40). Also, “to facilitate the movement of tourists to the ranch, a 1.8 km airstrip has been constructed at Bebi, about 40 km from the ranch” (Adeniyi 40), and there are speculations that the Federal Government might aid the state to extend the airstrip.



Figure 2:<sup>8</sup> Governor Duke, family, and coterie of political loyalists

From the top of the Ranch Mountain one sees the profound beauty of the last 10% of lush tropical rain-forest in West Africa and enjoys a temperate climate akin to that in North America or Europe. It is from here that the new language of a progressive era in the country is spoken in different tones by a prospering political class. In critiquing this new middle-class culture, therefore, I begin with the state’s involvement as an institution struggling to assert a new rationality of modernity, one that is generally perceived as development/civilization but which I argue amounts to what Andre Gunder Frank has appropriately described as “the development of underdevelopment” (4). From thence I proceed to examine the politician as an agent of state power, and how he semiotizes this power through a specific form of social indulgence—mountain leisure. It is worthwhile to note that while I will rely on the Cross River State Government documents and other sources for this critique, some of the analysis will be based on first-hand experiences. The reason for this methodological choice, as Ralf Buckley has observed, is that “to evaluate any eco-tourism enterprise from published reports is an uncertain and perhaps unreliable endeavor. Published reports are written by people with very different expectations and comparative experience” (6). One might also quickly add that these reports are also written with different political and economic interests in mind, very often promotional in intent. The co-opting of informal personal experience therefore bridges the gap between supposed facts and factual reality.

#### IV. Eco-tourism, New Nigerian Political Elites, and the Semiotization of Modernity and Power

Generally, and in retrospect, no single historical epoch has corporatized mountains as the last quarter of the twentieth-century. Lord Hunt observes this trend, noting that “I doubt if the pioneers could have imagined the explosion of humanity onto the peaks, passes and glaciers on which they ventured, intrepid in their isolation, in those early days. The opening up of new approaches, the construction of mountain cabins and the mechanization which followed the growing popularity of the sport and then contrived to make it even more so, provide a startling contrast with the lonely remoteness of the high alleys only a hundred years ago” (5).<sup>9</sup> It is pertinent to note that what Elaine Engel calls “the ancient mountain worship and mountain love” (15) has been on from the earliest ages. There have been myths of Greek gods on mountains; the Bible is replete with numerous incidences between man and God on mountains (divine revelations); there are adventure stories of hunters in mountains in most community folklores (such the chamois-hunter and collectors of rock-crystals in the Alps); throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries writers used mountains as narrative locales in phantasmal literary pieces (see De Saussure’s volumes and those of French novelist E.F De Lantier); poets wrote about mountains from as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and scientists from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century made research forays into the mountains.<sup>10</sup> But none of these moments have spurred liquid capital off the mountains as the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The commercialization of mountains, as part of a universal culture of eco-tourism, emerges from the larger global culture of capitalism. With the increasing paroxysms of profiteering culture the world over, mountains are forced to yield capital, to answer to the mercantilist cravings of the new world of capital accumulation. While I agree that the whole mountain culture itself evolved from an early European capitalist quest, before 1975 mountains were not directly prized objects of capital acquisition, but were only means to an end. Today however, they have been ripped of their hitherto sanctified status, desacrilized to fit into a global capitalist system. This corporatization of mountains derives from their own distinctive natural qualities. Rousseau, for example, has noted that “there is something supernatural in hill landscapes which entrances the mind and the senses; one forgets everything, one forgets one’s own being; one ceases to know even where one stands” (qtd. in Engel 38). Some travelers have always found in “mountains a kind of novelty, a relief from close contact with too tame a world” (Engel 13). It is this unique character of mountains that the world of eco-tourism business is selling. And it will seem that it is those thoroughly steeped in the miasma of competitive political and economic pursuits that desperately need the unique calming sensation that mountains provide. After a dangerous and tumultuous navigation of the world of power and money, the modern man must return to some environment of peace and tranquility and he will pay for it at any price. The world of business and that of even nation states know this, hence the burgeoning growth in mountain tourism/leisure. Third world countries are not oblivious to this trend and are pursuing it with undiminished vigor.

As far back as 1996, the World Tourism Organization had projected a meteoric rise in tourism journeys from 593 million in that year to over 1 billion by 2010 (Fennel 83). Furthermore, it was estimated that “earnings from international tourism are expected to climb from the 1996 figures of US \$423 billion to US \$1.5 trillion in 2010” (Lurhman 1997).<sup>11</sup> There are indeed general feelings among researchers that

eco-tourism even has greater potential for expansion than the general tourism industry. In 2002, the WTO claimed that eco-tourism amounts to 2-4 percent of global tourism.<sup>12</sup>

Undoubtedly, the tourism industry, whether of the eco-tourism bent or not, is becoming a huge attraction in both developed and developing nations. Developing nations are privy to the investment opportunities in this industry and are priming to enter into the global fray of profit maximization from nature. The numerous mountains, beaches, museums, caves and flora and fauna that dot the entire third world are becoming huge assets for eco-tourism. The Ranch Mountain in the Cross River State of Nigeria is a classical example of that quest to attract tourists carried out by governments in the developing world. A young, dashing socialite of forty-three years, who is supposedly an ardent promoter of tourism in the country, heads the Cross River State Government. Like commissioner Harkin “[who possessed] enthusiasm for initiatives that promoted tourism” (MacLaren 21) in Canadian parks, Governor Donald Duke’s commitment to harnessing the state’s tourist potential is legendary in Nigeria. He has “designed a 10 year program that will turn around the cultural and tourism potentials in the state” (“Duke Reiterates” 29) and thus put the state “on the map in terms of popular culture” (MacLaren 30). As part of the grand agenda to corporatize the state’s tourist potentials, the state government floated a 4 billion Naira (approximately CDN \$3.2 billion) tourism development bond in 2004 to finance its tourism policy. This loan, which will be repaid by the state government from its statutory federal allocation over four years, is for the:

- “- Increase of the let-able rooms at the Ranch Resort from 80-250 by December, 2005;
- Establishment and commencement of tourism bureau
- Extension of road works at the Ranch Resort
- Extension of the runway at Bebi airstrip to admit larger aircrafts Development of the cable car
- Development of a water park on the Ranch;
- Commencement of work to upgrade each site of the tourism circuit to ensure quality services for tourists- from creeks to our mountains including the marina, the Falls, the monoliths and the Drill Ranch”(Cross River State Budget 2005).<sup>13</sup>

This policy thrust of the state raises a number of questions about the rationality of this kind of development strategy, in a country whose citizens live largely below the poverty line and lack the basic necessities of life such as medical care, water, food, shelter, and qualitative education. What administrative logic underlies such a huge borrowing on behalf of laboring taxpayers, for facilities that they cannot afford or will not enjoy? It might be interesting to know that since 2004, when the tourism bond was secured, the government had not given account of its expenditure nor revenue that accrued from the project. The government itself rationalizes its agenda as a development strategy intended to bring civilization to a



supposedly backward place and peoples. As a way of marking a flourishing era after years of autocratic military governance, current political elites believe that such artificial initiatives (*disneyfication*) signify not only the development strategies' successes, but also the country's entry into modernity.



Figure 3:<sup>14</sup> An image depicting improved accommodations and some sport facilities at the Ranch Mountain.

This brings me to the issue of the “subject-centered rationality characteristic of post-Enlightenment modernity” raised by Partha Chatterjee in his seminal work *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (1999). With Bengal in India as a case study, Chatterjee critiques the choice by postcolonial nations to form an “imagined community from certain ‘modular’ forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americas” (5). “It would seem,” he continues, “history ... has decreed that we in the postcolonial world shall only be perpetual consumers of modernity. Europe and the Americas, the only true subjects of history, have thought out on our behalf not only the script of colonial enlightenment and exploitation, but also that of our anti-colonial resistance and postcolonial misery (5). The persistent recourse by leaders of developing nations to European and American paradigms of modernity itself buttresses the permanent marks of imperialism in the former colonies. As inheritors of the political instruments of state and the economic structures of imperialist interests, Third world leaders are indoctrinated to perceive modernity as anything material (technologies, fashion and so on) or non-material from the west. Unaware that “the specificities of the colonial situation do not allow a simple transposition of European patterns of development” (Chatterjee 7), the political elites in developing nations have continued to be sheepishly factitious of western models of modernity that do not answer to the specific needs of their people. It is this social dynamic where the African political elites sheepishly and indiscriminately



ape western development modules for Third World nations that David Scott succinctly characterizes as “Colonial Governmentality” (1995). Thus, according to Chatterjee “Here lies the root of our postcolonial misery: not in our inability to think out new forms of the modern community but in our surrender to the old forms of the modern state” (11). It is Chatterjee’s view, then, a view I consider valid in the context of this paper’s argument, that while it may seem that colonialism is over, by our involvement in the progress of the so-called modernity, we are still inadvertently enmeshed in it in varying degrees and at different places. What we witness today in developing nations is reminiscent of what had happened in early Europe, wherein “modernizers ... thought of peasants as embodying all that was backward and pre- modern” (Chatterjee 158). In their quest ostensibly to modernize their space of control, African governments such as that in Cross River State are indifferent to the specific needs and cultural concerns of the people within their modernization zones such as parks, mountain tourism sites and the like. As MacLaren has noted in the case of the development of the Jasper National park in Canada, “native peoples and [their] trade are here swept aside and forgotten by another transcontinental concern” (27). In the case of the Obudu Mountain resort, that “transcontinental concern” is tourism.

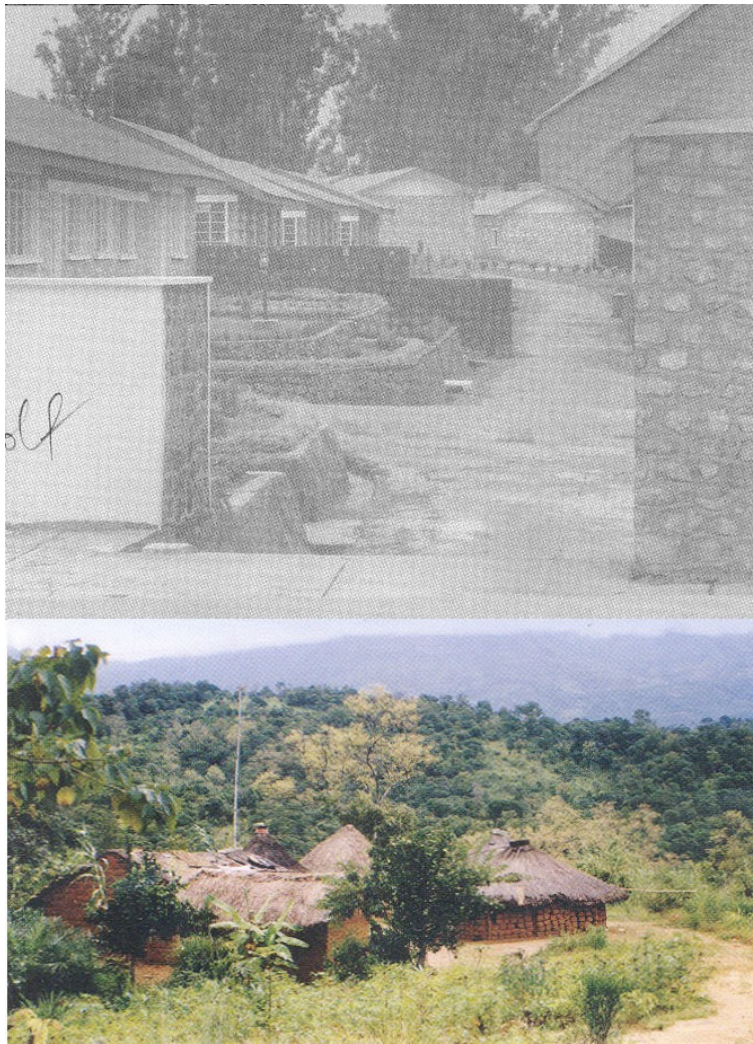


Figure 4:<sup>15</sup> A pictorial representation of the contrast between the expanded government Lodge at the Ranch Resort and the homes of indigenous communities.

This phenomenal chasm between the needs of the postcolonial local on one hand, and his political leaders' development tastes on the other, has a deep root in colonial history. As successors to state power hitherto exclusive to European colonial administrators, postcolonial African leaders have inherited also the advantages of the colonial lords such as offices, residential quarters, cars, and numerous benefits. The case of the Nigerian politician, like all indigenous elites in British colonies, is such that the new national leaders, as M.V Pylee has noted, "inherited the British system of government and administration in its original form" (Chatterjee 15). The implication of this inheritance for the state, Chatterjee argues, is that the key character of the colonial modern state, which was pretty much founded on "a rule of colonial difference, namely, the preservation of the alienness of the ruling group" (10), was also absorbed by the colonial power elite. This tradition has lingered on. The modern Nigerian political elite is so alienated from its subjects so much that they do not (or pretend not to) know the development needs of the people they rule. The result is the ridiculous disparity between what the political elites think is good for the people and what the common citizens actually need. The vigorous tourist pursuits in Cross River State exemplified in the expansion

of the Obudu Ranch Mountain Resort by the new political class strangely contrast with the development needs of the contiguous communities around the mountain resort. While that government is frantic about turning the Ranch Mountain into a wonderland comparable to “Disney Park,” surrounding communities are dying from avoidable diseases, lack of food and water, shelter and common paths to trek through even to sell their hard-earned farm produce.

I call attention to these issues because I mean to gesture toward the irony in the conception of development (also perceived as modernization) by the state, especially in the context of mountain tourism and what that term truly means. Acceptable indices for assessing development in terms of a nation’s social and economic advancement is usually predicated on some basic indicators such as “protein intake, access to portable water, air quality, fuel, health care, education, employment, GDP and GNP” (Fennel 7). Developed countries such as Britain, America, Canada, Germany, France, Australia, and others in Western Europe are recognized as such by these economic reflectors. Of course it is by these indicators also that the political leaders and their subjects in these countries assess their successes or failures. That the new Nigerian political elites continue to see and pursue their successes and modernity based on foreign development programs that are irrelevant to indigenous interests and needs (such as we have demonstrated with the tourism pursuits at the Obudu Ranch Mountain), bespeaks an intrinsic malaise of warped leadership.<sup>16</sup> This fact questions what Rosalind Duffy calls “Green Capitalism’s” claim to provide the elixir to the development needs of indigenous communities in Third World countries. Rather, it proves that “Green Capitalism,” otherwise known as “eco-tourism” involves “deeply political choices by those who create the demand (eco-tourists) and by the interest groups that cater for them (primarily businesses, governments and NGOs)” (x). David Scott’s interpretation of the ulterior motive of the modern power elite (as agents of government) in the former colonies throws a significant sidelight on Duffy’s proposition. Scott writes that

[i]f modern power is concerned with disabling non-modern forms of life by dismantling their conditions, then its aim in putting in place new and different conditions is above all to produce governing-effects on conduct. Modern power seeks to arrange and rearrange these conditions (conditions at once discursive and nondiscursive) so as to oblige subjects to transform themselves in a certain, that is, improving, direction. And if this is so, if the government of conduct is the distinctive strategic end of modern power, then the decisive (which is not to say the only) locus of its operation is the new domain of ‘civil society’ (200).

In other words, the emergent power blocks in Nigeria must fabricate a new (modern) environment for their citizens, and to fit in, the common people must adjust their cultural conduct to suit the dictates of the contemporary political moment. The apparent grand agenda of modernization carried out by the Cross River State government in its mountain tourism project must then be apprehended from the point of view of the subterranean and ulterior political motives that undergird it. It is through this dimension that one can get a thorough understanding of the importation of exotic development paradigms that is on-going in emergent democracies in the Third World. My central thesis then in critiquing the burgeoning mountain tourism projects in Nigeria’s new democracy is that the new political elites will not be able to achieve their supposed goals of development “by importing sterile stereotypes from the metropolis which do not

correspond to their satellite economic reality and do not respond to their liberating political needs” (Andre 15). If they do (and it is already clear they are), then they are no longer engaged in any development agenda but in the perpetuation of underdevelopment, which emasculates, enslaves and ultimately effaces its people rather than empower and liberate them from the clutches of poverty and want. With this critique of the state as engaged in a flawed modernity project (using government tourism plans at the Obudu Ranch Mountain as a case study), I now proceed to examine the attitude and social culture of the Nigerian politician as a patron of mountain tourism.

If the new and thriving middle classes must emblemize their political inheritance from the authoritarian military regimes as a sign of gaining control of the ship of state, they certainly will evolve a culture that distinguishes them from ordinary citizens outside the precincts of state power. This is not unusual because as Jean-Francoise Bayart has noted in his seminal work *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly*, “in Africa as elsewhere, the state is the manufacturer of inequality” (60). This system of social inequality breeds what he calls “Little Men and Big Men” (60). The 1976 draft constitution of Nigeria for instance, conceived of political power as “the opportunity to acquire riches and prestige, to be in a position to hand out benefits in the form of jobs, contracts, gifts of money etc to relations and political allies.”<sup>17</sup> Once power is acquired then, the fabrication of the new political and economic status manifests itself in different social indulgences amongst “Big Men,” and mountain leisure is one of them. As the new Nigerian political elites have been repositioned to acquire stupendous wealth from state coffers, doling out largesse to friends and loyal allies or patrons, they must redefine themselves in the context of a new progressive era. The sheer exorbitance of patronizing the Obudu Ranch Mountain Resort speaks of this new status. To be able to pay a flight, rent chalets/suits, buy foreign cuisines (of course provided by an international hotel such as the Protea Hospitality Group, ranked amongst the best in the hospitality industry in the world alongside Sheraton and Nicon Hotels), privileges an improved social standing. Also, to patronize the Ranch Mountain Resort is also to be able to buy the temperate climate of that mountain summit which runs between four and ten degrees centigrade. Since this climate condition equates the temperate climate of most of Europe and North America, to go to the Ranch also approximates (and this is conceived as such), to experience holidaying in style in these foreign lands. And it must be noted that the culture of holidaying itself is not intrinsically African (Nigerian) so to indulge in it is a mark of sophistication and indication of being *de rigueur*.





Figure 5:<sup>18</sup> Governor Duke, his wife Onari, and other political acolytes at the Obudu Ranch Mountain.

The Obudu Ranch Mountain also provides the political elites some iconographic deployment of political contests between themselves. This is not an unprecedented social phenomenon because as David Robbins argues, “in reality conflicts between different bourgeois class fractions are expressed and resolved in the cultural sphere as well as those between bourgeoisie and proletariat” (582). With the reemergence of civil rule, “numerous local lordships” (Chatterjee 27) have emerged. These numerous political factions desperate to maintain a stronghold on their areas of influence are often engaged in fierce altercation between one another. I will cite the case of Senator Musa Adede and Governor Donald Duke to buttress my arguments. Between 1999 and 2003, Adede represented the Northern senatorial district at the federal legislature. In the contemporary Nigerian political world he was considered the political sheriff in his district made up of five local governments under which Obanlikwu, the municipality where the Obudu Ranch Mountain Resort is located, falls. As the political leader of this district, he ought to have unlimited access to any chosen port of call. But in 2003 he was refused entry into the Ranch Mountain on instructions from the state government led by Governor Duke (see Adeniyi 40). He had brought a powerful team of political confederates from the nation’s federal capital, Abuja, for consultation after his community gave him a civic reception. This act raised enormous furor because to insulate the senator from the resort was to state that he was not in charge in that district. Of course this is what the government understood by shutting the resort against him and his guests, and he perceived that gesture as such too. If this is true, how will one rationalize such an act when the resort itself was expanded by the state itself as a way of generating additional revenue? Didn’t it matter that a huge crowd of influential politicians had come from afar to spend their stupendous wealth at the resort? Didn’t it matter that the state was indebted to the tune of Four Billion Naira, so that such great opportunity was at hand to glean part of such a huge loan back and lessen the burden on common taxpayers from whose pockets the loan was being paid? No! The Mountain Resort had fitted into a language of political contest and was to be deployed as such. Physical geography, the summit of a small highland, had been redefined to signify new a socio-political discourse of contest, power, money, and political influence.

This brings me to the next point about the new politicians and their security. As it became glaring that



political power also translated to economic power (since those who wield state power are the sole dispensers of the huge oil wealth of the nation), a rugged battle to secure elective or nominative positions emerged. According to Diamond et al “As corruption flourished (particularly after the first and second oil booms), the state became more and more preeminent as the chief instrument for obtaining both development resources and personal wealth. As the premium on state power became ever more enormous, the contest for control of it (by electoral and other means) became ever more intense, to the point where rules became meaningless and the country descended into pure praetorianism” (13). In this atmosphere of political bellicosity no form of arsenal was spared. High caliber rifles, light explosives, and other lethal weapons became normal instruments of coercion in the nation’s electioneering process. When the die was cast and a winner declared, the animosity between opposing interests only but worsened as arson and assassinations became the order of the day. A number of examples will suffice: on March 5, 2003 Dr. Marshall Harry, a national vice-chairman of the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) was murdered; on February 6, 2004, Chief A.K. Dikibo, National Vice-Chairman, South-South of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), was also murdered.<sup>19</sup> This is just a small fraction of the uncountable assassinations that the nation witnessed.

The new political class frantically sought for fortresses to proof themselves from a consuming political climate. The Ranch Mountain resort became one of those. To go up the Ranch Mountain is to escape from the vulnerability of city streets, thus staying unharmed. As the Mountain Resort is jealously guarded by tight state security, with little escape routes for assassins because of its surrounding deep valleys and glaciers, and is often unapproachable by jobless touts who usually are ready mercenaries in the hands of jealous political opponents, it became a safe haven for the endangered political elite engaged in a precarious power play. To climb the Obudu highlands is to move above the common habitation planes of ordinary citizens and as such to remain unscathed, surveying the lower political terrain from a safe and unreachable political cum security post. I draw this conceptual framework from Elaine Freedgood’s savvy interpretation of what she calls “cultural masochism” in the Victorian culture of mountaineering. She argues that, “in representations of pain in mountaineering memoirs, the world is specifically remade to allow a nation (England) a class (the industrial and professional middle) and a gender (the male one) to imagine itself as particularly indomitable” (113). To be up at the ranch, for the new Nigerian middle classes, is to remain unreachable hence invincible to a marauding political Gestapo seeking revenge from those who eclipsed their progressive quests.

But to stay away from one’s political turf for fear of being in harm’s way is to loose it because the expanse of one’s political control shores up the politicians’ political capital which is necessary in maintaining relevance in the political ambience. From the secured and safe haven of the Ranch Mountain then, the Nigerian politician must evolve an ingenious strategy for managing his political strong hold. Communication becomes invaluable in this regard. Here I am referring to the erection (at the Ranch summit) of a functional telecommunication GSM mast and the construction of an airstrip at the foot of the mountain by the state government. This indeed is not a new development in the tourism industry because as MacLaren has accurately observed, “technologies of transportation and communication were seen to align with tourism” (15). Removed by thousands of miles away from the main stage of political activities, the new Nigerian middle classes keep tab of what happens in their political domains and elsewhere by

monitoring and dispensing information from their safe posts. This is what Stephen Slemon refers to as “symbolic management” (16)- that social act that provides one an illusion of control over certain spaces beyond one’s direct control.

Furthermore, for continued maintenance of control over a priced political environment, one must not only spy and keep surveillance on the people from above, but also rationalize actions and utterances from that excluded zenith. Using the specific case of mountaineering in Victorian England and the prospering middle classes, Freedgood again notes, “The unprecedented extent and pace of change made the future seem unusually fraught with unknown risks and uncertainties. These risks and uncertainties, because they necessarily resided in the future, evoked anxiety. They produced a state of continued anticipation about the exact shapes and consequences of new, and as yet unknown, contingencies (105). The result of this anxiety, she argues, was that the “newly powerful class had to work out, more or less on the run, theories of government, society and economics that would explain, rationalize and stabilize the rapid and myriad changes that resulted in their rise to dominance” (105). The Nigerian state is becoming unstable because of deep disaffection with the successes of a privileged few in the new middle classes. Needless to say, the political class itself is aware, deeply anxious, and troubled by these developments. If they have to stay off the assassin-infested streets of the cities and yet maintain their firm hold of the state, they must continue to rationalize the dubious process that benefits it. Places like the Ranch Mountain then became a conclave for political consultation and strategization for the political elites. Long hours of nocturnal meetings between political groups in the country held at the Ranch Mountain. In fact at one point the president of the country, Olusegun Obasanjo, did suggest that the Commonwealth Heads of States’ Annual Meeting, planned for Nigeria in the last quarter of 2003 be held at the Ranch (Anani 6). Ensconced in their safe and private world, the new elite strategizes moves to maneuver the system (a precarious and explosive one for that matter) and maintain their respective interests from there. In short, the Obudu Mountain Resort is now something like a shrine for a few privileged members of a political occult from whence decrees of state emerge.

Additionally, I propose to look briefly at the place of women in this social drama of political and economic prosperity. Though Africa is not exclusively guilty of patriarchal practices, it still retains vestiges of age-old perceptions of women. One such concept sees woman as a necessary symbol of male prosperity. In Nigeria, as hitherto jobless youths become municipal councilors and heads, state governors and commissioners; professionals such as doctors, professors, engineers, lawyers, pilots, become senators, congressmen, ministers, federal board members and so forth, women, often young and glamorous, become a necessary accompaniment. If there was ever a cherished audience to whom the Nigerian political socialite must display his newfound prosperity, it is a woman. This kind of masculinist disposition, as Freud has noted is not an intellectual process. “When we seek to be acknowledged and known by another it is not only for the sake of truth: it also for the sake of power. An individual has no power except there is an other to recognize one’s individuality and one’s action” (Valverde 38). Since most of the women are from humble economic backgrounds, they must be “spoilt” with not only cash largesse and other gifts, but titillated and dazed with lavish parties in exotic settings. This is precisely what Mariana Valverde hints at when she advances the view that “in our society, economic as well as erotic power are used to exploit people who

have less power” (33). Places like the Ranch Resort become favorable playgrounds for this pastime.<sup>20</sup> As admiring witnesses to the wild spending sprees of the middle classes, women become emissaries dispensing firsthand accounts of the spending abilities of these men, which approximate the inexhaustibility of the male’s wealth. As usual, there is an exchange of sex for wealth in this social dynamic. The woman then becomes a priced “commodity” to be “acquired” and the more glamorous the woman, the more expensive it will be to court her. To “attract” a flashy bevy of ladies then is to semiotize one’s distinct economic status amidst a thriving political epoch. And to have them up the Ranch is a reflection of the sophisticated taste of that dandy. The Ranch Mountain then becomes another curious playground where an interesting dynamic of lingering social values of masculinity and femininity plays out in popular middle class culture.

## V. Conclusion

The emergence of vigorous scholarship on the middle class the world over has meant that a theorization of these social classes be broached. The general feeling is that “the middle class is still much less studied than the working class and, in particular, middle-class culture remains largely unexplored territory” (Robbins 579). The dearth of scholarship on the African middle classes is even more pronounced as the large body of popular culture theory in Africa, blazed by the Birmingham school represented by Karin Barber, is limited to the culture of the common folk. Needless to say, the theory of mountain cultures amongst the middle classes that are only beginning to emerge in Europe and North America is near absent in and about Africa. This project then has been a tiny and indeed inconsequential beginning in that direction.

In doing this then, there is something to be rescued from the theoretical lacuna that has been central in cultural studies for some decades. That is, its “neglect of the insights that the structuralist tradition offers: the most important being the central role that the structure of cultural forms plays in the signification of meaning” (Robbins 583). Popular culture, whether of working or middle classes, has huge potentials to privilege insights into its symbolic dimensions for both “participants and spectators.” In this context, culture is apprehended “as forms of class expressions” (Robbins 581): what Gayatri Spivak has referred to in general terms as “the fabrication of representations of so-called historical reality” (244). The specific behavioral patterns of certain occupational groups usually emblemize and embody their values, philosophies, and tensions. And one of the numerous but unique ways to look at this is to concentrate on the use of geographical space. Of course one of the many ways in which the humanities is redefining itself and integrating into a growing dimension of sociological research thrust in scholarship is to turn its attention in many other directions including geography. As a scholar blazing the field of literature and engineering has noted: “for a number of reasons the fields of English and Cultural Studies have lately moved toward the study of space” (Nodelman 2). Amongst the many ways of making sense of contemporary popular culture then is the use of distant geographies such as mountains for sports (mountaineering) and leisure (tourism) by different social classes. In this paper I have thus attempted a foray into this discursive dimension in the humanities using the Obudu Mountain Resort in one of Africa’s largest and influential countries, Nigeria, and the various cultural (social, political and economic) significations embedded in them. My central

argument has been that the rapid and dramatic social changes actuated by the progressive democratic political era has been “a necessary condition for the emergence of the [mountain tourism/leisure] in that [it] produced an expanded professional, largely urban, middle class with the inclination, leisure and financial resources to take it up” (Robbins 586). But I argue that this new middle class culture seats athwart the leadership role expected of a nation whose common man is in dire need of economic and social palliatives from the state. Mountain tourism then, here exemplified in the Obudu Ranch Mountain Resort in Nigeria, has become a contemporary cultural practice where government as an institution of state inscribes its own perception of the newfound change (that is, freedom, modernization and progress) on one hand, and how the progressive middle classes are signifying the robustly new political atmosphere (and their place in it) in certain unique appropriation of geographical spaces such as mountain resorts, on the other.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Frank Andre Gunder. "The Developing of Underdevelopment." *Imperialism and Underdevelopment: A Reader*. New York and London: Monthly Review press, 1970. 4-17.

<sup>2</sup> Also see the position on the surveillance of the properties of natural environment in colonies by Chaterjee 19-20.

<sup>3</sup> Ted Turner (2003) in his essay particularly examines the peculiar case of Aristocratic adventure in 19<sup>th</sup> century on eco-tourism and mountaineering.

<sup>4</sup> Von Trieschke was a savvy and renowned German scholar. The statement is taken from a series of public lectures he gave to graduate students in universities at Munich and Bonn in late 19<sup>th</sup> century but was published only in 1914.

<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that the ones I have accounted for here are the successful ones. There at least equal numbers of failed coup in the country accounting for the loss of several brilliant army professionals.

<sup>6</sup> One of which is called the “devil’s elbow.”

<sup>7</sup> Cross River Sate Government. *The Land of Natural Beauty*. Calabar, Nigeria: The Department of Tourism, Cross River State Government, 2005. P22.

<sup>8</sup> Culled from Effiong Essien’s Essay “Tourism Development in Cross River State—A Tour Operator’s Perspective.” *MOFINEWS*. Calabar: Ministry of Finance, Cross River Sate. September-October, 2002. P38.

<sup>9</sup> Hunt is not alone in this marvel. Later Climbers of even the mid 1980’s, such as Reinhold Messner (1999) have also loudly decried the invasion and commercialization of mountains. See works cited for detailed citation.

<sup>10</sup> All of these instances are cited in Engel 13-41

<sup>11</sup> (Cited in Fennel 83).

<sup>12</sup> World Tourism Organization International year of Eco-tourism launching, New York: [http://www.world-tourism.org/newsroom/releases/more\\_releases/january2002/launch](http://www.world-tourism.org/newsroom/releases/more_releases/january2002/launch)

<sup>13</sup> Full text reproduced in *MOFINEWS*, September- October 2004. *MOFINEWS* is a Cross River State sponsored quarterly journal that promotes Government policies. See full citation in works cited.

<sup>14</sup> Cross River Sate Government. *The Land of Natural Beauty*. Calabar, Nigeria: The Department of Tourism, Cross River State Government, 2005. P20.

<sup>15</sup> See *The Land of Natural Beauty*. 2005. P21 & 22.

<sup>16</sup> Also see the discussion of “the construction of the state by mimicry” by Bardie and Birnbaum in Bayart, pg.8.

<sup>17</sup> Cited in the preface to Bayart’s seminal work on the dynamics of governance in Africa, which he aptly calls “The Politics of the Belly.” Pg.xvii.

<sup>18</sup> “Congo Envoy Commends State Tourism Programme.” *MOFINEWS*. Calabar: Cross River State Ministry of Finance, November—December, 2004. P38.

<sup>19</sup> See *Thisday Newspapers* 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2003 and 7<sup>th</sup> February, 2004.

<sup>20</sup> Also see Michel Rick for other dynamics of sex, power and leisure in tourism sites. See citation in works cited.

# Out with the Light...

By Laura Madeline Wiseman

Pasha slipped into loose jeans, a baggy sweater, and pulled her hair back into a ponytail. As she carefully applied silver eyeshadow and black mascara, she watched the fat brush pull over her eyelids and the dark wand nudge her stubby eyelashes out. She thought her eyes were her best quality; the only things worth looking at.

When she was in middle school, she plucked out her eyelashes on a dare. Her eyes appeared bare, puffy, and swollen and for a long time, they didn't grow back. No one said a word, not her sisters or brother, not her mom or even Bill. Pasha's dark hair was always in her face anyway and she wondered if she was a girl worth noticing.

Her fourteen-year-old younger brother annoyed her. Bill ordered her around. She would roll her eyes at Bill when he wasn't looking, sending her black eyelashes up and splayed against her lids. As soon as she could she'd slip away into her room, push her headphones onto her head and close her eyes. Inside herself was the only space just for her.

Bill was her mother's newest husband, if five years could be considered new. As a nurse, her mother was rarely around and when she was, often too busy and too exhausted to talk to her two youngest children. Bill, skinny, old, drunk Bill worked union and thus worked forty hours a week, always. He'd come home, find his place at the kitchen table and drink. This was his throne, with the tiny thirteen inch television blaring in front of his red eyes.

Pasha's chore had been the kitchen as long as she could remember. It was the perfect chore and no longer required any thought. She had a routine: find all the dishes, put the clean away, fill the sink, do the dishes, wipe counters and briefly sweep the floor. She preferred to clean right after school, before Bill got home, but didn't always make it.

When she didn't make it, she'd try to ignore the sounds of him: long swallows or boots scraping on the linoleum. He wouldn't exactly stare at her. He wouldn't exactly touch her. But he was there, rubbing the grayed stubble of his beard, running his dirty fingernails through his thinned hair, and breathing that stale smell of alcohol. When the cans fell off the table, as they often did, the kitchen rang with the sounds of gunshots.

As Pasha marched to school that morning, she spit every few paces. She walked along the street and on the curb: one foot on the damp asphalt and the other on the ice. Spring was her favorite season, and loved

the way snow melted and ran in the gutters. The black dirt of the street made rough ridges in the snow. In mornings, after the night had frozen the melted slush in the streets, it would begin to thaw from underneath as the blacktop warmed from the sun. Pasha loved to crack the ice, knock it down, and send it skittering along the water in the gutters.

Crush step, crush step, crush step, Pasha walked to school with an innocent smile. She pulled her fingers into the arm of her long sleeved shirt and spit. Inside the black shirt, she felt small, her skin clinging to the bone and tissue beneath. Her only coat was beyond dirty and they were out of detergent until next week. She has rinsed most of the vomit off, soaked it, but the smell still lingered. She wanted to kill Bill when she woke the next morning finding him and it in the kitchen, but it was her fault. She had left the coat near the kitchen table. It wasn't that cold anyway, Pasha told herself.

Pasha spit again, thinking of Jesse her friend. Jesse was different from her, richer, cooler, smarter, prettier and thinner. Not that Pasha cared much about weight before she met Jesse, but Jesse was as slim as a headless mannequin. Spit. Jesse was the kind of girl whose attention made everything else disappear. It didn't matter where they were, school or Jesse's house, Jesse's perfect golden hair and clear blue eyes would meet Pasha's and it felt like it was just the two of them.

Pasha would do anything for Jesse, so she spit. On pro-anorexia sites, Jesse showed her that spit had five calories. "I spat once an hour yesterday," said Jesse, "In a week, I should lose a pound."

Pasha did not think that Jesse had anorexia or bulimia; she was just preoccupied with weight, which was the thing that most normal girls worried about. And besides, it was exciting. Each new revelation, each new plan, each new item Jesse would swear off forever, only to come back a day or two later with an entirely new idea. The old goals previously made not to be spoken of or mentioned. Jesse didn't like to be reminded of her failures. Pasha watched her closely: the way she let a cigarette hang on her lips, the way she'd wiggle the blades of her shoulders like wings trying to break through the skin or the way the flesh of her legs only touched at the ankles when she stood with her feet together. Jesse seemed to not fit her body; it was too big and she herself was too small. Pasha was never able to see the difference in pounds or fit of clothing that Jesse expounded on daily, though Pasha said she did.

When she stepped on the scale, Pasha always weighed the same: 125. It didn't matter if her hair was wet or dry, she was naked or clothed, if she had her period or not. It was always 125. But this she used to her advantage, she would claim she tried Jesse's new diet and nothing. She was hopeless. She was doomed to always be 5'8 and 125 pounds. Pasha could never remember ever weighing more or less. Her body was a mystery to her, being revealed by Jesse, so it seemed. Pasha had long dark brown hair that perpetually looked damp and fell over her eyes and she didn't even consider her appearance, until Jesse told her she was beautiful.

At school, Pasha avoided the halls and walked around the building until she came to the door just outside the art building. Art was the first two classes of the day, study hall and first year art. With the radio on and



a table to herself, Pasha slipped into class and opened her journal. It was not a journal in traditional form, with “dear diary” scrawled across the top. It rarely had any words in it at all, though it was full of sketches and doodles, arrows linking pictures together.

Pasha liked to imagine that her life was linked together by arrows that she couldn't see, but were there: an arrow from her mother and Bill to her; a line connected her to school, to art class, to Jesse; an arrow to the neighborhood boys and a red arrow to her brother; arrows to teachers; a broken arrow to all her older sisters who had moved out, gone to college, married, left and never visited. In one section of the journal she sketched the bodies of teachers secretly for Jesse. In the drawings, she would outline all the flaws, with tiny arrows pointing to large chocolate candy butts, ham hock calves, chicken necks, ripply upper arms, and tumor-fed bellies. She thought, someday she would paint this “Arrow World” and dedicate it to Jesse.

Besides her mother, Pasha was the only girl left in her family by the time she reached fifth grade, which was probably why the neighbor boy, Shane, bullied her all the way through middle school. She had no protectors then, only her younger brother and he didn't count. When she thought of Shane, her shins ached, where he'd kicked them when she didn't play right, when she reminded him that she was a girl. Pasha imagined that there were arrows to the maroon scars on her shins, but tried to ignore them. Shane had gone away, so why couldn't the old wounds? Pasha wore long pants to cover the disfigured skin to convince herself there was nothing there. No club house. No initiation. No memory.

The journal was part of the requirements for first year art students. The art teacher was not typical for a teacher, Pasha thought. Ms. Regicide had red flaming hair and wore green or blue. On the first day of school, she wrote on the board, “If you think art is vanity, prove it. If you think vanity is art, buy it. But if you are not sure what art is, then you are in the right room.” Pasha couldn't prove anything and her family had little money, so she must be in the right place. If only Jesse would try to understand this, Pasha thought.

Behind Ms. Regicide's desk hung a large mirror framed in gold plaster curlicues. If students went to her desk, she would watch how many times they looked in the mirror and how many times they looked at her. Sometimes during class with eyeliner and a mirror, Ms. Regicide would chalk circles around her eyes. Then she'd look up and around at her students, one eyebrow arched like royalty. She painted herself as much as she painted on paper. Pasha liked her because she did not deny her obsession, but lived it every moment. An obsession was something to devote a lifetime to. Pasha imagined that the art teacher had several mirrors in her house, each with a different angle of her razor eyebrows and her emaciated body.

This morning the art teacher stood on top of her desk, carefully flicking a paintbrush against her smock. As a teacher, she was always challenging the students to see the world in a new way, to create the world in an individual manner, and to combine objects to explain something no one else wanted to say. Though Pasha kept a distance from the teacher, she found her mesmerizing. Ms. Regicide knew so much she was like a god. When the teacher stood over Pasha to give suggestions on her work, Pasha immediately did exactly what Ms. Regicide said. When Ms. Regicide critiqued her work, Pasha believed every word as truth.

Today, Ms. Regicide was announcing the last assignment for the semester. “Your final project for the year is going to be mixed media. As I come around, I will give you each four cards. Each card has something written on it. You must incorporate all four of these cards into your final project,” she said as she pulled from her green art smock a stack of small blue cards. Hopping down from the desk, Ms. Regicide made rounds of the room passing out the slips of paper.

Pasha waited anxiously, doodling in her journal and not even touching the cards when they were placed on her paint-stained table. When the teacher was well past, Pasha snatched them up and quickly laid them on her journal, the words face up. The four cards read: fire, death, nature, and smell.

Without warning, images of Shane filed into her head.

It was not the first time he had done it, the third or the last; it was more of a ritual, as Pasha now understood it. She had gone to therapy for it, but her family couldn’t afford appointments consistently, let alone medication. Pasha had a list of all the diagnoses which were placed on her from one physician or another: manic, extreme depression, bi-polar, multiple personality disorder, mild schizophrenia, and bored. Often, she was prescribed drugs or her parents were told that brief institutionalization might help. However, in all cases the money couldn’t be raised.

Back then Shane was her best friend, sometimes he was her boyfriend. They had a club house, where occasionally other kids were invited to join. The club was along the riverbank, in flood land. Every spring, the area was covered in river water, the treetops reduced to shrub size in the rushing current. But for the most part of the year, the land was dry and Shane and Pasha spent hours in the club house.

Shane decided that because the club was in a secret place, they had to have secrets that only they shared. On their legs, Shane carved long horizontal lines, which later became maroon scars. When they healed, he added new lines because it proved something about his own power over life and his powerlessness. This is how he explained it to Pasha. Shane figured he could do things, cut his body or make a club, but never could control the exact outcomes, how fast to healing or when the riverbank would flood. To make the lines, he would do himself and then he would do her. It was done quickly with a broken piece of glass, slashing on her out stretched leg, knee to ankle. Tears were proof of initiation and later, lack of tears the preferred expression. Near them, grasshoppers would ping into the air, the brown water swirled as if boiling, and the whine of the cicadas grew louder as the afternoon moved into evening.

It was the river water that bothered Pasha the most and why she refused to go back there once her family moved to the other side of town. Inside that cauldron of depthless water, tides pull her into a memory she can’t remember. The first psychologist, nodding in understanding, had told Pasha that she was hiding something. Whenever Pasha crossed a bridge since the move, she slammed her eyelids together and focused on the cuts on her legs. The bridge made them ache and sometimes she’d see slivers of a body, etched with lines.

Shane fit perfectly for the final assignment for art class, thought Pasha. But he was gone, anyway. She needed a new subject; she had a new subject, Jesse. How does one know when she's finally accepted, when she's okay, when her best friend will never leave them? she thought. Pasha sketched ideas in her journal, dreams she recently had and images she found fitting. But mostly, she drew her own name over and over the faint sketch of a girl. By the end of class, she had a plan.



Jesse hid behind the gymnasium smoking cigarettes and waited for Pasha to get out of art class for their track and field third period they had together. She was already dressing for gym, having missed the first two hours of school. After showering and fixing herself up, she had slid her body into her favorite dark blue sweatpants and college sweatshirt. One single ribbon held her ponytail in place.

Jesse inhaled and exhaled like a mirror image of the beautiful women in the movies. Leaning against the cool brick of the building, she imagined someone else watching her with envy. In her mind, she saw some nerdy band kid approach her. Practicing her laugh out loud, Jesse thought of fitting comments for such an interaction. Her real laughter rang in the warming day. What Jesse wanted was perfection: to walk from home to school and arrive absolutely without flaw. If she could only wear the right clothes, be at the right weight, and say the right things. But she didn't know how. That was the problem, but she didn't plan on telling anyone this. Squishing the butt into the grass, Jesse watched the art door for her friend.

Jesse did not do extra-curricular activities. She did not do sports or band, cheerleading or choir, nor did she have any desire to start now. School was not her life, nor would it ever be. She worked as a waitress in a posh restaurant downtown. Her father landed her the job through a friend of the family, though Jesse had never seen this friend before. When Jesse showed up the first day, the manager, Brad, took her into his office and carefully examined her. He told her: no jewelry, nothing too tight or too low. "You are the youngest staff, but I do not want the clientele knowing I employ high school students. You are to act like a professional," he said. Then he made her go home and put on a correct uniform: black bottoms and a button-down long-sleeved white dress shirt. Jesse was relieved he didn't ask her what grade she was in, but knew she could pull it off. She might be fourteen, but already had a world of knowledge.

Because of her job, Jesse rarely made it to school on time the days after she worked the night shift. This annoyed her parents and affected her grades, but the money made her delirious. Every plate on the menu was at least twenty dollars and the business men who came in with pretty business women, left thick tips. The women disregarded her. The men, called her honey, sweetie, or miss. On the weekends when Brad the manager was not working, Jesse would wear knee length skirts with nylons. When the nylons had tiny runs in them, she got bigger tips. Jesse gathered her customers liked their servers a little trashy.

As Pasha approached her, Jesse felt pity for her friend. She did not understand why Pasha refused to use her potentials. She is a project, a fixer-upper, Jesse thought spitting. How could anyone stand to dress like that, wear clothes with frayed sleeves or walk with her head down? The world appreciated women who

smiled and looked others in the eye, Jesse knew. Jesse also knew just the way to wear her shirts, so the tiniest gap would appear between the buttons. If you don't use it, you lose it, Jesse thought as she eyed her friend's breasts knowing they were there, somewhere.

Jesse considered herself a connoisseur of procedures to change the body and saved most of her tips from work, knowing it would come in handy eventually. With apt attention she'd watched an obese woman get her stomach stapled on the medical channel. She had watched lipo-suction, tummy tucks, breast implants, and face restructuring. She knew pills and powders, machines and programs. Every item promised transformation in a few short weeks. How long was a few short weeks, Jesse wondered.

On a video once, she had watched someone with her mouth wired shut. Another woman in a commercial stood motionless like a disgruntled scarecrow, with thick black thread connecting lip to lip. At work, when older beautiful women came in, Jesse tried to guess what they had had done and how much it had cost. She couldn't imagine that anything was a given, every ounce of perfection had to be earned. Jesse knew this to be true, every day she fought a war with herself. In a cartoon she had seen long ago, a cat swallowed starch which resulted in an immediate pin prick mouth. Jesse wanted a pin prick mouth, but with large full lips. When she licked starch carefully to avoid too many calories, nothing happened. Then she ran for half an hour, no use gaining weight by experiment.

As they rounded the track for the second time, Jesse began her daily work on Pasha. "Whatever is art good for?" said Jesse, as Pasha and she sped walked the mile for gym class. The only people who ran the mile were athletes and fat girls. Everyone else walked. Jesse could run the mile in under eight minutes, but she wouldn't dare do it now. She'd mess up her hair. She'd smell. Running was for nighttime, for ducking in the bushes and hurling the supper that her parents forced down her throat. And besides, she didn't want anyone to know really about her private crusade.

"City art is only good for defacing. Museums are for old people," said Jesse, Pasha making non-committal responses. "Art is for morons."

"I'm only taking it because I have to. Anyway, who cares? I think I lost a pound today," said Pasha, stopping to tie her shoe.

"No, you didn't."

"Yep. I think it was all the spitting I did this week. You were right, it's working like a charm."

"Well, good," said Jesse, changing the subject to the fifty dollar tip she got from the guy eating dinner alone the night before. Her mind shifted as she told her story, thinking two things at once. She saw the office, her name on the schedule as the closing server. The dull annoyance she had felt, knowing she'd have to remind Brad again that her parents did not want her to close on school nights.

After gym they headed their separate ways until lunch, which they had together. Pasha went to English. Jesse went to earth science. Instead of listening to the teacher, Jesse wrote notes. She wrote notes in school books, though never her own. Next to women scientists, she made quotation bubbles that said “I am fat, just like you.” Jesse imagined that she could change them all and knew that anyone could be as thin as herself, if they only had the courage to try. But they didn’t. Everyone was happily, disgustingly, fat.

When she showed her word bubbles to Pasha, they exchanged a secretive smile. Jesse knew she had a good sense of humor because she could laugh at herself and make everyone believe she was laughing at them. Sometimes after a joke, Pasha had a hurt look in her eyes, which only made Jesse laugh harder. Pasha had so much to learn and it wouldn’t be fair to tell her, she’d just have to show her.

Jesse also wrote notes in the matchbooks that she stole from work. The messages said: “I eat to live, but I don’t live to eat,” “Less is better,” “Those who saw her eat a tiny salad were very happy,” and “Burning and burning.” She would pass them to friends or waitresses as a joke. If someone gave her a strange look, Jesse would say, “Just helping you out,” make some comment about the way that person looked, and then quickly made her exist with a laugh. Jesse also left them in her locker, her pocket, and her purse. When she went to smoke behind the gym or the restaurant, she would read the lines like mantras.

As Jesse sat through her next class of world history, she carefully picked the dirt out from under her fingernails and thought of Brad. He’d come up behind her several times over the last few months, one hand firmly on her side and the other directing her attention to some flaw in her work. She knew what he wanted, but wasn’t ready to give it up yet, though she knew she would eventually. He had told her three weeks ago that he’d been watching her.

“Fantastic,” she had said, “you and every other man in this restaurant.”

“Uh-huh,” he fingered his slightly graying beard, “No, your tips, honey. If I catch you under-claiming, I’ll fire you.”

“Yeah, okay,” she’d said, walking away from him and throwing that laugh behind her.

As she tapped her pencil on her desk, she wondered why she didn’t expect it sooner and bit the inside of her cheek for imagining it would have been better than it was. That it would have been something. Not to say Jesse wasn’t experienced, she’d been having sex for almost two years now with boys near her age. She’d never slept with someone older.

When he’d pushed her into the office and began pulling at the buttons of her shirt, she’d quickly gone for his fly. Jesse wanted to help him out, getting this initial sexual encounter out of the way, so there could be more, so the romance could begin. But when she’d reached for his fly, he pushed her hands out of the way. And during, instead of concentrating, she kept seeing him push her hands away again and again. It was over so quickly, Jesse didn’t even have a chance to fake it.



“You make a lot of noise. I’m always worried I’m too noisy,” he said not smiling but with an edge of boredom in his voice. He carefully zipped up. He barely even removed his clothes, Jesse thought, though she sat mostly naked on his cool metal desk. She sat there confused a minute more, sensing something behind his words that she was missing. Some joke, or some insight that she had obviously overlooked. Immediately, she had an urge to pull inside herself, to shrink down, to hide as she blushed.

“Oh, sorry,” Jesse said, “Nobody’s here though.”

Brad had the cash draw and began the night out count. His fingers ran through the checks and money, the change neatly filed in the ledger. He leaned over his work, his shirt expensive, which reminded Jesse how she knew he had cultivated that look: money and power. Jesse looked at the room around her, feeling like there were two layers of reality and she could only see one. The room contained a calendar with perfect servers smiling, a framed picture of wife and kids, and a fake plastic plant that needed dusting. It all seemed wrong. Maybe I should clean in here, thought Jesse.

“You were noisy, too,” Jesse said finally, trying to laugh. Both the comment and laugh went unnoticed by Brad. He didn’t even watch her dress or compose herself. And she felt somehow that he wasn’t really talking about her sounds, but about her. Raising her hand to her hair, she felt to see if it was still in place. She knew her clothes were clean, or had been, before the night ended. And she did not smell, at least not that she could tell. Yet he was telling her something, something vitally important.

Jesse struggled into the last bit of her clothes. Leaving the room, she’d wadded her light jacket and punched out, which she’d forgotten to do earlier. In her hurry, Jesse did not write down her tips. A faint smell of cooking oil hung around her while the thick warm scent of Italian food wrapped around her neck. It was just past midnight and her father did not like her out so late on a school night.

As she passed by Brad’s office again, she said, “Good night,” immediately wondering if she’d said it too loud. Bringing her knuckles to her lips as if to remind herself of something, Jesse stumbled into the night. As her fingers slid her car key into her parents’ car, her school/work permit securely in her wallet, shrill laughter sounded in the air. As she listened, Jesse was unsure from where it came.



In Jesse’s bedroom, Pasha lay on the bed, flipping through her sketch book with the four words of the new assignment rattling around her head. Jesse tried on clothes in front of her mirror. The mirror was cracked in several places and had been the mirror from her mother’s bathroom. When she redecorated, Jesse begged for the large mirror. Tilted against the wall, it reflected most of the bedroom, though it was only four feet tall and six feet wide. “Mirror mirror on the wall, who’s the skinniest of them all?” said Jesse glaring at herself and daring the mirror to talk back.

“How do you draw smell?” Pasha asked, as Jesse slipped into a small sundress. As usual, Jesse did not

hear Pasha. When Jesse communed with the mirror, she heard very little. Her body was center stage and it had to look just right.

“This used to be my dress. I lost six more pounds. It keeps burning and burning. You should really try the aerobic videos with me, an hour twice a day is awesome. What?” Jesse threw off the dress, and pulled on a pair of red shorts. Sucking in her stomach, she buttoned them perfectly. Her legs were twigs.

“Does nature have to have nature in it? The outdoors are stupid, like gym class,” said Pasha as the family cat jumped onto the bed.

“What?” said Jesse, as she eased out of the shorts and pulled out her cherry swimsuit. Pile of clothes lay around the room in little heaps, like bodies on the roadside.

Jesse continued, “Cross-country/Track team starts practices next Monday. We should go. We could dress like my older brother does for the wrestling team with layers of clothes and not drink a drop of water. We could even run in garbage sacks.” Jesse turned around and around in the mirror, the bikini cups were two stop signs. The bottom, a cry for help.

“Can death be anything other than the gothic: skeletons, bats, coffins, vampires? Can a spoon be death? Can death come through a tube or along a piece of glass?” said Pasha.

“I need to lose more. My thighs look like death.” Jesse pouted and turned to face Pasha with a grimace.

“Come here,” said Pasha, “Let me have a look at them. Surgery is really the thing now. Besides, incisions are best on young flesh.” Pasha winked at her friend.

Jesse collapsed on the bed in giggles, laughing each calorie away. “Do you think the fat girls do this too? Prancing and squeezing into clothes in front of their mirror? I bet they do. I bet they cry or pretend they’re a beauty queen. Can you imagine?”

“Be dead,” said Pasha, “I need your help on an art project. I’ve got the camera.”

“You would come if I died, wouldn’t you?”

“Only if it’s for the art class.”

“You would. You would cry, because I am your only friend.”

“Dead people don’t talk.”

“Okay,” said Jesse, staring at the ceiling, unblinking, imagining she was sliding into an operating room.

Pasha wanted the eyes to be glassy, but they were watering.

Pasha pulled from her backpack a box of markers, a camera, and a sliver of glass. Snapping shots of the body, Pasha repositioned Jesse in various poses before she was satisfied. Her body was supine, as if sleeping or waiting for surgery. The red bathing suit lay loose on Jesse's frame.

"Pasha, am I dead this time? This isn't going to be some weird sexual murder art thing is it? Are you going to tie pantyhose around my neck?"

"No. You're going in for plastic surgery, stomach stapling, and lipo-section. It's a three-for-one deal. I'm not sure if you will come out yet. Be quiet or you might really die."

The only sound was red ink on flesh.

Pasha drew arrows on Jesse's thighs. Long hoops of light, marked the natural curves of Jesse's skin. Skin was a record of life; it showed time, power, and money. Only the very rich or the very young had flawless skin. The young had to starve. The rich fed doctors money to look serially twenty. The result was the same: a colony of matchsticks with hair like a flame and bodies so thin they could ignite.

Pasha drew lines like a doctor planning the incision. "Good night, sweet patient, I'll make it all better."

With a blue marker Jesse's waist became small, her belly button a jewel on a tiny band of white. Pasha etched out the ribs, making the groves deeper, the shadows enhanced by the inhale. Hipbones like shells, she colored fuchsia and scooped forward, jutting. The pelvis behind only a curtain of flesh criss-crossed with emblems and directions only Jesse and Pasha understood. On the back, the spine was refined into black steps, a thousand of them running up and down, over and again, burning and burning.

Pasha made her shoulder blades into angel wings of gray and like razors they cut and re-cut the ribs open. Blood trickled like calories away and away. Her arms became reeds, they did not flute or make bars, but were soft, compliant and hollow; for whom, they did not know. The green buds at the knuckles were laced with mold. Her palms were strawberries inside cages, to smell, but never to touch or taste. The seeds were mirrors that reflected nothing.

Pasha laced Jesse's lips with black wire to sew them shut. A purple pin prick was for the straw that could only drink water. Her eyes were circled with coal and her hair divided into cherry slices. Jesse was a skeleton in a red bikini.

When Pasha was done, she had used the four items on the yellow paper: nature, fire, death, and smell. The stop signs were now lost inside arrows to cut out, to dismember, and to get rid of what was not needed. Pasha looked into the eyes of her friend and saw nothing but stubby lashes. Jesse was silent pieces. Picking up the camera and the sliver of glass, Pasha waited for just a moment and then finished her project. Down

Jesse's legs Pasha wrote twice, "Less is Better."

# Body Shop Catalogue

By Eva Kuttenberg

Anatomy, androgyny, anorexia  
A-sexual, amorphous, ambiguous, aphoristic, archaic bodies  
Autopsy  
Bliss  
Brides & Bachelors  
Biology as Destiny  
Battleground of the Sexes  
Baudrillard's *Body, or the Massgrave of Signs*  
Caressing, castigated, castrated, culturally codified bodies  
Constructed, corporeal, celestial bodies  
Corpses  
Drifters  
Decaying, disintegrating, decomposing bodies  
Dissected, distorted, deconstructed bodies  
Duchamp's desire engines: *The Bride Stripped Naked by the Seven Bachelors, Even*  
Erotic, exotic, ethnic, exposed, embraced, erased bodies  
Femme fragile – femme fatale – femme total: Flash your Flesh  
Fluid, fluctuating, fashioned, fabricated, fractured, fragmented, frail bodies  
Genes, genitals, gender  
Genocides  
Hysterics & histrionics  
Homosexuals & heterosexuals  
Hazardous bodies  
Isolated, ideologically inscribed bodies  
Is – I – eye – lands  
Jouissance  
Kinetic bodies  
Killing machines  
Lonely, longing, loving bodies  
Masculine, masturbating, menstruating bodies  
Material, mechanical, military, meditating bodies  
Meandering, metonymical, mortal, metastatic bodies  
Musical bodies – andante, adagio, piano – pianissimo, forte - fortissimo – crescendo  
Naked bodies & nudes



Nuns, nurses, nymphs  
Narcissistic, nationalistic, nameless bodies  
Objectified, omnipresent, oppressed, ovulating bodies  
Passionate, pious, pierced, psychotic, procreating bodies  
Pleasure seeking, polymorphous perverse, poetic bodies  
Performing, pornographic bodies  
Phallus  
Queer bodies  
Raped, reproducing, robotic bodies  
Radiant & radioactive bodies  
Submissive, sexual, sensual, seductive, stripping bodies  
Semiotic & satanic bodies  
Traumatized, transgressive, transsexual, tattooed bodies  
Textual theaters of the body  
Tormented & tortured bodies  
Talking bodies  
Ubiquitous, universal bodies  
Unicorns  
Veiled vessels  
Violated, visibly divisible bodies  
Virgins & vamps  
Wombs, widows, wantons  
X-rayed, yearning, zealous bodies

# Forms and Functions of Interrogation in Charismatic Christian Pulpit Discourse.

By Rotimi Taiwo

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The use of interrogation is a common practice in most daily human conversations. It is however, more common in some kinds of discourse than others. For instance, in cross-examinations in courts of law, political interviews, job interviews, doctor-patient talk, and teacher pupil discourse, it is easy to see the syntagmatic chaining of discourse in terms of an exchange with an initiation (I) representing the question from one speaker and a response (R) which is the answer from another. Scholarly works on the use of interrogatives in discourse are enormous (see Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975; Stubbs, 1983; Bloor and Bloor, 1995; Eggins, 1993, *etc*).

The focus of this paper is a kind of discourse that appears rather like a monologue, but still makes use of interrogations, thereby seeking responses from the listeners.

Sermons, or pulpit discourse as we call it in this work, are messages delivered by speakers vested with some spiritual authority within the church or any gathering of Christians. They are not known to be typically characterized by the use of many interrogatives because the speakers set out to inform the listeners with a view to transform their lives through the messages. The preacher controls the discourse and the situation places constraints on the co-interactants to listen while he speaks (see Taiwo forthcoming). Despite that most sermons are typically full of declarative sentences, charismatic Christian preachers use interrogative forms for specific purposes in their messages. This article therefore, looks at the forms and functions of such interrogatives.

The research made use of audio and video recorded data as well as personal observations of pulpit messages given by charismatic Christian preachers in South Western Nigeria. An attentive auditioning of these messages produced the various forms of interrogation used in this work, their functions and the interpretations given to them judging by the responses of the listeners.

## 2. THE USE OF INTERROGATION IN ENGLISH DISCOURSE

Traditional grammar structurally recognizes four types of sentence: Declarative, Imperative, Exclamatory and Interrogative. These types are also distinguished on the bases of their uses and functions (meaning types) (see Kersti and Burrige, 2001) The formal and functional types together with their purposes are identified below.

**Table 1: Formal, Functional and Purposes of Interrogation in English Discourse**

FORMAL TYPES	FUNCTIONAL TYPES	PURPOSES
Declarative	Statement	to state, tell or convey information or make something known
Imperative	Command	to make others to behave in certain ways
Interrogative	Question	to seek or elicit information
Exclamatory	Exclamation	to express surprise, disgust or annoyance at something

The neat correspondence between the formal and functional types of sentences as seen in the table above may not always be so in real communication. Pragmatists identified what they call illocutionary force of a sentence, *i.e.* what the speaker intends his utterance to be interpreted as, as opposed to the actual utterance. (See Austin, 1962 and Searle, 1969). For instance, Wales (1989) asserts that a declarative sentence may have the illocutionary force of a question simply by changing the pattern of intonation from a normal falling to a rising (represented by a question mark in writing), *e.g.*:

### 1. *You were there?*

Valimaa-Blum (2001) corroborates this by showing that “the same linguistic expression can be used to perform several illocutionary acts”, *e.g.*:

### 2. *Have you finished eating?*

The question above has the illocutionary force of wanting to know whether the addressee is over with eating. It may equally have the illocutionary force of wanting the addressee to leave the room because the speaker wants to have a private discussion on some issues with a visitor.

Interrogatives are popularly used instead of imperatives for polite requests, *e.g.*:

### 3. *Could you shut the door please?*

It then means that for any interrogation to be properly interpreted, the propositional content, *i.e.*, the linguistic meaning, as well as the illocutionary force, *i.e.*, the intended meaning have to be understood.

Scholars on interrogative syntax have identified some types of interrogatives in English. The broad types identified from the typologies presented by these various scholars are the following:

- a) **Yes-no Questions**, otherwise known as Polar Questions, Closed Questions Or Nexus Questions (Jespersen, 1933), Confirmation-denial Questions (Robinson and Rackstraw, 1972).
- b) **Wh-Questions**, otherwise known as Information-seeking Questions
- c) **Alternative Questions**
- d) **Tag Questions**
- e) **Rhetorical Questions**

(For more details on these interrogative types, see Quirk, *et al*, 1985; Aremo, 1997 and Kersti and Burridge, 2001). We shall discuss the types briefly in the next section.

**Yes-no Questions** can be described as questions that allow for an affirmative (yes) or negative (no) reply. According to Aremo (1997:342), in a typical Yes-no question, the operator (the only auxiliary or the first of the two or more auxiliaries in a verb phrase) is moved before the subject and is pronounced with a rising intonation. Eggin (1993: 173) puts this in another way – “the structure of the polar question involves the positioning of the finite before the subject”, for example,

### 4. *Are they coming tonight?*

In 4 above, the operator or the finite verb *are*, is fronted, while the subject *they* is placed next to it. The rising intonation is indicated by the question mark. In cases where the related declarative contains a fused finite/predicator (*i.e.*, simple past and simple present forms of verb) there is need to introduce a finite element to be placed before the subject. This finite element is typically the “do” auxiliary, *e.g.*:

5. Declarative: *Tunde copied the work from his book*

6. Interrogative: *Did Tunde copy the work from his book?*

6 is a non-basic sentence formed from 5, a basic sentence by inserting the finite element “do”. In a Yes-no question clear constraints are on the interpretation of the utterance which follows. Hearers therefore will

try and interpret whatever follows the question as meaning either “yes” or “no”. According to Stubbs, 1983: 105),

this is not to say that only the forms “yes “ and “no” can occur; but that whatever does occur is already pre-classified as meaning either “yes” or “no”.

For instance, an answer such as “I don’t think so” can be interpreted as negative.

**Wh- Questions** are questions formed with one of the closed class of interrogative pronouns (*who, what, where, when, why* and *how*). According to Quirk, *et al* (1985: 806), wh- questions typically expect a reply from an open range of replies. It may appear that wh- questions are syntactically constrained in the sense that a where- interrogative is normally followed by a place adverbial and a when- interrogative , by a time adverbial, *e.g.*:

7. Q: *Where is my book?* A: *On the table.* / *\*At five o’clock.*

8. Q: *When is daddy coming?* A: *At five o’clock.* / *\*On the table.*

It is easy to identify counter examples where there are no such constraints, *e.g.*:

9. Q: *Where is John?* A: *He’s not well today.*

The answer in 9 can still be interpreted as “At home”, but using the latter “might be conversationally inappropriate on its own, since some reasons might be required” (Stubbs, 1983: 108).

**Alternative Questions** are a special kind of Yes-no question in the sense that the structure is like that of a yes-no question (the subject follows the operator or the finite verb). They differ only in the fact that they possess two or more alternative answers. In alternative questions, there is a presupposition of the truth-value of only one of the propositions, *e.g.*:

10. *Will you have tea or coffee?*

**Tag Questions** are a type of question in which the interrogative structure is left to the end of the sentence where the operator is “tagged on” to the pronoun subject and the question expects a “yes” or “no” answer. The central purpose of a tag question is to seek confirmation, *e.g.*:

11. *He came late, didn’t he?*

Kersti and Burrige (2001) identified other functions of tag questions:

i. regulating conversational interaction and politeness, for instance, a parent may say to a child who



misbehaves in the presence of visitors

**12. *You don't do that, do you?***

ii. indicating interest in participation in an ongoing discourse, *e.g.*:

**13. *I guess I can come in now, can't?***

iii. seeking empathy from listener (s), *e.g.*:

**14. *I am not as bad as he portrayed me, am I?***

For further discussion on the functions of tag questions, see Kersti and Burridge (2001: 122 *ff*).

**Rhetorical Question** is common in formal speeches of persuasion made by public speakers, politicians and poets. It resembles questions in structure, but is really used for making emphatic statements. Quirk *et al* (1985: 1478) assert that “in communicative effect, it [rhetorical question] is similar to tag question since it seeks confirmation of what the speaker has explicitly assumed (by preceding declarative) to be agreed as truth.”

In a rhetorical question, the speaker does not expect an answer, for example,

**15. *Is there anybody here ready to die?***

Sometimes, rhetorical questions reflect how the speaker thinks, *i.e.*, his internal reflection and at the same time, it directs the hearer's mind to the points being made, *e.g.*:

**16. *How shall I put it now?***

**17. *But, where was I?***

Some rhetorical questions have the functions of a directive (with abusive component), *e.g.*:

**18. *Why don't you go and jump in to the lagoon?***

### 3. CHARISMATIC CHRISTIANITY

Charismaticism is a movement that came into being in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The movement, according to Burgess and McGeed (1990) is a trans-denominational movement of Christians (both independent and

denominational) who emphasize “life in the spirit” (p.4). From the United States, the movement spread to other parts of the world. The growth has been tremendous in Africa, especially in the urban areas. The spread in the urban areas could be adduced to the fact that their messages address contemporary urban problems such as unemployment, loneliness, inadequate health care and poor social services (see Ojo, 2001:4).

Charismatics emphasize the outflowing of the Holy Spirit and dwell on the importance of exercising extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit such as speaking in tongues (an evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit), healing, prophesy, teaching, and so forth. They are committed to the spread of the gospel and in the modern times engage in the use of modern technologies, such as the radio, television, and the internet to facilitate the dissemination of the gospel (see Hackett: 1998:7). Success of this movement in evangelism, according to Burgess and McGeed (1990) may well constitute the most dramatic increase of believers in the history of the Christian church. The rapid growth in charismatic Christianity brought a considerable variety of worship pattern, cultural attitude and methods of evangelism.

In their bid to evangelize, charismatic activities, especially in developing nations of Africa are not limited to churches and crusades. They also extend their preaching to public places such as buses, taxis, markets, offices, hospitals, schools and prisons using the Bible, tracts, stickers, audio and video tapes (see Ojo, 1995; Hackett, 1998). Some of the fast growing charismatic Christian organisations that exist in the area of this study include: The Living Faith Ministries, Foursquare Gospel Church, Deeper Christian Life Ministries, The Redeemed Christian Church of God, The Sword of the Spirit Ministries and Mountain of Fire and Miracles.

#### **4. LANGUAGE USE IN CHARISMATIC MOVEMENTS**

The charismatic movement, like other social institutions has norms guiding members’ behaviour. Members share certain of the community’s language expectations, some of which according to Fairclough (1988) include knowledge of language codes, knowledge of principles of norms and use, and knowledge of situations and the world. Despite the fact that linguistic behaviour may vary to some extent, from one charismatic organization to another, there is a generally recognized linguistic behavioural pattern. Charismatic movements are marked by vigorous activities and in all these activities, language plays prominent roles. Charismatic Christian services are full of warmth with messages in forms of sermons, prophecies, testimonies, announcements and songs. At every point in the service language is characterized by norms, which vary along lexico-semantic dimensions. The language and norms of prophecy differs from those of prayer or sermon.

A close observation of the linguistic behaviour in charismatic movements shows that it differs a lot from that of orthodox Christian bodies. Charismatic services are generally known to have a boisterous atmosphere. For instance, the usual graveyard silence one usually notices during sermons in orthodox Christian

services is not a feature of charismatic services. Charismatic preachers are more flexible and less formal in the delivery of their messages. They often carry the listeners along by encouraging their participation. It is not unusual to often have messages being interjected by unsolicited comments from the congregation. Such comments include phrases such as “oh yeah”, “hallelujah”, “ride on pastor”, and so forth. Interjections may also be in form of a rapturous noise or an applause (which sometimes drown the message) expressing approval of something said by the preacher. There are also non-verbal behaviour such as clapping and waving hands to show an approval of the message. The preacher may solicit responses such as a repetition of something he has just said, making the congregation to fill a gap in his statement and so forth. All these are strategies employed by charismatic Christian preachers to ensure the attentiveness of their listeners.

The most active use of language in charismatic worship service occurs during sermons. Sermons are messages given for the purpose of transforming the lives of the listeners. Preachers appeal to the faith of their listeners by encouraging them to pursue righteousness and hope for the best. They also use the message to warn, chastise, and challenge the listeners to tap into their potentials. The preacher controls the discourse and only allows the congregation to participate at his will in the course of the discourse. The use of interrogation is one of the features of a charismatic sermon. And they are used with the view to achieve some of the purposes listed earlier. Some of the questions we shall attempt to answer as far as the use of interrogation in Charismatic Christian discourse is concerned include the following:

- (i) What kind of interrogative forms do charismatic Christian preachers use?
- (ii) Why do they use such interrogative forms?
- (iii) What kinds of responses do they expect (*i.e.*, the illocutionary force) of their interrogation?
- (iv) What kind of responses do they get to their interrogation?
- (v) When there are ambiguities in the interpretation of their interrogation, how do they resolve these?

## 5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Our findings reveal that three types of interrogative forms are commonly used by charismatic Christian preachers – wh- questions, yes-no questions, and rhetorical questions. These questions, as we have observed earlier in Section 2 are used sometimes to perform some illocutionary function, which are different from their traditional function of elicitation of information.

Most of the wh- questions used were usually unambiguous – the answers were sometimes too obvious. For instance, these preachers sometimes made statements, which were related directly to the questions

they were asking and the questions were then seen as a way of making some points and ensuring that the preachers were being followed. In other words, the illocutionary function of the question was not primarily to elicit response but to stress or underscore some points in the discourse, *e.g.*:

**19. *God is on your side. Who is on your side?***

**20. *All things become new. How many things become new?***

Answers to the questions above lie in the statements preceding them. The function of the questions above is more of that of a hearing/check, *i.e.*, they were meant to check whether the listener was following or not (Olateju, 1998:34). The kind of discourse we are dealing with here is one in which the preacher does most of the talking and the questions come in only when he needs to be sure he is carrying the listeners along as he is making his points.

Interrogative forms were also used to make points clearer in the discourse. It was observed in the data that charismatic Christian preachers asked questions and chose to provide the answers. When this happened, it was very clear to the congregation that such questions were not meant for them. Such questions were usually open-ended and the questioner did not provide any clue or enough clues to guide the listeners. The contexts always made it clear that only the questioner could answer his own questions, *e.g.*:

**21. *Why will our bodies be transformed? What reasons? Several reasons, one..., two...***

**22. *Each time we see these things, we rejoice. Why? Because the end is near.***

It may not be easy for the congregation to respond to the questions the way the preachers had. The style (the questioner answering his own question) was common in sermons that were like teaching sessions, where the teacher raised questions based on biblical principles and used the answers to teach these principles. This style may even be more complex when the answer seemed too remote from the question asked and the whole thing looked like a riddle, *e.g.*,

**23. *Where is Moses without the rod of God in Egypt? Suicide.***

The complexity of this question lies in the fact that ordinarily, listeners have the tendency to interpret it as a rhetorical question. This is because it appeared to be probing something, which calls for a thoughtful consideration, rather than expecting a verbal response. With the answer given by the preacher, his wh-word (where) was not actually expecting a place adverbial answer. The preacher was quick to demonstrate that it was not a rhetorical question, but one used to convey a message which people would not normally think seriously about. The answer “suicide” would normally be appropriate for a ‘what’ question and not a ‘where’ question. It also underscores the importance of “the rod of God” and the danger Moses and his followers would have faced before Pharaoh without it.

Charismatic Christian preachers were also seen to use interrogative forms to which they deliberately provided the wrong answers. In such instances, the contexts aided the responses. The illocutionary function of such an act is to actually ensure that the congregation was attentive, *e.g.*:

**24. *What is in your hand? A book?***

The wrong answers provided (*A book*) itself is a question (pronounced with a rising intonation). The point being made here is that the Bible is not just an ordinary book, but the word of God, which is powerful.

Another strategy used by charismatic Christian preachers to ensure attentiveness is the use of wh- echo questions (see Quirk, et al 1985: 835). The wh- element is used to question a part of a statement made earlier by the speaker or a well-known Bible passage or principle. The preacher would expect the congregation to repeat part of his message as a way of having its content confirmed, *e.g.*:

**25. *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you what?***

The wh- here is questioning the nominal item “rest”, which is the completion of the Matt. 11: 28 passage quoted from the Bible by the speaker.

When polar questions were used as an interrogative form in messages, they might also have obvious answers, which the preacher wanted his listener to supply either as an affirmation or denial of the proposition in the question, *e.g.*:

**26. *Is there any body here who is ready to go to hell?***

The expected answer is obvious – a negative response “no” because every member of the congregation understands the implication of the answer given – hell is a place no Christian would want to go to.

Despite that sometimes answers to Yes-no questions are obvious, the preacher may occasionally go ahead and provide the response. His purpose is to strengthen the proposition made earlier, *e.g.*:

**27. *Can you use another man’s knowledge to procure an appointment? No.***

The question and answer in 27 was used to show the importance of a personal relationship with God rather than a dependence on human intermediaries. The figurative use of “another man’s knowledge” stands for “a human intermediary”, while “an appointment” represents “a relationship with God”.

In all the instances we have treated so far, the interrogative forms were used to elicit verbal responses, which were either given by the congregation or the preacher himself.

Interrogation in charismatic Christian discourse does not only have the illocutionary function of eliciting

verbal responses. Some interrogative forms were sometimes used to elicit non-verbal responses, which came in form of kinesics, and mental behaviour. In most cases when the non-verbal response was kinesics, the preacher normally used wh-questions addressed directly to the congregation, *e.g.*:

**29. *A friend of mine would tell me this “God is not asleep”. How many of you know that God is not asleep?***

A commonly used form of kinesics identified in the data is the raising up of hands to show identification. Rhetorical questions are generally known not to expect verbal responses. They were however observed in the data to elicit mental responses, mainly a meditation on the question being asked, *e.g.*:

**30. *You think witches and wizards don’t know you?***

The form of 30 is a declarative given the illocutionary function of an interrogative. Wh-rhetorical questions are used to set the listener thinking and thereby having a fresh insight into an already familiar idea, principle or story, *e.g.*:

**31. *How can a man be cripple at the Beautiful Gate?***

**32. *You carry the rod of God in your hand? Why must you allow Pharaoh to keep humiliating you?***

The language in 32 is figurative. The allusion here was made to the story of how Moses confronted Pharaoh and led the Israelites out of Egypt. For the contemporary Christian the *rod of God* in Moses’ hand can be compared with ‘the Bible’ while *Pharaoh* can be likened to ‘the devil’, who would not want ‘Christians’ – or more accurately ‘the Spiritual Israelites’ – to reach their ‘promised land’ – heaven.

Polar rhetorical questions were also used for the same purpose mentioned above, *e.g.*:

**33. *Do you know that the differences between extraordinary and ordinary is “extra”.***

The questions in 30, 31 and 32 as we can see, were meant to challenge the listeners to tap into their potentials. They are common in messages that have to do with believers exercising dominion and authority, prosperity messages and deliverance messages. The general quietness and meditative mood of the congregation when these questions were asked showed that the questions were achieving their purpose.

Sometimes there were ambiguities in the interpretation of some rhetorical questions, *e.g.*:

**34. *When you die, what do you take to heaven?***

The question may not absolutely have the illocutionary force of a rhetorical question because the



congregation had an accurate answer to it. The preacher, on such occasion as this, had a way of passing across the message that he did not intend the question to be answered, but for the congregation to think about.

What we have identified and discussed in this work represents the general style of interrogation in charismatic Christian pulpit discourse. We are aware that different preachers have their own styles and this depends largely on their background and training. The submission at this point is that interrogation is a common approach to discourse control and sustenance in charismatic Christian sermons.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study has been able to establish the fact that interrogation is a tool in the hand of charismatic Christian preachers, not only to elicit information from the congregation, but to regulate their linguistic behaviour in the process of the discourse. The preacher also sometimes answered his own questions and even when the answer to a question was obvious from both the linguistic and social contexts, the preacher still attempted his own questions in order to make his point.

We also observed that interrogation was also used to elicit non-verbal responses, which could be inform of kinesics and mental behaviour. Since the essence of preaching is to transform the listeners, preachers appealed to their mental faculties by interrogating them and making them have new insights into the topic of the message being preached.

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# Pauper at His Feet

By Will Harris

Because for me Christ is the Christ  
I linger just beyond the corner and the open door  
waiting for the good servant  
who will share the scraps of wealth from her master's table  
even with the lowest and infidels.  
And she is faithful. She arrives,  
pays her respects, takes her seat, and the lesson begins.  
Sometimes there is speaking, and I pass by and look in,  
see the *muhafez* lean back patiently while the young woman  
strains forward in concentration. On these days I pass on,  
afraid to turn back and be discovered.

But God is gracious even to the lowest.  
And on those days of my redemption  
I hear birds fluttering in the room,  
chasing sung phrases of the Qur'an,  
sweet seeds blossoming in air.  
At midterm I sat in the next room, imagining  
that I was grading, pen and empty paper before me,  
while in spirit, I closed my eyes and feasted that day  
on manna and coriander seed.

Someday I will learn the holy language  
even children know and sing at Ramadan.  
Until that day, their God and my God  
is merciful, even to the lowest. He will let me  
glean, and what I glean will satisfy.

# After the Levees Breached...

By Carra Leah Hood

*For my father who's from there, Megan who's dreamed of living there, and my friends at LSU whose blood's down there...*

They mouth "Help us"  
for cameras  
write out their plea on cardboard  
on the front of their houses  
on their t-shirts.  
Their dogs howl  
abandoned on rooftops  
trapped in attic crawl spaces  
cats claw glass, behind windows  
in the distance.  
The evacuees from N'orleans  
stand outside the Convention Center -  
no room for them inside -  
or sleep on the exit ramp  
connecting Route 10 East to downtown.  
Pointing at helicopters circling overhead  
they cough bloody green-yellow sputum graffiti  
spraying "Fuck off" on what's left  
of the levee at London Avenue Canal.

Wading through waist-deep sludge  
hand paddling plastic storage bins  
past remnants of clothes  
other families' photographs  
water-logged stereo equipment  
soggy newspapers turned pulpy goo  
swollen garbage bags half submerged, twist ties intact.  
The evacuees from N'orleans  
float through the once-neighborhoods of the 9th Ward  
deeper into the humidity of decaying bodies  
shit-strewn E-coli, urine, flames spitting ethylene

sweetness of rotting pomegranates.

Mississippi's revenge?  
The end of history?

No jazz razzmatazz  
beads coconuts 24/7 hooch  
chickory laced A.M. spikes  
jam that don't shake like jelly  
parading masked identities  
Chief Indios  
crawfish etouffee highs  
green geaux gumbo jumble  
or bluesy woosey criollo drawls  
swaying lovers on Bourbon Street.

Four of them, two children,  
who did not know her before the flood  
cover her face with a damp bed sheet -  
70, diabetic, bloated, blue lips ("Mercy, mercy")  
she'd've gotten the needle at Charity.  
The evacuees from N'orleans  
call her Sheba  
from Domino's lick.  
"Her kidneys failed last night"  
the four of them hum in mourning  
kneeling on the cement floor of the Superdome.

Inside outside  
scarce food, water.  
Black, white, Latino, Asian, scratching arms  
drawing blood  
trembling from the cold  
in 100-degree unventilated arena -  
the evacuees from N'orleans  
"Never seen the Saints' play!" -  
need a line, need a snort.  
Leaky dicks, always erect inside,  
check out girls asleep on cots  
looting virgin pussy for food.  
Renegades outside smash storefront windows

run hugging cases of Similac, bologna, American cheese,  
six packs of water, bread, milk, aspirin, soap.

Cops chase them

away from stuffed cherry tops

journalists shoot them -

aim, save, store, "It's a wrap."

Sirens swirling red eieio

(a brother in blue's had enough).

Nabbed on digital memory cards

the evacuees from N'orleans

look back:

"It'll all go bad, it'll all go bad, we're starving, we're dying, it'll all go bad."

Oh, when the Saints,

Oh, when the Saints,

Sing along!

Oh, when the Saints go marching in,

I wanna be

I wanna be

I wanna be



