

Selected Video Essays, 2004-16

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1. Introduction

Just after his arrival at Louisiana State University, to begin a new faculty position in Performance Studies, David Terry reopened with me a conversation that had begun years earlier with Michael LeVan, editor of the online journal *Liminalities*. For two years, Michael, David, and I had participated in a group of scholar-artist-teachers who developed video art—either as free-standing pieces or as video designed to interact with live performers—for presentation at meetings of the Performance Studies Division of the National Communication Association (NCA).

In November 2010, the NCA met in San Francisco. Here we presented original video work that engaged in dialogue with Alfred Hitchcock's 1958 film *Vertigo*—as famous for its San Francisco locations as for its obsessive, twisted “detective story.” When the NCA met in New Orleans a year later, the group arrived with video responses to Elia Kazan's 1951 film *A Streetcar Named Desire*—an iconically “New Orleans” film that nevertheless shows only a handful of brief glimpses of the actual city.

For whatever reasons, the energy driving the group dissipated, although this energy has re-emerged with altered casts of characters (notably at the NCA convention in Las Vegas in 2015, in a panel devoted to parodying and “sweding” Vegas-identified feature films). But Michael, David, and I have continued to exchange ideas about the nature of the video essay. We talk about both the expressive range and the communicative potential unique to the medium (through its various delivery systems) and the unusual perspective that “performance studies” brings to both creating and viewing such work.

My recent communications with David, however, had a second focus. In the late summer of 2019, I will complete my fortieth year of teaching at Northwestern, and celebrate as well the fiftieth anniversary of my first setting foot on Northwestern's campus as a prospective undergraduate transfer student. Prior to the beginning of the 2019-20 academic year, I plan to make the transition to “emeritus” status, with full library privileges. The time had arrived (as David and I agreed) to assemble some kind of collection of my work in the medium of the video essay, which relatively few people have had the opportunity to see.

As I explore in one of the video essays: I developed my earliest video work at the beginning of the 1990s for use as classroom teaching modules. Feeding multiple audio and video players into an old-school “a-roll/b-roll” editor

(expensive and sophisticated at the time, although primitive and clumsy in retrospect) I made videos that often mixed appropriated content (clips and stills from Hollywood movies, for example) with my own voice-overs. By the closing years of the twentieth century, I had made the transition to digital non-linear editing. I cut my teeth on Adobe Premiere, and then moved to successive versions of Apple's Final Cut program. At NCA, I began to present video essays in 2004 with *Word and Tone*.

At David's recommendation, I pulled together the following selection of video essays. This is not everything I have presented in classrooms and other academic settings, by any means, but it constitutes the work that I feel least embarrassed to revisit in the company of both the raised eyebrows of friends and the kindness of strangers.

The Video Essay: Performing Beyond Liveness (2005, 2007, 2010, 2014; 49 minutes)

1. "Hello" (to 2 minutes, 50 seconds)
2. "Performing beyond Liveness" (to 18 minutes, 25 seconds)
3. "Legal," including introductory comments (to 37 minutes, 2 seconds)
4. "Report of the Task Force on Heritage," including introductory comments (to 48 minutes, 3 seconds)
5. "Coda" (to 48 minutes, 56 seconds)

The Winter Barrel (2009, 2010; 17 minutes)

1. "Introducing *The Winter Barrel*" (to 6 minutes, 46 seconds)
2. "Chicago: 1966/1968" (to 16 minutes, 50 seconds)

Word And Tone (2004, 2010; 30 minutes)

1. "Introducing 'Word and Tone'" (to 3 minutes, 11 seconds)
2. "Word and Tone, or, Talking over Opera" (to 29 minutes, 56 seconds)

Up The River: A Video Mystery In Three Parts (2011, 2016; 1 hour, 6 minutes)

1. Part One, "Marlon Brando and Me: A Short History of America in the Late Twentieth Century" (to 23 minutes, 33 seconds)
2. Part Two, "'Apology from Paul Edwards to the National Communication Association,' as Shown in New Orleans in November 2011" (to 36 minutes, 45 seconds)
3. Part Three, "'Up the River: A Counterfactual,' as Not Shown in New Orleans in November 2011." (to 1 hour, 5 minutes, 53 seconds)

Footnote: Julian Beck, Near The End Of His Life, Takes A Role On A Cop Show (2016; 52 minutes)

All of this material was created for presentation in academic settings, and has been viewed almost exclusively by faculty and students at Northwestern University and a few other campuses, as well as by members of the National

Communication Association who attended convention panels at which the work was shown.

In the following annotations (which, years ago, Michael LeVan first urged me to compile) I have attempted to document the principal sources of appropriated content, including content for which I did not pursue permission from copyright holders. In only a few places, however, do I document the sources of still images scanned from print sources or, when necessary, copied from the internet. I do so selectively, when such documentation helps to establish the research context of an idea explored in a video essay.

As I will explore below (in notes to section 5, “Coda,” of *The Video Essay*): I never created this work for personal financial profit, and have never made any financial profit from it. Quite the reverse: the software and hardware required are expensive, and require regular upgrades, repairs, and replacements. Only a percentage of this software and hardware is deductible as a business expense, and little of the specialized gear is supplied or reimbursed by my workplace.

Prior to the current discussions with David Terry and Michael LeVan about how this work might be presented in *Liminalities*, I have used video essays and shorter video modules exclusively in connection with teaching and research, and have not attempted to show this work publically outside an academic setting (such as a classroom or a scholarly conference). Insofar as this work creates original fictional narratives, it is derivative, and does not attempt to reproduce someone else’s work under my own name. Insofar as this work creates video essays, the appropriated content is intended to function as quotation from other people’s work, much as a print essay might quote from a copyrighted novel or play (sometimes extensively, as in the case of an entire book about, let’s say, Joyce’s *Ulysses*).

In my incorporation of appropriated content, I have been guided by the reinterpretation of title 17 of the United States Code that appears in the Digital Millennium Copyright Act of 1998, as well as subsequent clarifications of and revisions to that act—notably the 2010 rulemaking that spelled out the extension of DVD anti-circumvention exemptions to “college and university professors and ... college and university film and media studies students” who must remove content scrambling (CSS) from commercial DVDs when grabbing vidcaps and clips for educational uses. Even in submitting this work to *Liminalities*, an online scholarly journal, I am attempting to stay within the boundaries of fair use.

Whether or not to bother reading this

Hey Professor!
Could you turn out the lights?
Let’s roll the film.

—Laurie Anderson, “Big Science”

That said: I honestly don't know whether the best strategy for approaching this material is to read the notes and documentation first (if at all) or simply to dive in and watch the videos. Consider the case of "Hello," the very short introduction to the first collection of short works, *The Video Essay*. It receives a very elaborate annotation (dozens of pages) which hopefully redeems the work from feeling merely facetious and tossed-off. (On the surface, the joke is funny enough to just enough people, but not automatically self-justifying for inclusion in an "essay" context.) For its creator, at least, the little essay is extremely serious, and in its condensed way approaches the condition of a whole-career review.

Over years of my showing this material to various audiences, some viewers have felt that diving right in is the appropriate attitude to adopt toward productions that are *recognizably* desktop movies—not things aspiring to be seen as "indies" or television documentaries, much less major studio productions. The videos are as technically challenged and limited as many examples of "YouTube poop" that, despite appropriated content, have somehow managed to evade YouTube's scanning censors and the "takedown" notifications of copyright holders. Whole collections or even individual segments (these viewers have insisted) should be encountered with as little preparation or preamble as possible—just as we tend to stumble across (rather than go looking for) intriguing oddities on media sharing platforms.

I'm thinking, for example, of the awe-inspiring, calculated ineptness of the Amanda Sings "Starships" and "Gangnam Style" music videos, or the more informal Amanda covers of "Call Me Maybe" and "ROAR." Perhaps an even better example is the 2005 music video "Jesus Christ: The Musical" in which Miguel Mas plays Jesus, making it through about half of Gloria Gaynor's "I Will Survive," before getting run down by a city bus.

As Linda Hutcheon would observe, early on in *Irony's Edge* (1985) and more forcefully in *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006; rev. 2013): we can look at adaptations either "as autonomous works" (for which you did not have to pass a quiz before walking into the theater or going online) or "as adaptations, . . . as deliberate, announced, and extended revisitations of prior works" (*Theory of Adaptation* xiv). As creators of autonomous works, Colleen Ballinger (now Evans, a.k.a. Miranda) and Miguel Mas are excruciatingly funny, doing send-ups of songs or music videos that we might remember (or maybe just kind of remember) from other contexts—but to which we have not applied a studied concentration. But when viewed as utterances that seek audience responses *different* from those solicited by their source texts—utterances *intended* to be *recognized* as parodies, send-ups, mash-ups, and so forth—their work acquires a significant degree of added depth and resonance, a truly critical edge.

Below I explore Hutcheon's analysis of Kenneth Branagh's 1989 film *Henry V*: a free-standing work that can be viewed and enjoyed by someone who has not

even read Shakespeare's play, much less seen various stagings and film adaptations of it. But as Hutcheon argues in 1985, the film becomes capable of sustaining a truly ironic reading when screened for someone who has seen Laurence Olivier's very different 1944 film. Such a film as Branagh's may then pass "through eyes of the past, eyes which have seen Olivier's film" (*Irony's Edge* 69).

Let's amend "the eyes of the past" to "eyes and ears of the past," and then indulge in a little academic power-trope. The Amanda Sings "Starships" is really, really funny, in an appealingly, egregiously stupid way—especially when some of your students crowd around your office computer and say, "You've *got* to watch this, *you* will *love* this" (which of course I did). But after you take the time to carefully review the Nicki Minaj music video "Starships (Explicit)" of 2012, the Miranda Sings parody becomes something else again—neo-Marxian, post-capitalist, Baudrillardian, an intense critique of pop-culture "charisma" routinized by a money-hungry music industry, a Bakhtinian utterance hovering uneasily somewhere between the one-way stylization of parody and the dialogic scene of carnival laughter, *profoundly* ironic, *subversively* quotational—as well as one of Miranda's best videos and, once over-thought and pedantically over-explained, even funnier and stupider.

Other viewers, however—especially a whole *different* group, students in their late teens and early twenties—watch my videos and feel that a problem of reference interferes with their ability to enjoy what they're processing. For starts, a lot of it is in black and white, and some of it talks about grand opera (owie). At worst they just get bored by grandpa's range of references, and check out. At best they have expressed to me the wish for decoder rings—kind of like the page-long footnotes in Arden editions of Shakespeare (the need for which is fatal, of course, to any possibility of a joke landing). If you find yourself among *these* others—or, perhaps, among a third group, the legal team of copyright holders—my annotations supply the decoder rings, spelled out in sometimes proleptically elaborate detail. ("Don't you *see*? I was quoting *that* because of *this*, this point I'm making here. No, *really*, your Honor, it was a *quotation*. Don't you *guys* have quotations in case law and all that shit? . . . No, *wait* a minute, what do you *mean*, I'm in contempt of court? I teach at a major American university, for God's sake. . . .")

So. I don't know what to say. Keep reading or don't. Watch the video first, or watch parts of it, and read parts of this later, or don't even get around to reading this later. Go do whatever you have to do. I'll close the introduction by extending the invitation of William S. Burroughs at the end of his 1959 "post-Bomb" novel, which is itself a collection of fragments assembled in aleatory fashion: "You can cut into *Naked Lunch* at any intersection point" (187).

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2. The Video Essay: Performing Beyond Liveness (49 minutes)

Commonplace Book

The speed at which roles can change hands [in an academic department] prompted a recent retiree I know to define the status of professor emeritus as “forgotten but not gone.”

—Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (1996)

It would be extremely interesting to write the history of laughter.

—A. I. Herzen, epigraph to chapter one of Mikhail Bakhtin’s *Rabelais and His World* (1965), trans. Hélène Iswolsky (1968)

I’m sorry I couldn’t be here tonight, but I thank you all for coming.

—Don DeLillo, upon showing up to receive the National Book Award for *White Noise* (1985)

Americans have a special horror of giving up control, of letting things happen in their own way without interference. They would like to jump down into their own stomachs and digest the food and shovel the shit out.

Your mind will answer most questions if you learn to relax and wait for the answer. ... I am a recording instrument. ... I do not presume to impose “story” “plot” “continuity.” ...

—William S. Burroughs, *Naked Lunch* (1959)

It was all unreal, yet it seemed to have happened before. Only now the melody seemed charged with some vast new meaning which that part of him that wanted to sing could not fit with the old familiar words. ... He saw the singers still staring, and as though to betray him he heard his own voice singing out like a suddenly amplified radio:

“... Gave proof through the night
That our flag was still there ...”

It was like the voice of another, over whom he had no control. ... A wave of guilt shook him, followed by a burst of relief. For the first time in your whole life, he thought with dreamlike wonder, the words are not ironic.

—Ralph Ellison, “In a Strange Country” (1944)

Discourse lives, as it were, on the boundary between its own context and another, alien, context. ... The word in language is half someone else’s. It becomes “one’s own” only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention.

—M. M. Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel” (1935)

Carnivalization might be seen as an affirmative or joyful manner of playing out undecidable or uncanny relations in the face of anxiety which is never entirely transcended. Yet it involves a life-and-death struggle or “contest” between contending forces. In Flaubert, uncanny effects are often produced by extreme indeterminacy or undecidability of voice. ...

—Dominick LaCapra, “*Madame Bovary*” on Trial (1982)

It’s all so stupid that I have come to enjoy it greatly.

—Gustave Flaubert, ten days before the trial of *Madame Bovary* for public indecency commenced in 1857

Enjoy nature! . . . The popular cry of our time is “Let us return to Life and Nature; they will recreate Art for us.” ... But, alas! ... Nature is always behind the age. ... One touch of Nature may make the whole world kin, but two touches of Nature will destroy any work of art.

—Vivian in Oscar Wilde’s “The Decay of Lying,” expanded version of 1891

One never knows, do one?

—Fats Waller, cover recording of “Your Feet’s Too Big” (November 1939)

I, William Seward, captain of this lushed up hash-head subway, will quell the Lock Ness monster with rotenone [exterminator’s poison] and cowboy the white whale. I will reduce Satan to Automatic Obedience, and sublimate subsidiary fiends. I will banish the candiru from your swimming pools. —I will issue a bull on Immaculate Birth Control. ...

Now I, William Seward, will unlock my word horde.

—William S. Burroughs, *Naked Lunch* (1959)

Section 1, “Hello”: Boasting versus Clowning

It seems odd, I’m sure, that I should unleash so much language—the most massive “word horde” in my accompanying notes—on the second-shortest segment in this collection of video essays. I feel, however, that the introductory “Hello” (at under three minutes) sets the tone—and provides the interpretive decoder ring at the bottom of the cereal box—for much of what is to follow. If all forty-nine minutes of *The Video Essay: Performing beyond Liveness* present a kind of review of four decades of teaching on one university campus, it will be useful to viewers if I said something first about my career.

To put the matter as simply as possible: the history of “performance studies” in the last quarter of the twentieth century, at least as this evolved on college and university campuses in North America, suggests to me two wide-ranging, and sharply contrasted, academic stances or personas. One is the “boaster” and the other is the “clown.” My brief video introduction to *Performing beyond Liveness* seems to require a contextualization of both figures, because this very short video “clowns” a “boast.”

The boast

In 2013, a collection of essays by the late Dwight Conquergood appeared under the title, *Cultural Struggles: Performance, Ethnography, Praxis*. Editor E. Patrick Johnson was wise, no doubt, to sidestep several of Conquergood’s publications and conference papers from the 1980s, which showed him as a young faculty member articulating compromise positions between factions doing battle on local and quasi-national fronts of the culture wars. On one side was the older “interpretation” or “performance of literature” tradition that survived until 1984 as an academic department at Northwestern, and into the early 1990s as an “Interpretation Division” of the NCA. On the other was the steadily growing movement that desired to found “performance studies” as an academic discipline—and to locate cultivatable campus turf on which performance studies departments could be planted.

Conquergood, though a prominent voice, was not alone in arguing that a critical cultural studies, employing embodied performance practice (as both a method and a subject of study), could somehow coexist in the same departmental structure with its ideological funhouse mirror. That bad mirror was the study of “canonical” western literature through the practice of reading aloud: a performance pedagogy descended from the eighteenth-century English

elocutionists by way of the relatively short-lived “expression” movement of American Victorianism.

It goes without saying that these organizational identities could not live together harmoniously, at least for very long. By 1991, the year of the divisional name change in the NCA from Interpretation to Performance Studies, the “art of interpretation” (as my first Northwestern teachers liked to call it) had gone the way of the rotary dial phone and the forty-five rpm record. And today, the specific issues—now that even the phrase “culture wars” has next to no meaning for my undergraduate students—seem almost endearingly quaint. Looking back, it’s impossible not to repeat the wisecrack variously phrased and variously attributed (to everyone from political scientist Wallace Stanley Sayre to former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger): “Academic politics are so vicious precisely because the stakes are so small.” In a telling parallel, the smallness of the stakes reminds me especially of the open warfare, at the end of nineteenth-century oratorical culture, between “suggestive,” “essentially educational” platform readers and “pagan” American Delsartians (see Edwards 54-78)—battles more appropriately situated today in a plush revival of Meredith Willson’s *The Music Man*, in which the “Grecian urns” ladies scandalize River City with their “poses plastiques.” The progression of Conquergood’s thinking over two decades, about the decentering and subsequent fading from view of an older departmental identity, can be traced in four essays anthologized in *Cultural Struggles*: “Performing as a Moral Act” (1985), “Rethinking Ethnography” (1991), “Beyond the Text” (1995/1998), and “Rethinking Elocution” (2000).

The essay I miss in *Cultural Struggles*, however, is the first by Conquergood I ever read, and perhaps the first he ever published. “Boasting in Anglo-Saxon England: Performance and the Heroic Ethos” recasts and tightly focuses some of the research for his 1977 doctoral dissertation, *The Anglo-Saxon Boast: Structure and Function*, completed in Northwestern’s Department of Interpretation under the supervision of then-chairman Wallace A. Bacon.

The “Boasting” essay attempts nothing less than the recuperation of a term now used most often in a mocking or derogatory way. Consider for a moment the stink that instantly attaches itself, when we moderns accuse our colleagues and rivals of boasting. And in considering this, let’s take the long view of modernity—all the way back to the waning of what Barbara Tuchman has called “the calamitous fourteenth century.” For the noun “boast,” OED gives us “proud and vainglorious speech,” in use as early as 1300. For the verb, OED gives us, by 1340, “to speak vaingloriously, to extol oneself; to vaunt, brag.” For “boaster,” we get this menu of options, again already in use between the fourteenth century and the “early modern” age of Shakespeare: “a loud talker”; “one who threatens”; “one who extols his own deeds or excellences, a braggart, vaunter, arrogant person.”

So defined, Shakespeare's Falstaff is a *boaster*. A sometimes high-functioning alcoholic, this parasite is loud, bullying, bragging, and cowardly, often all at once—as are in different ways (although never with such memorable, grotesque rowdiness) Shakespeare's Parolles and Lucio.

But Conquergood advances a starkly contrasted conception: a radical one, in the strict sense that he traces his usage back to the root meanings of “boast” and the heroics of *Beowulf*. Boasting is better understood, first of all, as a “genre of cultural performance” (24) than as a literary tradition. (Encountering this position will come as no surprise to the readers of *Cultural Struggles*.) The “literary critics” are the ones who got it wrong across the centuries, by calling attention to the “excessive pride” expressed by Beowulf's boasting, for example—as if this were merely the flaw in temperament of a fictional character—rather than looking to the community-binding and promissory qualities of an appropriately “heightened form of speaking” (25).

“Few types of utterance are more essentially communal than the boast,” which works rather like the rhetorical enthymeme. The boaster “selects the particular *episodes*” of past heroic action, suddenly worthy of fresh reconsideration. But then “the community supplies the general *plot* of the narrative” in which to gather these episodes. The resulting story-line is typically a narrative of ultimate victory over some foe or obstacle (29):

The “I have done” part of a boast is significant only because of its ability to determine the “I will do” section. Every “I did” carries with it an implicit “I must continue to do.” . . .

Boasts, then, are personal narratives in which the speaker recollects and shapes past experiences into a sequence which inexorably calls for a sequel. Each glorious exploit recounted sets up the expectation of “What next?” and contributes to the momentum of success which pushes toward more death-defying deeds. (28)

What Conquergood identifies as “the future-directedness of boasts” requires a nuanced appreciation “of contexts for utterances” (29). Despite their sometimes nation-shaping ambitions (in heroic literature from *Beowulf* to Shakespeare's histories) boasts *in context* tend to exemplify what Jan Cohen-Cruz has called “local acts.” A community of people sits around waiting for something to happen: an actual change, or at least an “applied theater” rehearsal for change. Then, if the community is lucky, showtime: the community can turn to its boaster (in Boal-speak, often a “spect-actor”). The boaster steps up, and projects through language some possible images for what that change might look and sound like—or better, how the change might *act* when it begins to *perform*. At this point, the collective imagination of the audience can shape such prompts into the arc of a total story, with the sense of an ending (hopefully a happy one). Conquergood invokes J. L. Austin's concept of the “‘performative’ utterance with the illocutionary force of promising”—the kind of utterance that can “do

something”—to illustrate the nature of “the boasting contract.” In response to such a contract, “the audience functions as a witness”—sometimes a legally binding one—to the verbal performance of a promise (30).

Conquergood’s “Boasting” focuses primarily on the boast’s community-binding power. A second essay written out of his dissertation, “Literacy and Oral Performance in Anglo-Saxon England” (1983), widens this focus considerably to examine what happens to the boast out on the battlefield: “In addition to the rallying effect upon in-group participants, the *baritus*,” for example, “was performed to demoralize opponents” (113). Below, I will follow these two essays in distinguishing the boast from a mere brag. A boast acquires efficacy by calling upon the boaster’s demonstrated power to *achieve*. And its audience is bi-directional: as boasters, we might speak to an enemy blocking the way, but also over the shoulder to the army at our back. In that unique way, a boast can be *simultaneously* a careful speech delivered to the face of power *and* (if the army has an ear for irony) the performance of a “hidden transcript.”

Here is something the “Boasting” essay has helped to clarify over the years, for me and some of my students. *Structurally*, boasting is fundamentally the same activity regardless of the ethics of the boaster or (in the long view) the justice of the cause.

For example: as I approach a major life transition—from a health care plan with a generous employer co-payment, to Medicare and the brave new world of a so-called “bridge” policy—I have taken some time to review the passage of the Affordable Care Act, signed into law in March 2010. Along the way I have revisited important speeches by President Barack Obama, from his September 9, 2009, address to both houses of Congress, to his June 25, 2015, remarks from the Rose Garden about the Supreme Court ruling to uphold the Act. Let’s put to one side for a moment what I think about Obama’s abilities as a political tactician: as a coalition-builder and glad-hander, gifted at working both sides of the aisle in the manner of a bred-in-the-bone “politician” (scare quotes intended) like Lyndon Johnson as he put together support for the Civil Rights Act of 1964. (Johnson’s “boast” to both houses of Congress of November 27, 1963, is worth revisiting in this context.) All that aside: I have no doubt whatsoever about Obama’s fundamental decency and integrity, or his sincere belief in the justice of the cause for which he might be best remembered (and which, by the way, I also support).

And Obama’s speeches, of course, are boasts. He has had to face a growing number of increasingly hostile enemies, in a series of battles that will undoubtedly continue beyond his presidency. Thus, in 2009:

[W]e did not come here just to clean up crises. We came here to build a future. (Applause.) So tonight, I return to speak to all of you about an issue that is central to that future—and that is the issue of health care.

I am not the first President to take up this cause, but I am determined to be the last. (Applause.) (Obama, "Transcript")

And in 2015:

[T]oday, after more than 50 votes in Congress to repeal or weaken this law ... the Affordable Care Act is here to stay. ... If the partisan challenge to this law had succeeded ... America would have gone backwards. And that's not what we do. That's not what America does. We move forward. ... So this was a good day for America. Let's get back to work. (Applause.) (Obama, "Remarks")

And I feel the same way about Conquergood. Although I had the bad historical luck to be part of the institutional obstacle he had to remove—in order to achieve his vision of performance studies departments growing across the country, and of performance studies itself taking a place in the history of ideas—I never doubted, during all the years I worked with him, his sincere belief in the humanistic value of what he was trying to get people to do. I didn't always like his tactics, but I never doubted his fundamental integrity. Although what you are reading and watching now is filled with clowning and jokes (a few of which, people have reassured me, are actually funny) I'm not joking about this. Boasters are sometimes as ethically responsible and "answerable" as they would like us to believe.

The "charisma" of Conquergood and his band of boasters—back in the "evangelical fervor" days of the mid-1990s (see Auslander 178-80)—has largely evaporated. And sadly, the scene today is admittedly a lot less entertaining. Since the turf wars have now all been won, that old performance studies "charisma" has entered into what sociologist Max Weber would call its "routinization" phase. (How do we keep it running? Where do we find our students? How do we fund it? How do we staff it, now that all of these oldsters are shuffling off?) Of the many things I will miss about my career, the bureaucratization of the "antidiscipline" is not one of them.

But Conquergood's template of boasting behaviors, sadly, works equally well with a hero of dubious ethics. I will use as my example King Henry V of England: a figure so unstable in the eyes of his many beholders that he has been called everything from "the mirror of all Christian kings" (*H5* 2.cho.6) to a man who "had more than a little in common with Napoleon and even Hitler" (Seward 153).

If we can stretch the "boaster" figure to cover so wide a range of personalities, where do we get with the "clown"? As I will explore below, in discussing writings by Caryl Emerson and Michael André Bernstein, that figure covers an equally wide range. Whether arriving at Bakhtin's popular-festive carnival or Bernstein's bitter one, we are likely to find, out there among all the "natural" fools, an ethically *responsible* if often controversial clown (Stephen

Colbert, Ellen DeGeneres, Whoopi Goldberg—or Colleen Ballinger Evans in her current celebration of family and children). But we are just as likely to run up against an ethically *irresponsible* one (a John Wayne Gacy or a Charles Manson). The two stances or styles of utterance contrasted by these notes are not guarantees of the utterer’s social responsibility, or indications of the utterer’s intentions.

(Un)willingly to school

More funhouse mirrors: Conquergood, a year older than me, arrived at Northwestern’s Interpretation Department in 1978, to fill the faculty line vacated by the retirement of Robert S. Breen (my undergraduate mentor) and to teach and reimagine courses with names like “The Interpretation of Biography and History” and “The Interpretation of Letters and Diaries.” I arrived a year later, to fill the faculty line vacated by the retirement of Bacon (Conquergood’s mentor), a Shakespeare scholar from the University of Michigan. Having taken, as a Northwestern undergraduate, Bacon’s year-long course sequence examining almost all of Shakespeare’s plays, I suddenly found myself *teaching* it—and have shivered under the long shadow of that charge ever since.

But Shakespeare remains my bridge from Old English to our own “modern” English, and from a tribal to an international, globalized sense of life on the planet. (As the Republican and Democratic nominating conventions of 2016 approach, I am especially attuned to Conquergood’s distinction between true boasters and mere braggarts.) The parts of Bacon’s Shakespeare sequence that I retained and refashioned, over three and a half decades, were a course in “Shakespeare Adaptations” (which currently focuses on *King Lear* as a work still in progress) and another in Shakespeare’s two tetralogies of English history plays.

As the faculty members, chaired by Lilla Heston, reshaped ourselves into the hybrid Performance Studies Department that debuted in the fall of 1984, several of us who still taught literature-based performance courses followed Conquergood’s lead, in focusing our attention differently on the literary masterwork. By the end of the 1980s, all of my courses in plays and novels (inherited from Bacon, Heston, and Breen) had decentered the former interest in a work’s “canonical” status, and now examined the work as a production of culture. Situated in its historical moment, but continuing to live on and gather meaning across what M. M. Bakhtin in 1970 would call “*great time*,” the work (or what Roland Barthes in 1971 preferred to call the “Text”) was something that would keep changing, as people used it and played with it and made new things out of it. For these reasons alone, Bakhtin insisted, “literary scholarship should establish closer links with the history of a culture.” But paradoxically, “that ‘great Shakespeare’ whom we know now” means *more*, and means *differently*,

than did the historical human being alive in his own era. “There is no possibility of squeezing our Shakespeare into the Elizabethan epoch” (“Response” 2-4) because the works of “our Shakespeare” bear the traces of innumerable, dangerously supplemental handlings across the centuries.

The 1980s also saw the rise of the new historicism which, in turn, helped to inspire in “literary studies” other new styles of cultural critique.¹ But if Stephen Greenblatt’s “Invisible Bullets” was soon accompanying me into my “Shakespeare’s English Histories” class, so was Conquergood’s “Boasting” essay—which my students seemed to love.

Despite Bakhtin’s warnings about modernizing and distorting works that have grown across *great time*, Shakespeare’s histories regularly became the projection screens for contemporary concerns. In 1944 Laurence Olivier (in what many regard as his most successful Shakespeare film) turned a heavily edited *Henry V* into an allegory of the Battle of Britain. But by America’s Vietnam years, productions of *Henry V* were giving us the “Jingo hero” about whom George Bernard Shaw had complained as early as 1896 (Wilson 102). Then from 1986 to 1989, at various venues around the world, the English Shakespeare Company gave us Michael Pennington’s “vile politician” (*IH4* 1.3.241), a chip off the old Bolingbroke, in a singularly nasty characterization—the kind of native son that only a Margaret Thatcher could love. In the words of director Michael Bogdanov:

The English invade the Continent much like the marauding Celts of old. Imperialism encourages jingoism. So the Falklands. So Agincourt. “Fuck the Frogs.” The banner hung out by the send-off crowd at Southampton in our production of *Henry V* grew out of the desire to bridge nearly six hundred years of this same bigoted xenophobic patriotism. ... The marriage to Katherine, political expediency. “*Il faut que j’apprenne l’Anglais.*” Of course she must, Katherine is his “capital demand.” (Bogdanov and Pennington 48-49)

And yet no production can presume to have the last word on a work that continues to grow and change so remarkably. The year 1989 also gave us Kenneth Branagh’s film of *Henry V*: an interpretation that does not shy away from Henry’s cold-bloodedness (during his exposure of the Southampton plot, or in his sanctioning the “cutting off” of the “offender” Bardolph) performed in public for what we might call an “orature op.” And yet it still manages, somehow, to celebrate his tricksterish energy. The film concludes with a wooing scene that warms up considerably after a chilly start. Branagh as Henry and his Katherine (Emma Thompson, who began a six-year offscreen marriage with Branagh in the year of the film’s release) attempt to woo, under the glowering, senile, Lear-like gaze of Paul Scofield as the King of France. But after a while, Henry and Katherine seem to shrug and say, “Well, we’re stuck in this deal together, so we might as well try to enjoy ourselves.”

No one better appreciates the complexity of Branagh's film, as an expression of its historical and cultural moment, than Linda Hutcheon. Her impressive career as a literary and performance theorist arcs from *A Theory of Parody* (1985) to *A Theory of Adaptation*. Midway on this journey, she pauses to consider Branagh's film, not as a *refutation* of Olivier's film, but as an ironic *adaptation* of it:

Few critics have denied that Branagh appears to intend viewers to see some sort of connection with Olivier's film. ... Branagh's *Henry V* has been called a "detailed reply" ... to Olivier's. And so it is—but ... it seems to be so in a particularly complex and ironic way. ...

It is not that Branagh's film updates Shakespeare's play in the way post-1960 theatrical productions often do. ... It has not put into action Jan Kott's thesis in *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* by setting the play in modern times; nor does it overtly make the drama topical through parallels with political leaders of our own day. ... Yet Branagh's version is also not offered in ignorance of these newer readings. ... Olivier's film offers an inspiring Henry for a war-weary England; Branagh's film presents a war-weary Henry for a very different England—now "an eclipsed world power" ...—that might see itself not only through this new film's vision but also through eyes of the past, eyes which have seen Olivier's film. (*Irony's Edge* 67-69; see 67-88)

What Hutcheon views through the lens of irony (in her specialized usage), Bakhtin views through the lenses of his own key terms, some of which I will explore below. For Hutcheon sees not just irony, but ironic intertextual dialogue, in an old play's passage through many handlings, over *great time*. Interpretation of the play is "unfinalizable," as Bakhtin explored this idea (in the book that began life in 1929 as *Problems in Dostoevsky's Creative Art*). No single performance, no single critical interpretation, no close reading that nevertheless "reaccentuates" the work's language: none of these will ever function as a last word that stops the work's potential to create new meaning, which Bakhtin believed to be a potential "immanent" in the work.²

Here, then, is my first decade and change of teaching at Northwestern. New Bakhtin translations were appearing almost annually, it seemed, and that heady vocabulary, rich and strange, was helping to reanimate mere "appreciation" and "interpretation" into "adaptation studies" in multiple fields (cinema, theater, opera). We were busy making the shift from "work" to "Text"—from a readerly concern with "literature" to a writerly concern with "literacy." As film scholar Thomas Leitch reaccentuates "literacy," in 2007:

We end up teaching our students *books* instead of teaching them *how to do things with books* because our college English curriculum is organized around literature at the expense of the active, writerly engagement, the sense of performance and play, the unquenchable sense of agency even in the presence of canonical works, that we call literacy. (14)

But such a formulation, to somebody already shouldering the wheel circa 1984, seems sadly belated. (Have we really progressed so little since then to need this prompting?) Running alongside all this was the new historicist “alienation” of literary masterworks as grubby historical artifacts, covered with fingerprints. Meanwhile, the performance studies revolution had started, although in movement so barely perceptible at first that it might have been described by the language of plate tectonics; the first major seismic events (not only the Department’s name change, but Heston’s sudden death) arrived in 1984. It took me over a decade to admit to myself that I was living on a fault line, and that the very institutional ground on which I stood—the Department that hired me to do certain things—might start quaking and slide from under my feet at any moment. Meanwhile, I was learning the plays of Shakespeare year by year, in trying to teach them. (My apologies to my first ten years’ worth of students: as the late Leland Roloff liked to say about *his* first decade of teaching, “I wish I could give them all their money back.”)

And commencing all this, it seemed, was my early glimpse of my new colleague’s “critical cultural” imaginary. Like Hitchcock’s “MacGuffin,” Conquergood’s “Boasting” essay is not really about what it says it is about. It is, rather, one of those “equipment for living” texts that Kenneth Burke had been talking about since the late 1930s.

When the First Annual Performance Studies Conference met in 1995, two years before the official founding of Performance Studies international (PSi), performance theorist Philip Auslander cast a cold eye on what he called, in the pages of *TDR*, the “evangelical fervor” of the various presenters. The published version of Conquergood’s address to that conference celebrated performance studies as “a border discipline, an interdiscipline” (*Cultural* 27). A year later, Marvin Carlson (in conversation with Conquergood and Joseph Roach) would suggest this refinement of such language: performance studies aspired to be neither “a new discipline” nor “an interdisciplinary field,” but a true “antidiscipline” (Carlson 189; see 20).

Antidiscipline. Hmm. Back in the day, a lot of people hearing or reading this language for the first time felt a little like Flaubert’s Félicité, getting stuck on the imagery of her young charge’s catechism lesson: “She found it difficult . . . to imagine what the Holy Ghost *looked* like, for it was not just a bird but a fire as well, and sometimes a breath” (Flaubert, “Simple” 30). But in 1998, Judith Hamera helped us out a bit. Hamera (one of the contributors to the “critical responses” section of the Conquergood anthology *Cultural Struggles*) glanced back at the hothouse rhetoric of a few years earlier. She wryly characterized a “prison break” by members of the NCA’s Performance Studies Division toward “anything but literature”: the “(inter-)disciplinary euphoria” of those escapees seemed to arise from the earnest belief, “No one has imagined us!” (Hamera 272-73). The yearning for an antidiscipline, in this view, was less a “global

concept” than a “local act” (having its greatest meaning and impact within communal small worlds like the membership of the NCA or PSi).

Or to cast this in Conquergood’s less jocular language: the PSi conference presenters of 1995 were not evangelizing, daydreaming, muttering while in their cups, bragging, bullying, prophesying, or even describing (since the thing itself did not yet exist to be described). They were *boasting*.

One wonders at first (or at least *this* one did) why the “Boasting” essay of 1981 is so death-haunted, so concerned with “glorious exploits” and “death-defying deeds”—so populated with legendary figures like Beowulf and Hrothgar and Byrhtwold, who either fulfill their boasts or die trying. By the end of the essay, the field of battle is littered with enfleshed images of noble sacrifice, the corpses of those who “utter boasts before charging to their deaths” (33). Hopefully the human cost of attending a scholarly conference will never be so great, but one never knows.

Someone else who wondered about all this was Joseph Roach, who took the time (as I once did) to search for the key to the mystery in Conquergood’s 1977 dissertation, as well as in its pair of spin-off essays. Roach contributes the final critical response to the anthology *Cultural Struggles*. His appreciation of a tragically shortened life and career (cut off by an enemy unresponsive to boasts or, for that matter, to reasonable appeals by symbolic language of any kind) is, as the occasion required, more elegiac than critical in tone. But it comes to rest on the same phrase—“He beot ne aleh” (or “alek”)—that Conquergood foregrounds in the “Boasting” essay. “He did not fail to fulfill his boast” (see Roach 330; Conquergood, “Boasting” 30).

My career at Northwestern, then, virtually began with “Boasting,” and boasting pursued me a long way through the journey. Before I discuss how it ends with clowning, however, let me repay a debt. Conquergood’s dissertation research had led him to a profound, intuitive grasp of the real-life complexities, and even contradictions, within the consciousness of the subject in culture who engages regularly in boasting. And his reading of Bakhtin’s *Rabelais and His World* attuned him to the same complexities in the person who regularly engages in clowning. What follows here is a short version of how the essay “Boasting” has helped me bring Shakespeare’s four-centuries-old histories into the present-day public sphere for my students, and how (God willing) it will help me once more over the next three short years.

Shakespeare’s *Henriad* as early-modern boasting

Midway through “Boasting,” Conquergood draws breath, to thank his mentor Wallace Bacon for suggesting the following passage from *Troilus and Cressida*. It is part of a longer speech that is Shakespeare’s version of the show-biz cliché, “You’re only as good as your last hit.” The commanders of the Greek army

camped outside the walls of Troy are desperate to goad a reluctant Achilles (their star defensive tackle) back out onto the gridiron. Ulysses proposes to the war cabinet the following trick: when you next see Achilles standing idly outside his tent, “pass strangely by, / As if he were forgot” (3.3.39-40). And the trick works. When a shocked, deeply offended Achilles laments, “What, are my deeds forgot?” Ulysses is quick to remind him that “good deeds past” are “forgot as soon / As done”:

Perseverance, dear my lord,
Keeps honor bright; to have done is to hang
Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail
In monumental mock'ry. (3.3.144-53; see “Boasting” 29, 35)

Advice to careerists everywhere, young and not so young. The way to hold back the injurious effects of “envious and calumniating Time” (3.3.174) is simply to keep *doing—win* that next Grammy or that next Tony or Pulitzer or that next Superbowl, *publish* that next juried journal essay or, better, academic press book or, better still, *New York Times* bestseller. And one way to keep *doing* is to keep uttering those illocutionary performatives, *especially* when others (any old others) are standing within earshot. As your agent should have told you by this point, there is no such thing as bad publicity. Don't sit on your hands waiting for the next battle to engage: get out there and *boast*. You might actually win friends and influence people.

I have had many opportunities over the years (and expect, as I say, to have one more) to teach the so-called *Henriad*, Shakespeare's version of the painful divergence of the life-stories of Prince Hal and Falstaff. So: in walks my undergraduate class, having just read the *Henriad*. Nominate the major characters, and then ask for show of hands: who is the “boaster” in these plays? Unanimous answer: that villainous abominable misleader of youth, Falstaff. First runner-up: “Ancient” Pistol, sent onstage with a whole wrecking crew in *Henry V* to fill the gap in nature made by Falstaff's abrupt departure.

But Conquergood, in the assigned reading for the next class session, invites us to answer this differently. Falstaff might be the drunken braggart, egregious liar, and bullying coward—but the *boaster* is Prince Hal, soon to be Henry V of England and (on the thinnest of quasi-legal pretexts) the imperialist conqueror of France.

When his father all but accuses Hal of treason, for his wasted days and wasted nights in Eastcheap, Hal replies with a boast about his long-anticipated title bout with the “gallant Hotspur”:

For every honor sitting on his helm,
Would they were multitudes, and on my head
My shames redoubled! For the time will come,
That I shall make this northern youth exchange

His glorious deeds for my indignities.
 Percy is but my factor, good my lord,
 To engross up glorious deeds on my behalf;
 And I will call him to so strict account
 That he shall render every glory up,
 Yea, even the slightest worship of his time,
 Or I will tear the reckoning from his heart. ...
 And I will die a hundred thousand deaths
 Ere break the smallest parcel of this vow. (*IH4* 3.2.140-59)

And this is not the empty brag that it might sound like at first. Not only conventional wisdom on these plays (of the E. M. W. Tillyard and Lily Bess Campbell vintage) but new historicist re-readings, notably Stephen Greenblatt's "Invisible Bullets," stress the streetwise "education" of the Prince. In Hal's case, this extends beyond dirty tricks and pre-internet "lurking," all the way to outright criminal activity. But this rough-and-tumble "school" is ultimately efficacious in getting the young man dressed for success in international statecraft. Everything in Hal's short life has been preparing him for this moment, face to face with his itchy, Nixonian, half-threatening, half-pleading father. Boasting as equipment for living: "The idealized Beowulf," Conquergood reminds us, "faces every important choice in his life with a boast" (26).

When Hal comes face to face with his northern rival, he begins the fight-to-the-death with another boast: "and think not, Percy, / To share with me in glory any more" (*IH4* 4.4.63-64). Skip forward to France, outside the walls of Harfleur—a bustling seaside port that had the bad luck, not unlike late-twentieth-century Haiphong, to be in the path of a well-armed imperialist invader:

Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more;
 Or close the wall up with our English dead.
 ... On, on, you noble English,
 Whose blood is fet from fathers of war-proof! ...
 Dishonor not your mothers; now attest
 That those whom you call'd fathers did beget you.
 ... And you, good yeomen,
 Whose limbs were made in England, show us here
 The mettle of your pasture; let us swear
 That you were worth your breeding, which I doubt not;
 For there is none of you so mean and base
 That hath not noble lustre in your eyes.
 I see you stand like greyhounds in the slips,
 Straining upon the start. The game's afoot! (*H5* 3.1.1-32)

The context for this utterance: maybe as many as nine or ten thousand English and Welsh grunts, in various layers of body armor (depending on their rank and means), are hunkering down in the sand and mud and blood, watching their

comrades-in-arms get cut down by an inferior but well-entrenched force. In Henry's boast, the bad tease of promising "classless," "democratic" comradeship-in-death hangs before these grunts like the carrot at the end of the spin stick. (Maybe—just maybe—under the surface differences of skin, clothing, signifiers of speech and conduct, dissimilarity of life stories—maybe we *are* all alike, and equally worthy to be tossed together into the same pit—mortal men, mortal men.) The local community's imaginary identification with a rhetorically suasive media spokesmodel—the by-God King of England, no less, and a natural-born killer to boot—inspires them to "imitate the action of the tiger" (*H5* 3.1.6) and become sub-human killers themselves.

A mere two scenes later, the young King stands before the Governor of Harfleur, with an army of sleepless, het-up, pissed-off "animals" at his back, and delivers yet another boast:

... therefore, you men of Harflew,
 Take pity of your town and of your people,
 Whiles yet my soldiers are in my command,
 Whiles yet the cool and temperate wind of grace
 O'erblows the filthy and contagious clouds
 Of heady murder, spoil, and villainy.
 If not—why, in a moment look to see
 The blind and bloody soldier with foul hand
 Defile the locks of your shrill-shrieking daughters,
 Your fathers taken by the silver beards,
 And their most reverend heads dash'd to the walls;
 Your naked infants spitted upon pikes,
 Whiles the mad mothers with their howls confus'd
 Do break the clouds. ...
 What say you? Will you yield, and this avoid?
 Or guilty in defense, be thus destroy'd? (*H5* 3.3.27-43)

The art of the deal: whether feeling "guilty" or not in the eyes of heaven for protecting their homes and families, the defenders yield to the boaster, in part because of his impressive reputation for spitting upon a pike a celebrity victim's head.

Intermission

Let's all go to the lobby. As we chat over a tasteful cocktail, dare we wonder what Shakespeare's audience would have known, or not known, about Prince Hal's blotter charges for international war crimes and genocide? The "real" past of Henry includes some grim sieges, from Harlech to the horrorshow in the "fosse" around Rouen. But this "real" was nearly two centuries in the past for Shakespeare's audiences—even farther from their living memory than, say,

Grant and Sherman's invasion of the south is from the living memory of my students in 2016.

According to Shakespeare's "heroic" version, Hal has precisely *one* witnessed victim—the megastar Hotspur, at the battle of Shrewsbury—prior to setting foot, with an invasion force, onto a future vacation beach at the mouth of the Seine. Did that first audience in 1599 (we presume) bring to the theater any collective memories of Hal's *chevauchée* activity, up and down the Afon Dyfrdwy? The burning of Sycharth? The siege warfare against an indigenous population? Shakespeare did not give us a play about the fiery, bloody, muddy, and tactically bungled invasion of Owain Glyndŵr's green valley, and the plays he *did* write refer to this only in passing.

But how—please, please help me out with this one—does any of this explain why several thousand Welsh archers would be willing to follow their former persecutor and current colonial overlord, and stand at his back on a beach in Normandy? A large part of Shakespeare's answer, throughout *Henry V*, is this: Henry liked to boast to his subjects that *he too*, by virtue of being born at his father's castle in Monmouth, was *Welsh*. And even though birthers might have a field day with that one, I don't think Shakespeare's character was consciously or deliberately lying—despite the fact that actors in recent decades have played him that way. Like many successful politicians, Henry appears to have believed his own spin, and even self-fashioned within it.

But doesn't that "Welsh" boast sound an awful lot like the Donald Trump tweet that went viral last Monday? "Happy #CincoDeMayo! The best taco bowls are made in Trump Tower Grill. I love Hispanics!" Well. Ha.

They've started to blink the house lights. Let me just observe, as we head back in, that the preceding four paragraphs, however unpleasant the content, are *not* a boast. As I will explore below, all this is the *opposite* of a boast: it is an act of clowning.

Boasting versus clowning, round one

At the end of his first scene onstage, the young King Henry delivers an impressive boast, almost forty lines in length, to the ambassadors of the French Dauphin: "But tell the Dolphin I will keep my state, / Be like a king, and show my sail of greatness / When I do rouse me in my throne of France" (*H5* 1.2.273-75; see 259-97). Before Agincourt, Henry—the hero of Shrewsbury and Harfleur—whips up the homicidal spirit of his outnumbered and dysentery-enfeebled troops with perhaps the greatest boast in English drama:

If we are mark'd to die, we are enow
To do our country loss; and if to live,
The fewer men, the greater share of honor.
God's will, I pray thee wish not one man more.

By Jove, I am not covetous for gold. ...
 But if it be a sin to covet honor,
 I am the most offending soul alive. ...
 This day is called the feast of Crispian:
 He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,
 Will stand a tip-toe when the day is named,
 And rouse him at the name of Crispian. ...
 And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,
 From this day to the ending of the world,
 But we in it shall be remembered —
 We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
 For he to-day that sheds his blood with me
 Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,
 This day shall gentle his condition. ... (H5 4.3.20-63)

Rare words, brave world.

Henry genuinely does not know (as he confesses to God—or should I say “God” in scare quotes, just another imaginary audience?) whether his rag-tag army can actually pull off this one. So he constructs a future-directed boast with two sequels. (It’s a little like those “director’s cut” DVDs that include the *other* ending that was shot, thrown in as an extra.) Only one of these endings, miraculous victory, is desired: “But this,” like so much else, “lies all within the will of God, / To whom I do appeal” (H5 1.2.289-90). But within the context of the boast, the *other* sequel is still acceptable. Like old Byrhtwold and *his* band of brothers—lamenting their fallen leader and arming to fling themselves at Viking invaders—Henry’s troops brace themselves for utter destruction. (In this case, of course, the boaster himself would be captured and probably ransomed—a chivalric custom that Henry, at a crucial turn in the battle, cold-bloodedly disregards.)

But Henry, remember, does not just *murder* his enemies; a little like Josef Mengele, he *studies* them. When the recipe calls for a little extract of Hotspur—“Doomsday is near, die all, die merrily” (IH4 4.1.134)—Henry is ready to *perform* this, to a very appreciative audience.

The boast, as Conquergood suggests, might prepare its listeners for response to an “immediately imminent” threat, like the French forces at Harfleur or Agincourt. But just as often, the “time of crisis” might be lurking “in the distant future” (29) and the boaster-hero might be staking out the long, patient struggle that lies ahead before the achievement of a commonly desired outcome.

However, class—class—I know it’s ten before the hour, but listen up, please. (Bueller? Bueller?) This much, at least, should be clear after today’s enlivening discussion.

Prince Hal is the *boaster*. David Scott Kastan suggests that Burbage might have played him, before moving on to heavyweights like Hamlet, Othello, and Lear (see Kastan 78).

Falstaff is the *clown*. David Wiles argues persuasively that Falstaff very likely would have been played by Will Kemp (see Wiles 116-35).

Conquergood acknowledges this distinction between boasting and clowning, with a near-quotation of one of Falstaff's best-known self-justifications for cowardice: "no boaster is at liberty to select and arrange details from his life in such a way as to imply that 'discretion is the better part of valor,' or that he should be released from further responsibility to expose himself to risks" (29; see *IH4* 5.4.119-21). Boasting, the language of heroes, entails the riskiest of risky business, and it is *serious* business. Clowning, by contrast, is thoughtful, watchful, hesitant, capable of "loophole" discourse, and full of self-doubt. Clowns goof around by the copier all morning, go to class, spend the rest of the afternoon in a library carrel, and then head across campus to the Starbucks (for a venti soy chai latte) or the cocktail lounge (for a double granny smith apple and cranberry infusion Tito's rocks, water back), or home to their needle or cannabis stash. (Boasters, by contrast, spend their nine-to-five mostly in the charged environment of committee meetings and office conferences, back-to-back facetime encounters, and then perhaps follow the rest of the day plan.) Clowns typically have exercised their student deferments, and have looked for loopholes in their own official life-narratives whenever the draft law has changed.

But since boasting is also *dialogic* business (in theatrical practice, we make a mistake by calling these speeches "monologues") it can tolerate a certain measure of clowning, which is an even more intensely dialogic activity. Recall how *Henry V* concludes: not with stage combat, but with a wooing scene. And although people are reluctant to play it this way anymore, the wooing scene has the potential to be very funny. Henry—who, in addition to his stand-up, also does impressions—launches once again into his deadpan impression of Hotspur. Two plays back, in the Welsh council scene, Hotspur professes his dislike of "mincing poetry": "I would rather hear a brazen canstick turn'd, / Or a dry wheel grate on the axle-tree" (*IH4* 3.1.129-30). And later on, Henry decides that *one way* to win the heart of Katherine of France is to do his Hotspur for her:

I know no ways to mince it in love, but directly to say "I love you"; then if you urge me farther than to say "Do you in faith?" I wear out my suit. Give me your answer, i' faith, do, and so clap hands and a bargain. ... If I could win a lady at leap-frog, or by [vaulting] into my saddle with my armor on my back, under the correction of bragging be it spoken, I should quickly leap into a wife. ... But, before God, Kate, I cannot look greenly, nor gasp out my eloquence, nor I have no cunning in protestation; only downright oaths. ... (*H5* 5.2.126-44)

This clowning, however, is not merely the prelude to a *kiss*: it is the prelude to a *boast*, witnessed by two Frenchwomen who understand more English than they let on:

No, it is not possible you should love the enemy of France, Kate; but in loving me, you should love the friend of France; for I love France so well that I will not part with a village of it; I will have it all mine. ... If ever thou beest mine, Kate, ... I get thee with scrambling, and thou must therefore needs prove a good soldier-breeder. Shall not thou and I, between Saint Denis and Saint George, compound a boy, half French, half English, that shall go to Constantinople and take the Turk by the beard? Shall we not? (*H5* 5.2.171-75, 203-10)

Merciful heavens, this man can't stop boasting even when he's making love. If ultimately he fails to make good on this boast, down to the smallest parcel, we must cut him some slack. Less than a year after he and Katherine produce the "boy"—the future Henry VI—Henry V succumbs to an enemy that "may well have been a chronic intestinal condition" (Allmand 173). Even director Bogdanov, who finds almost nothing amusing or lovable about Henry, sees a grim humor at work here:

France is plundered first, then Kate. ... "What! a speaker is but a prater. ..." *What?* He *never stops* talking—The Breach, St Crispin's Day, the joyous horn-interlocking word play with Falstaff. You cannot be *serious*. How can you believe this man? What a dirty rat. Michael [Pennington] and I went for it. (Bogdanov and Pennington 49; emphasis mine)

In the process Bogdanov and actor Pennington created what must be the unfunniest wooing scene in the stage history of *Henry V*. But the key to *our* believing this man is that *he believes himself*, from moment to moment—even, if necessary, in the process of saying contradictory things. Conquergood's "Boasting" has helped my students understand this—especially in combination with Bakhtinian dialogics.

Metalinguistics

The appreciation in *Cultural Struggles* by Della Pollock begins by acknowledging Conquergood's longstanding debt to the social anthropologist Mary Douglas:

Dwight gained some renown for being out of place. To turn one of his preferred phrases: he *mattered* out of place. (324)

What, then, was Conquergood's "place" in the first place? Which is another way of asking: what on earth was he doing in an "interpretation" department in the mid-1970s?

Conquergood completed a master's thesis at the University of Utah entitled, "William Faulkner's *Light in August* as a Rhetorical Act" (1974), which downplays a well-known book's status as "literary masterwork," and resituates the work in the arena of social communication. At Northwestern a year later, he began to negotiate with his new faculty mentor, Bacon, concerning how a

cultural studies topic might be acceptable for a dissertation in a department of reading out loud. (On the strength of mere undocumented anecdote, I have both Bacon's and Conquergood's versions of this.) How might the analysis of an unquestioned "literary" treasure—the anonymous manuscript *Beowulf*, written in an English that few can read anymore—exemplify that text's very *resistance* to purely literary interpretation? To employ Douglas's grounding distinction in *Purity and Danger* (1966): Conquergood appeared to *matter* when introducing a little dirt or pollution into the seeming "purity" of an unlikely setting for himself, such as an "antiseptic" environment like an academic ivory tower.³

Conquergood's growing interest in Bakhtinian "metalinguistics," which I witnessed first-hand throughout the 1980s, extends and complicates his early attraction to Douglas's opposition of purity and contamination. A key concept here is decentering, and Bakhtin's image for this is a rapidly spinning centrifuge.

Centripetal energy seeks to unify: strong gravitational pull brings us toward the center and tends to restrict the free play of our movement. Centripetal energy is *official* energy, the voice of authority, the restriction of options. Its aesthetic is a *poetics*, and its library is a restricted canon with very exclusive membership polices.

But the centrifuge flings matter *outward*, scatters it, and in the process disrupts order (especially imposed order). Centrifugal forces, as Bakhtin scholars Morson and Emerson observe, "are generally speaking messy and disorganized" (30). Douglas's "purity" inhabits centripetal spaces—whereas, when the centrifuge starts turning, the "dust" (Dickens's hilarious euphemism in *Our Mutual Friend* for the London's rat-infested heaps of trash, abandoned junk, and excrement) is flying around all over the place, blowing not just outward but every which way (see also Morson and Emerson 139-40).

Centrifugal energy's aesthetic, by contrast to poetics, is *prosaics*. Bakhtin's centrifuge blasts artistic language back out to its origins in cultural communication, where every utterance (from a grunt to forty-line Shakespearean boast) requires the context of an utterer and an audience. People in public, engaged in the act of making utterances, are thereby engaged in dialogue:

The word is born in a dialogue as a living rejoinder within it; the word is shaped in dialogic interaction with an alien word that is already in the object. A word ... encounters an alien word not only in the object itself: every word is directed toward an *answer* and cannot escape the profound influence of the answering word that it anticipates.

The word in living conversation is directly, blatantly, oriented toward a future answer-word: it provokes an answer, anticipates it and structures itself in the answer's direction. Forming itself in an atmosphere of the already spoken, the word is at the same time determined by that which has not yet been said but which is needed and in fact anticipated by the answering word. Such is the situation in any living dialogue. (Bakhtin, "Discourse" 279-80)

Good boasters all, we form our utterances out of “the already spoken,” and speak in the direction of a possible “future answer-word.” Since Conquergood could not have read this passage until four years after the completion of his dissertation, the originality of his conception of “the boast” seems all the more remarkable.

As in life, such is the situation in the novel. The polyphonic novel is the “artistic image” of social language, and is thereby irreducibly “double-voiced” and “hybridized”:

What is a hybridization? It is a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor. ...

What is more, an intentional and conscious hybrid [in a novelistic image of a language] is not a mixture of two *impersonal* language consciousnesses ... but rather a mixture of two *individualized* language consciousnesses ... and two individual language-intentions as well. ... (Bakhtin, “Discourse” 358-59)

Two ideolects, two human intentions, meeting to do battle within a single utterance: here we are, back on the battlefield of everyday life.

True dialogue in a novel, Bakhtin argued, is not like dialogue in a play. (As is evident from the preceding discussion of the *Henriade*, I have some trouble with this idea—since, for example, the performance arena of actor-audience interaction is “dialogic” and “open” in ways that have nothing to do with the play script’s “dialogue.”) Try not to think of dialogue as Tesman speaking in his distinctive way, and Hedda responding in hers. “Bakhtin’s point ... is often misunderstood,” write Morson and Emerson, “so it is worth stressing: the dialogues that constitute novelness are to be found *not* primarily in the ‘compositionally expressed dialogues’ among the characters, but in the hybridized, double-voiced, dialogized heteroglossia of the author’s own voice” (326).

Neologism and jargon like this often put people off Bakhtin, back in the day, and no doubt still do—although fewer people appear to be reading Bakhtin anymore. The only word that should hang us up here is “heteroglossia” (“different-language-ness” or “different-speech-ness”): an English translation of Bakhtin’s umbrella term “for linguistic centrifugal forces and their products” that, “over time, always threaten the wholeness of any language” (Morson and Emerson 30).

But what I find particularly useful here: true dialogue in a novel is likelier to take place between an author (in the guise of an omniscient narrator) and a character, than between two characters engaged in conversation. Here, for example, is a paragraph from Lydia Davis’s impressive translation of Flaubert’s

Madame Bovary—and while Bakhtin had precious little to say about Flaubert’s narrative art, this passage will illustrate some key aspects of novelistic dialogue.

In part 2, chapter 12, Emma has been abasing herself before her callous lover Rodolphe, and begging him not to leave her for someone else. “Oh! It’s just that I love you!’ she would go on. ...” And while there follows a paragraph of direct-discourse quotation, we recognize from the manipulation of verb tenses, in the surrounding narrative context, that this is the kind of thing Emma would say to Rodolphe again and again—“imperfectly,” as it were. Then the narrator takes over:

He had heard these things said to him so often that for him there was nothing original about them. Emma was like all other mistresses; and the charm of novelty, slipping off gradually like a piece of clothing, revealed in its nakedness the eternal monotony of passion, which always assumes the same forms and uses the same language. He could not perceive—this man of such broad experience [*cet homme si plein de pratique*]¹—the difference in feelings that might underlie similarities of expression. Because licentious or venal lips had murmured the same words to him, he had little faith in their truthfulness; one had to discount [*on en devait rabattre*], he thought, exaggerated speeches that concealed mediocre affections; as if the fullness of the soul did not sometimes overflow in the emptiest of metaphors, since none of us can ever express the exact measure of our needs, or our ideas, or our sorrows, and human speech is like a cracked kettle on which we beat out tunes for bears to dance to, when we long to move the stars to pity [*quand on voudrait attendre les étoiles*].

But with the critical superiority possessed by anyone who remains aloof, whatever the relationship, Rodolphe saw other pleasures this love affair might offer. ... (Davis 167; Flaubert, *Madame* 254)

This much-discussed passage might be approached in a number of ways. One can ponder, for example, the translator’s options at certain turns (what is the *mot juste* in English for *pratique*? *rabattre*? *attendrir*?). But these are concerns of a *poetics*. Let’s go *prosaic* on this passage.

What makes Davis’s translation so admirable here is how closely (with the chief addition of merely two dashes) it tracks Flaubert’s punctuation. Many translations of the sentence beginning, “Because licentious or venal lips,” interrupt the forward motion with full stops—whereas Flaubert uses a couple of semicolons and lots of commas, to allow the run-on feeling of a slide from one ideolect and set of intentions into another, back and forth, with only the slightest of signals. At issue is not merely how the “point of view” shifts—from a narrated representation of Rodolphe’s thoughts, to commentary that seems to belong to the narrator alone, and then (with the new paragraph) back into Rodolphe’s consciousness—but how two different *voices* slide into and out of each other.

Dominick LaCapra’s Bakhtin-inflected reading of this passage pays special attention to what we might call the *politics* of “free indirect style” (or what Dorrit Cohn prefers to call “narrated monologue”). The long first paragraph begins

with good old-fashioned “objective report” on a character’s thoughts: “Rodolphe is not impressed” with Emma’s expressive style, and the prose at first “is not impressive”:

But with the second sentence ... , the narrator in “free indirect” manner begins to fade back in, and it is unclear who is putting forth these general reflections about “the charms of novelty, falling away like a garment” to lay bare “the eternal monotony of passion. ...” (158)

After this, the narrator appears to see Rodolphe more and more “from the outside,” with an increase in ironic distance.

But then begins that remarkable run-on sentence, ninety-eight words in Flaubert’s original:

[T]he difficulties in the passage intensify. ... Has not the narrator himself seen and induced the reader to see Emma largely or at least partly as Rodolphe here sees her? ... Does she have a full soul which words cannot adequately express or an empty soul that fills itself with self-deceptive romantic clichés? And where can one situate the narrator in these respects? ...

Then, at “as if the fullness,” the sentence

offers an extended analogy or “as if” construction. ... The distinction among real, imaginary, and linguistic orders begins to waver. The reference to the “abundance of one’s soul” [“fullness of the soul”] seems difficult to classify or to localize in terms of a referent. Who in the novel is the vehicle of this abundance? ...

The lapidary, epigrammatic quality of [the concluding section], with its poignant contrast between Romantic agony and behavioristic bathos, seems to emblemize the entire problem of language and its use. ... For in this rare direct statement about the nature of language, we could be reading from the letters at one of their most intense moments when author, narrator, and writer are in intimate dialogue with one another. (LaCapra 157-61)

By “writer,” LaCapra here means something akin to what Wayne Booth calls an “implied author.” This figure is “a threshold phenomenon” and “imaginary persona” neither entirely outside nor entirely inside the work, but “mediating and supplementing author and narrator”: it is the reader’s image of a “social individual” who *might* have written such a book, but who (unlike the historical author) does not have to answer for it in court (LaCapra 63). As writers who are simultaneously subjects in culture, LaCapra suggests, we unhappy language-users are all similarly triangulated.

Such passages like the one LaCapra discusses are what Cohn calls “virtuoso performances on the keyboard of consciousness” (Cohn 138). But what might make such virtuosity *political*?

For one thing, LaCapra is concerned not merely with where our attention is directed, but who is doing the directing. He shares this concern with film director Wim Wenders, who has suggested:

The most political decision you make is where you direct people's eyes. In other words, what you show people, day in and day out, is political. ...

The implication of the statement is this. *Showing* someone (a political prisoner, perhaps, but also a plain old media consumer)—and showing that person, day after day, for example, “that there can be no change”—is “the most politically indoctrinating thing you can do to a human being” (qtd. in Strauss 101). An analysis of narrative strategies in *Madame Bovary*—which sounds at first like a purely aesthetic exercise, a term paper for a “comparative literature” course—might initiate a *political* analysis of the book.

Analyzing an earlier passage in *Madame Bovary*, a “narrated monologue” of Charles’s thoughts as he first studies Emma, LaCapra makes this startling suggestion:

The narrator might almost be said to contest the possession of Emma with Charles as well as with Emma’s other men. He struggles with them for the right to describe her, to dress and undress her with words. ... In a sense the narrator becomes one of Emma’s men, fascinated by her ... just as she becomes his creation. And it is an open question whether he can control her—whether his “voice” or “point of view” is more dynamic and powerful than hers. (LaCapra 156)

Readers of Bakhtin will recognize that both characters and narrators in novels—like speakers at large in so-called real life—occupy what Bakhtin calls “zones” of discourse.⁴ To adapt a phrase from Borscht Belt comedian Myron Cohen (who passed away in the year that the translation of Bakhtin’s *Speech Genres* anthology appeared): everybody’s got to be speaking someplace. Or as Michael Holquist puts the matter, in his notes to *The Dialogic Imagination*:

A character’s zone need not begin with his directly quoted speech but can begin far back in the text; the author can prepare the way for an autonomous voice by manipulating words ostensibly belonging to “neutral” authorial speech. ...

In Bakhtin’s view there are no zones belonging to no one, no “no-man’s land.” There are disputed zones, but never empty ones. A zone is the locus for hearing a voice; it is brought about *by* the voice. (*Dialogic* 434)

These “zones” overlap and even do battle, in the contested space of dialogue. The speech of characters need not be “passively” stylized by narrators. In “active” double-voiced discourse, the character’s voice can push back.

In the Dostoevsky book, Bakhtin discusses a variety of novelistic dialogue “that might be called *active*, in contrast to the preceding *passive* varieties”:

[I]n stylization, in the narrated story and in parody, the other person's discourse is a completely passive tool in the hands of the author wielding it. He takes, so to speak, someone else's meek and defenseless discourse and installs his own interpretation in it, forcing it to serve his own new purposes.

In *active* double-voiced discourse, however, "the other's words actively influence the author's speech, forcing it to alter itself accordingly under their influence and initiative":

In such discourse, the author's thought no longer oppressively dominates the other's thought; discourse loses its composure and confidence, becomes agitated, internally undecided, and two-faced.

Such "active" language within the same utterance "is not only double-voiced," expressive of the presence of two ideolects, "but also double-accented," expressive of two competing *intentions*. Such an utterance "is difficult to speak ... aloud" by a solo actor or platform reader, for example, because "loud and living intonation excessively monologizes discourse and cannot do justice to the other person's voice present in it" (*Problems* 197-98). The solo performer's unifying voice, reading aloud, will threaten to turn dialogue into monologue.

The solution? Put the narrator onstage in a voice and body, and let that onstage "character" engage in dialogues with the persons in the story, present onstage in other actor bodies. In the late 1940s, this was the brainchild of my mentor Breen, whom Conquergood would replace on Northwestern's faculty. As I have argued elsewhere, Breen's unwittingly Lacanian "invention," chamber theater, was the most psychological of theaters.⁵ Bakhtin obliquely suggests that it was also, at least in high modernist terms, the most political of theaters.

Boasting versus clowning, round two

But we need to trace Bakhtinian thought as it travels one fling further away from the center that holds. LaCapra's 1982 book *Madame Bovary on Trial* examines the scandal of a novel that "breaks contact with conventional expectations" to the point that it went on trial in 1857, during the reign of Napoleon III, as an "ideological crime"—an outrage to public morals and manners (LaCapra 8; see 7-52).

Rather than endorsing the widespread notion that Flaubert's novel was (and remains) an exercise in "pure art," LaCapra explores the idea that it was a sustained "critique of bourgeois culture," and was intended to be received as such: "The bourgeoisie was not a class" for Flaubert. "It was a condition—the condition of those who thought basely and stupidly" (67). One of the excellences of Davis's translation is that it preserves from Flaubert's text the typographical emphases of conversational *bêtises*, particularly tiresome instances of stupid clichés that have emptied themselves out through repetition:

[T]he doctor was invited by Monsieur Rouault himself to *have a bite* [à *prendre un morceau*] before leaving. (Davis 14; see Flaubert, *Madame* 37)

...
 But *the blow had struck home* [Mais *le coup était porté*]. A week later, as she was hanging the wash in her yard, she began spitting blood. ... (Davis 17; see Flaubert, *Madame* 42)

...
 [A]nd yet the elder Madame Bovary seemed prejudiced against her daughter-in-law. She felt that her *style was too lofty for their station in life* [Elle lui trouvait *un genre trop relevé pour leur position de fortune*]: wood, sugar, and candles vanished *as fast as in a grand house* [le bois, le sucre et la chandelle *filaiert comme dans une grand maison*], and the amount of charcoal consumed in the kitchen was enough to do the cooking for twenty-five! (Davis 36-37; see Flaubert, *Madame* 72)

...
 People were surprised at his [Charles's] despondency. He no longer went out, received no one, refused even to call on his patients. They claimed he *was shutting himself up to drink* [Alors on prétendit qu'il *s'enfermait pour boire*]. (Davis 309; see Flaubert, *Madame* 444)

These empty phrases might or might not be expressive of genuine feeling (cheerfulness, anger, outrage) on the part of this or that speaker. But we need to remember that they are not the voice of “someone else”: most often they are the voice of “anyone else,” the voice of social speech and town gossip, with the “Foley” soundtrack of clucking tongues running in the background. Even when Charles’s mother engages in such speech, one gets the impression that she complains to the neighbors in the same words, repeatedly, before she works up the nerve to voice these *bêtises* to the face of Emma herself.

LaCapra puts at the back of his argument Bakhtin’s *Rabelais and His World*. Here I will draw upon Morson and Emerson’s succinct characterization of this book as “the apotheosis of unfinalizability,” the furthest toss of pure linguistic art back in the direction of carnival laughter:

In the 1929 Dostoevsky book, the ratio of unfinalizability to finalization shifts in favor of the former. ... So long as a person is alive, Bakhtin writes, he retains the power to make conditional all external definitions of himself. ...

In *Rabelais*, Bakhtin goes still further and presents unfinalizability as the only supreme value. ... [T]he value of finalization has been reduced to zero. Everything completed, fixed, or defined is declared to be dogmatic and repressive; only the destruction of all extant or conceivable norms has value. ... (Morson and Emerson 91-92)

They quote Bakhtin as saying:

In fact, carnival does not know footlights, in the sense that it does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators. Footlights would

destroy a carnival, as the absence of footlights would destroy a theatrical performance. (*Rabelais* 7; qtd. in Morson and Emerson 92)

And later they continue:

The primary reflex of the carnival body, when it is not defecating or ingesting, is to laugh. Carnival laughter is neither negative nor unidirectional and does not pass authoritative judgments: valuing the unfinished in everything, it is always ambivalent. ...

According to Bakhtin, Rabelais's contemporaries understood the philosophical import of laughter in his works. Only later generations found his images problematical—or simply obscene, vulgar, and shallow, even if entertaining. ... (Morson and Emerson 454)

The spirit of “folk humor” is particularly hard, Bakhtin felt, to transfer into literature. Denied the give-and-take of the carnival setting, where “everyone participates,” it can rapidly begin to sound didactic and harden into satire, aimed one way at a target. (Many confess to feeling this way for example when reading Flaubert, including a lot of my students—although I do not.) But when we allow our activity (including both scholarship and “fiction” writing) to be shaped by a “carnival sense of the world,” we hopefully can transcend “solipsism” of both an intellectual and an ethical variety (see Morson and Emerson 454-70; Bakhtin, *Problems* 122, 177).

Morson and Emerson take a somewhat cool view of the *Rabelais* book, especially when celebrated by its admirers as equipment for living. They resist most strongly its simplification of complicated social conditions:

[I]t must be added that carnival itself addresses catastrophe and terror in a highly benevolent and unrealistic way. Bakhtin ignores the dangers of carnivalistic violence and antinomian energy. In short, it is not carnival but the “carnival symbolic” that inspires him, not real individual bodies in interaction but the potential for extending, transcending, and rendering immortal the collective body. ... In contrast to the author of *The Possessed*, the author of *Rabelais and His World* did not sufficiently appreciate that it is but a step from Bakunin to Shigalyov. (Morson and Emerson 470; see also Emerson, *First* 162-206)

A fuller exploration of such resistance appears in Michael André Bernstein's *Bitter Carnival: Ressentiment and the Abject Hero*. This 1992 study draws a spiking line through western civ, from the “corrosive” abjection of “the Juvenalian voice” (53), through Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, Diderot's *Rameau's Nephew*, and the abject heroes of Dostoevsky, all the way to “the Saturnalian dialogue” of the Manson family (160).

But since I'm in the giving vein today, I'll cut Bakhtin some slack. Beginning coherent life in 1940, the hapless *Rabelais* text received provisional acceptance as Bakhtin's doctoral dissertation in 1946—only to have the Soviet “Higher Attestation Commission” knock down the award from “Doctor of Sciences” to

“Candidate of Sciences.” (As I understand it, this is more or less the difference between being a fully licensed *docteur* and an *officier de santé*, Charles Bovary’s title. As events in book two of Flaubert’s novel demonstrate, Charles Bovary was truly unqualified to be a doctor. But imagine the humiliation in a case like Bakhtin’s of knowing enough and accomplishing enough to be a fully credentialized *docteur*, only to have the administration in power label you an *officier de belles lettres*.) Much revised and “handled,” over *great time*, the book finally came out between covers in 1965. But although this technically makes *Rabelais* one of Bakhtin’s *latest* works, it was apparently the first to taste ink in English translation, in 1968. Many people—including Conquergood, as he himself once said to me—formed their first impressions of “Bakhtin” on the basis of “carnival laughter” and the “grotesque body,” as cleverly euphemized repudiations of the centripetal demand for Socialist Realism.

In support of my previous statement, a little anecdotage. (Why I remember this so vividly, I don’t know—but there it is, this memory, tossed into a corner of the Ulmer-esque “keepsake drawer.”) Let’s travel back in time, to a warm, sunny afternoon in the spring of 1980, the kind of day that makes an obsequious, terrorized, sleepless assistant professor briefly happy to be alive. I’ve gone to do some browsing at Truman Metzler’s fabled “Great Expectations” bookstore, for many years a fixture on Foster Street in Evanston. I’ve spent some time wandering the aisles. I’ve spent some more time sitting at the big table near the window in the store’s southwest corner, drinking the free but truly nasty coffee, while Jay Stern has labored to humiliate me by introducing me facetiously to passers-by. A fixture at “Great Ex”—kind of their neighborhood Falstaff—Jay was also the husband of my senior colleague Carol Simpson Stern, so I had to be circumspect whenever I felt the urge to tell him to go fuck off (even though that kind of response appeared to delight him). Among the things we’ve been talking about: the military special ops have just bungled Jimmy Carter’s order to rescue the Tehran Embassy hostages, so this has to be around the first of May.

As I rise to go, up walks Conquergood to the littered front desk. He is purchasing some fresh, unmarked copies of books he uses in class, so that he can send clean xeroxes to his “coursepak” friend at the local copy center (Burke’s *The Philosophy of Literary Form and Language as Symbolic Action*—I can still visualize the covers of the books he was holding, I would swear to this in court). He and I proceed to have something that would become rarer in later years: a long, rambling conversation, one junior faculty member to another, hey, how you holding up, how are your classes going. And at one point (in response to what?) he mentions Bakhtin. I tell him I’ve never heard of the guy. After briefly consulting with Jeff Rice, Truman’s second-in-command, Conquergood steers me down an aisle, stepping carefully around (over?) Truman’s ancient and peripatetic black Scottie, and puts into my hands the somewhat pricey MIT Press edition of the Hélène Iswolsky translation of *Rabelais and His World*. Read

this, he seemed to be saying, *and talk to me about it later* (which I did)—or you flunk the “Promising Junior Faculty Scholar Club Quiz.”

Although my first encounter with Bakhtin did not yet make me an acolyte (it would take the efforts of Patricia Suchy and Saul Morson to do this) I warmed up just enough to this strange book to begin to figure out part of the imaginary of my fellow junior faculty member. After the appearance of the “Boasting” essay the following year, I was able to begin to *map* it out.

The phrase “central administration” began to take on fresh meaning. At the centripetal center is authority. Moving outward toward chaos, but still occupying a mediating position between purity and pollution, is the boaster. Here are the shit disturbers (as we used to call them back on the sixth-grade playground), neither wholly “tame” nor wholly “wild,” and *potentially* “peaceful warriors” (but just as possibly human rattlesnakes and genocidal motherfuckers like Henry V of England, so remember, Cub Scouts, know your enemy). In the spring of 1970, when the Evanston student body hit the streets in response to the shootings at Kent State and Jackson State, the Northwestern campus boasters featured young celebrities like Associated Student Government president Eva Jefferson Paterson (a peaceful warrior calling for calm, who later became a human rights lawyer), and the rowdier Students for a Democratic Society leaders Rice and Steve Lubet (who in the fullness of time made the transition from “anarchist” to “Northwestern faculty member”—*sic transit Gloria Swanson*).

But at the outer limits—the furthest fling of the centrifuge—is carnival laughter, the work of fools, clowns, and exiles (including vacationing or retired court jesters). Because the carnival does not enjoy anything like “pure” status, “the clown’s attire” shares something in common with what James C. Scott dubbed “hidden transcripts.” But Bakhtin comments:

No doubt laughter was in part an external defensive form of truth. It was legalized, it enjoyed privileges, it liberated, to a certain extent, from censorship, oppression, and from the stake. This element should not be underestimated. But it would be inadmissible to reduce the entire meaning of laughter to this aspect alone. Laughter is essentially not an external but an interior form of truth; it cannot be transformed into seriousness without destroying and distorting the very contents of the truth which it unveils. Laughter liberates not only from external censorship but first of all from the great interior censor. ... (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 93-94)

This sounds very close to Augusto Boal’s critique of the “Cop in the Head.” Laughing at ourselves, we begin to figure out, is a way to possibly liberate ourselves from internalizing our various cops and petty tyrants. Emerson discusses the Russian writer Vitaly Makhlin’s 1991 essay “Laughter Invisible to the World: The Carnival Anatomy of the New Middle Ages,” and comments:

At first we were all enchanted by ambivalent laughter, Makhlin notes of Bakhtin's reception in his homeland; now we are all disillusioned with the "cheerful gravedigger." So wide a swing over such a short period has given rise to the desire "to take revenge on Bakhtin, to expose laughter itself as corrupt. ... On the sociopolitical plane, the 'laughing chorus of the people' is understood—at best—as allegory and as a schizoid-analytical substitution of 'bodies of terror,' and at worst as an expression of Russian fascism and Russian Nietzscheanism. ..." For Bakhtin believed that we could often "true up" our vision more honestly by laughter than by seeing. Along with theorists of comedy and anti-utopians before and since, Bakhtin understood laughter as a detaching, humbling, individuating force that helps us to define our properly modest place in the world of other subjects: that of "laughing outsideness." ... [L]aughter helps us to accomplish that most difficult task, to see ourselves as very minor players in a multitude of other people's plots. Laughing forms are, above all, participatory forms. That is their primary and fully serious function. (*First* 195-96)

Emerson's critique of Bakhtin's carnival is even sterner than this, to the point that vainglorious bureaucrats and administrators as well as self-styled "celebrants" might squirm under it (were they open, that is, to Bakhtinian "outsideness"). But "properly applied," she helpfully reminds us, again quoting Makhlin, "laughter *sobers down* utopian, aestheticized *seriousness*,' which is always too ecstatic, always threatening to shut up the world with its stiff theories and humorless arrests" (196). A quasi-carnival "metaphysics of 'laughing outsideness'" (197) might be in order.

Bakhtin, more hopefully, also brings laughter into dialogue with "seriousness" (in scare quotes) and the qualified kind of seriousness that inhabits the boast:

Laughter showed the world anew in its gayest and most sober aspects. ... This is why laughter could never become an instrument to oppress and blind the people. It always remained a free weapon in their hands.

As opposed to laughter, medieval seriousness was infused with elements of fear, weakness, humility, submission, falsehood, hypocrisy, or on the other hand with violence, intimidation, threats, prohibitions. As a spokesman of power, seriousness terrorized, demanded and forbade. It therefore inspired the people with distrust. Seriousness had an official tone and was treated like all that is official. It oppressed, frightened, bound, lied, and wore the mask of hypocrisy. ...

It would be wrong, however, to presume that medieval seriousness did not impress the people. ... (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 94)

Even in hating it, people *do respond* to the voice of what they perceive to be authority. The boast is poised ambiguously between imperial fiat and clowning. In some ways it is playful seriousness, an "artistic image" of seriousness.

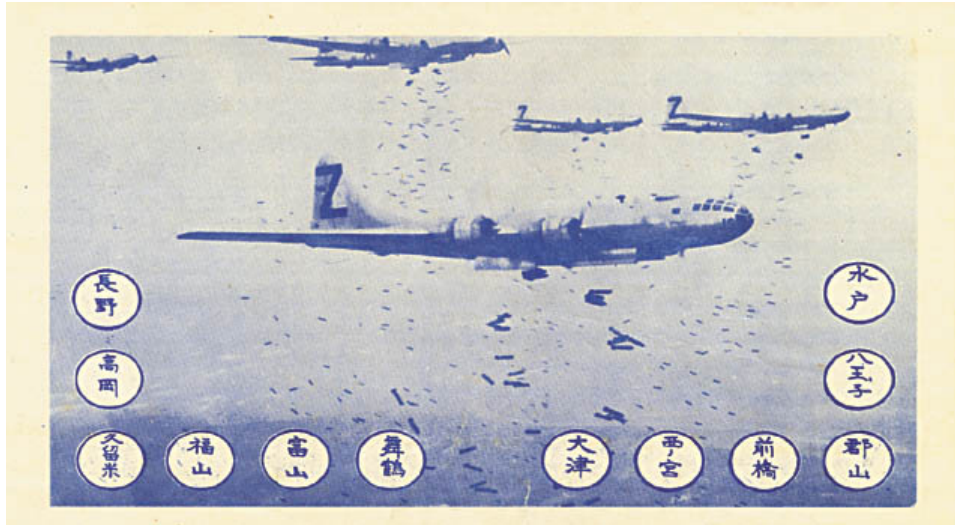
Let me try to describe to you the nearly identical beat that Michael Pennington and Kenneth Branagh played, in their very different productions of *Henry V*. We are midway through the play. Henry has just boasted to the Governor of Harfleur that nothing less than a surrender will keep his maddened army from “mowing like grass” the virgins, elders, and “flow’ring infants” inside the walls, once they break through. The glum Governor admits that he has no hope of reinforcement or resupply: “Therefore, great King, / We yield ...” (*H5* 3.3.13-14, 47-48). As the Governor turns his back and descends the wall above the city gate, Henry and the Duke of Exeter (an old soldier, Henry’s Beaufort uncle was one of his chief military advisers during this campaign) turn to face each other. And the English warriors roll their eyes and start to laugh, in intense relief: “They *bought* it. Thank *God* we don’t have to resume this fucking siege.” Boasting—not only in the wooing scene, but on the battlefield—can accommodate a measure of bragging and clowning, provided that it is backed up by the seriousness of a murderous reputation. In this special condition, boasting and clowning can meet in the space of the bluff.

The boast at the dividing line of history

For the sake of argument, however: before we leave the boaster for the clown, let’s raise the stakes of “seriousness” as high as possible. Can a boasting utterance also consist of a wordless gesture? The atomic bombings of two Japanese cities in early August 1945 suggest that it can.

Without question—as the need to invade the Japanese mainland seemed increasingly likely and the projected body count for the two sides combined grew into the millions—the boasting of combatants took place *mostly* in the realm of verbal and visual images. These included the warnings to the Japanese people broadcast by President Harry Truman, as well as the leafletting campaign that accompanied the fire bombings of 1945. Accompanying the names of twelve target cities was the threat to fleeing citizens, “we cannot promise that only these cities will be among those attacked. ...” (What say you? Will you yield, and this avoid? Or guilty in defense, be thus destroy’d?)

But put aside for the moment such instances of rhetorical art. When, in late July, the Japanese high command resolved to respond “by silence” to the terms of surrender in the Potsdam Declaration, the order proceeded to drop what at that moment was our entire deployable nuclear arsenal. Searching the old newsreels for a foolish-looking scapegoat, people mistake in saying that Truman himself “made the decision” to employ nuclear weapons. As Richard Rhodes painstakingly demonstrates, and Truman biographer David McCullough concurs, the very decision to begin to *develop* the bomb, in America’s first arms race, made *dropping* it what yet another writer has called “a paradigm of assumed inevitability.”⁶



Military historians often describe “air battles”—the dogfights of World War I or the Schweinfurt-Regensburg raid of August 1943—but I have yet to come across a writer who uses this term to speak of the atomic bombings. These two events were something different altogether. Taken together, they were the final exclamation point in the long war that effectively eliminated, forever after, the line between “combatant” and “civilian.”

For William S. Burroughs, as biographer Ted Morgan notes, “the Bomb and not the birth of Christ was the dividing line of history. The Bomb stole the relevance from all that had preceded it” and inspired Burroughs to develop what he called an atomic, shattered, or “post-Bomb” narrative style (Morgan 59). Unlike the targets of the fire bombings, Hiroshima and Nagasaki were not important centers of “distributed industry” or military activity. Nor were the bombings *primarily* weapons tests, although they were *also* that. These non-verbal utterances were boasts. Although the American President and other commentators accompanied these boasts with lots of verbal threats, they conveniently omitted to mention that the allied military had no further atomic weapons to use at present. They let listeners use their imaginations to supply the narrative.

Appropriately, there were clowns on the scene, some at ground zero. In *God of Comics: Osamu Tezuka and the Creation of Post-World War II Manga* (2009) Natsu Onoda Power has provided a helpful and perceptive study of the introduction of cinematic techniques into Japanese comic books. Among other things, the book provides a portrait of the “scene” of comic-book art in Japan during World War II.

Prior to reading Onoda Power's book, my sense of wartime cartoons and cartooning had been guided by books like John Dower's exceedingly grim *War Without Mercy*, which documents the racial stereotyping in "political" cartoons created on both sides of Pacific, designed to dehumanize an enemy. But Onoda Power documents not merely the cartoonists (*most* of them) who were able to keep working by generating political propaganda. She also discusses "cartoonists who actively resisted the war" like Yanase Masamu, who "continued to refuse to produce propaganda comics" up to his death in one of the Tokyo fire bombings in the spring of 1945. Tezuka, who would be best known in the west for creating *Astro Boy*, had an "empathic" but "surprisingly critical" response to a cartoonist who refused to continue to create under any circumstances:

If I were told that I could not draw cartoons, I might as well be dead. ... Even if this kind of regime returned and we became subjected to thought control and oppression, I would still draw. If I were handcuffed, I would still draw with my feet. Not only that, but I would find ways to show my work to people. If they killed me for it, that's just too bad. But I bet I could come up with a clever way of surviving, ways of showing my work without being caught. (qtd. in Onoda Power 33; see 19-37)

Like Shostakovich, writing music "for the drawer" after his censure in the mid-1930s, Tezuka insists that the artist's responsibility, even in times of political repression, is to find a way to keep working. Ultimately we get *Astro Boy*, a superhero in Tezuka's "Star System" (see Onoda Power 66-88) and a manga trickster for the nuclear age.⁷



Onoda Power refers to Tezuka as a cartoonist, and documents his love for various forms of joking. Therefore I am going to refer to him as a clown, for reasons that should by now be apparent. He was an artist rather than a politician; he was at times subject to official censorship (although not to the degree of Japanese artists one generation older than him); he was not a warrior, and acknowledged his relative powerlessness in the face of boosters in power; and, although more interested in “finalized” art than the clowns imagined by Bakhtin to have inhabited the world of Rabelais, he created art that was more centrifugal than centripetal. The version of Tezuka presented by Onoda Power helps me to refine a bit further my understanding of the relationship between clowning and boasting.

An amusing scene arrives at the end of the non-battle in act 4 of Shakespeare’s rumor-haunted *Henry IV, Part 2*. It concerns a northern rebel—a knight, not hereditary nobility, but still probably worth something in ransom—who surrenders to Falstaff on the basis of his groundless reputation. Falstaff subdues “Coleville of the Dale” with a sham boast based on a sham reputation. But the shifting scale of the *Henriad* plays allows us to see how ineffective Falstaff would have been had he actually faced Hotspur as a non-corpse, much less the defenders of Harfleur. The key to being a booster is your enemy’s perception that you are capable of making good on your threats. Clowns by contrast are already—perhaps always already—out of the game, and can make only parody boasts.

My second career

My debt to Conquergood, not repaid at the time of his death in 2003, consists of a number of things. During the first dozen years or so of working together, we were never friends, exactly—but our collegiality, if wary, was genuine. We actually had many interesting conversations before PSi raised its banners, both outside and inside the city walls.

Conquergood provided me with a working model for resituating “literary” interests outside a “western canon” structure and into courses that featured literature’s status as “made thing,” within its historical and cultural contexts. His example nudged me as well toward “adaptation studies” as I’ve come to teach and practice this at the end of my career. I have moved from a Bacon-and-Breen “service of literature” (Breen 6) to the malleability of the Barthesian “Text.”

I will begin my final offerings of “adaptation studies” courses with readings from Charles Mee—“There is no such thing as an original play” (Mee, n. pag.)—and Ralph Ellison—“For the first time in your whole life, he thought with dreamlike wonder, the words are not ironic (“In” 145-46). I will also cite Linda Hutcheon:

We retell—and show again and interact anew with—stories over and over; in the process, they change with each repetition, and yet they are recognizably the same. ... Temporal precedence does not mean anything more than temporal priority. Sometimes we are willing to accept this fact, such as when it is Shakespeare who adapts Arthur Brooke's versification of Matteo Bandello's adaptation of Luigi da Porto's version of Masuccio Salernitano's story of two very young, star-crossed Italian lovers (who changed names and place of birth along the way). That awkwardly long lineage points not only to the instability of narrative identity but also to the simple but significant fact that there are precious few stories around that have not been "lovingly ripped off" from others. In the workings of the human imagination, adaptation is the norm, not the exception. (*Theory of Adaptation* 177)

I also have Conquergood to thank for writing influential texts about boasting, and for literally putting into my hands the first key to unlock the mystery of Bakhtinian "clowning" and "carnival laughter"—at the furthest centrifugal fling away from centripedal officialdom. In my current ability to organize a philosophy of life (by which, sadly, I guess I mean academic life) I now have a truly complicated view of what two contrasted figures, and three contrasted power positions, might mean.

And consequently I have been able to locate myself on a professional continuum. Midway through his 1981 essay, Conquergood offers an inventory of the "tacit rules for boasting" that would automatically disqualify a pretender. You would manifest "generic inappropriateness" as a boaster were you to utter any of the following accounts of your heroic past: "I hesitated," "I weighed the alternatives," "I wavered," "I considered the risk," "I shall compromise," "I know when I'm beaten" (30). The boaster has to believe that, *when the chips are down, when the pedal is to the metal* (insert here your own Flaubertian *bêtise*), s/he can rise to the occasion and at least go down swinging.

I would not have been a very good soldier, and therefore, not a very good boaster. On a dreary December night in 1969, during my first quarter as an undergraduate transfer student to Northwestern University, the Selective Service System conducted a televised "draft lottery" that effectively abolished the college deferment and replaced it with a lethal game of Powerball. I drew 116. Thankfully, they stopped calling for my year at 112. (Other members of my small Northwestern dormitory—we few, we happy few—were not so lucky, but that's a story for another time.) And not only was I delighted. My father, who had flown bombers in the South Pacific in 1944 and did not want me marching in protest of Nixon's war, was nonetheless deep-down relieved that neither my brother (with a medical deferment) nor I had to go through anything like what he went through. (And what my decorated, war-hero father went through was, according to his own stories, a brutal, bloody horrorshow.)

In the event, I discovered that I didn't really have the stomach for any kind of sustained campaigning, military or political. In the late 1990s, as our low-

stakes local version of the culture wars was beginning to retire coursework in the “art of interpretation,” I tried to mount a boast, but ended up with an elegiac apology. The monograph *Unstoried*, which ran in *Theatre Annual* in fall 1999, contained content about our elocutionary and Delsartian past (roughly the first two-thirds of the total) that I still endorse, as a map of how we got here. But as boasts go, it stank. There was nothing behind it. Aiming at deliberative rhetoric, the finished piece hovered uncomfortably between the forensic and the epideictic. I used to like to lament that, when I retire, my courses will retire with me—but as of this writing, they seem to be *preceding* me out the door. At most, an impressive tradition of “adaptation studies” at Northwestern will survive into the 2020s as a specialization within programs like “Writing for Stage and Screen,” and as a side interest of certain teachers in Performance Studies and Theatre.

And I can now, calmly, pronounce these sentences about my four-decade career. “I weighed the alternatives of fighting to preserve the courses I was hired to teach, and considered the risks involved in protesting. But I hesitated, wavered, and then compromised (chiefly in the interest of affordable health care). After 2006, I knew when I was beaten.”

So at NCA in the fall of 2007, as part of the panel “From World-Viewing to World-Making” (see section 3, “Legal,” of *The Video Essay*) I began my second career as a clown. And it’s gone pretty well. The clown—after being staged by Shakespeare, credentialized by no less a celebrity theorist than Bakhtin, and embraced by my most powerful Northwestern colleague as the flip side of the boaster—has begun to seem like a growth industry in the millennial academy. And after all, who else but a clown would be caught dead teaching “literature” these days?

Let’s return briefly to Wiles on the topic of Falstaff. Wiles, as noted above, makes a strong case for Kemp (whose roles would have included Dogberry and the “clownish servant” Launce, as well as Peter in the surprising sketch comedy that follows the discovery of Juliet’s “death”) as the actor likeliest to have premiered the role of Falstaff. In the first performances of *Henry IV, Part 2*, Kemp not only would have played the fat knight (probably with elaborate padding) but would have returned to speak the play’s epilogue and dance the culminating stage jig. The epilogue famously promises:

If you be not too much cloy’d with fat meat, our humble author will continue the story, with Sir John in it, and make you merry with fair Katherine of France, where (for any thing I know) Falstaff shall die of a sweat, unless already ‘a be kill’d with your hard opinions. ... (2H4 5.ep.26-31)

But prior to the premiere of *Henry V*, Kemp abruptly left the Lord Chamberlain’s Men—and Falstaff just as abruptly left the *Henriad*.

Why is Kemp’s identification with Falstaff significant? Wiles notes that, prior to Falstaff, Kemp—Richard Tarlton’s successor as the clown prince of Shakespeare’s London—played roles that not only were written in colloquial

prose, but featured “a male character of low social status” (99; see 99-115). Falstaff, however, was Shakespeare’s first experiment with a hybridized type: a clown who is also a man of rank. Falstaff was not “full,” hereditary nobility. As a knight, he would have been more of an assistant nobleman, and after long tenure might have risen to the rank of associate nobleman—but he never would have been a credible candidate for Chair of the Department of Lords.

But his original in Shakespeare’s source materials was a surprisingly unfunny person. Sir John Oldcastle, in history the somewhat older friend of Henry V, ultimately went to his death as a Lollard heretic and rebel. Oldcastle’s passage through the anonymous play *The Famous Victories of Henry V* into Shakespeare’s plays—and then the scrubbing out of the name “Oldcastle” at the urging of at least one of Oldcastle’s descendants—has been the subject of much scholarly discussion. Arden editor Kastan tellingly titles his discussion of this unlikely clown, “Falstaff as Oldcastle/Oldcastle as Falstaff: Radical Protestantism and Rabelaisian Play” (see Kastan 51-62; Allmand 294-305). With Falstaff, and with Kemp’s departure, we arrive at a major transition in Shakespeare’s career: the “intellectual” clowning of Robert Armin, whose roles ranged from Touchstone and Feste to Thersites and the Fool in *King Lear*.

An unavoidable consequence of teaching Shakespeare’s histories for all those decades, for me at least, is to think about the unique hybrid of carnival laughter and high seriousness that lies at the heart of Shakespeare’s most famous “clown.” It seemed entirely appropriate, therefore—as the introduction to my career review—to “clown” a “boast.”

Several important clowns have passed through Northwestern’s Performance Studies Department. Leslie Buxbaum Danzig’s 2007 dissertation, *Chicago’s 500 Clown Theater: Physical Action, Impulse, and Narrative Play*, is a critical history of the astonishing group that came together around the clowning skills of Adrian Danzig, Molly Brennan, and Paul Kalina, for which she served as director, adapter, collaborator, and “outside eye.” One hesitates to use phrases like “life-changing” when talking about an evening at the theater, but 500 Clown’s productions of *Macbeth*, *Frankenstein*, and *The Elephant Deal* were life-changing events for me. More recently, Barnaby King’s dissertation *Carnavalesque Economics: Clowning as Transformative Social Practice in Colombia* (2013) has explored the world-changing political efficacy of clowning in a fieldwork setting. While I would not dare to put my own clowning skills in the same league with the work of these two genuinely gifted artists, I *do* feel that my current academic department has put me in good company for the kind of work I seek to do.

I have come to appreciate that the clown has grown to be something more complicated, in our era, than the descendent of the Tudor “Vice” by way of the Lord of Misrule and the village idiot. Since Falstaff, we have powerful images of the sadness of clowning. As so many of us now feel so powerless, even helpless, in the face of dysfunctional, paralyzed institutions of power (not merely the

federal government—I am a resident, remember, of the State of Illinois) we can take some cold comfort, at least, in flattering ourselves that we are wise enough to play the fool. To repeat Caryl Emerson’s assessment, quoted above: “Bakhtin understood laughter as a detaching, humbling, individuating force that helps us to define our properly modest place in the world of other subjects . . . , to see ourselves as very minor players in a multitude of other people’s plots.” Growing old, it goes without saying, also helps to cultivate a clownish humility.

The video segment “Hello” begins with a concluding statement from Oscar Wilde’s 1891 revision to “The Decay of Lying”: “The final revelation is that Lying, the telling of beautiful untrue things, is the proper aim of Art” (87). Then I perform the role of a Northwestern University administrator, who has been called upon to introduce me. I first developed this material in a version presented in on May 26, 2010, in a classroom on Northwestern’s Evanston campus as part of the Performance Studies Faculty Lecture Series. In this early version I played my then department chair, E. Patrick Johnson, who proceeded to name my most important publications and artistic works. I then took credit for my colleagues’ accomplishments, and Photoshopped my name and in some cases image onto my colleagues’ books and DVDs.

For the remake in 2014, I grew a beard, bought a purple-and-white Northwestern sweatshirt, and performed an introduction by a yet more prominent member of Northwestern’s administration. This elevation in prestige seemed appropriate for the introduction of a person of my rank and stature, as I approach retirement. The works for which I take credit are these (in order of appearance, not in alphabetical order).

- The third edition of Wallace A. Bacon’s *The Art of Interpretation* (1979).
- Dwight Conquergood’s essay “Rethinking Ethnography: Towards a Critical Cultural Politics” (1991).
- Margaret Thompson Drewal’s *Yoruba Ritual: Performers, Play, Agency* (1992).
- Mary Zimmerman’s published play script of *The Odyssey* (2003).
- Mary Zimmerman’s published play script of *The Arabian Nights* (2003).
- Mary Zimmerman’s published play script of *Metamorphoses* (2002).
- Mary Zimmerman’s production of Bellini’s *La Sonnambula* at the Metropolitan Opera (2009).
- Mary Zimmerman’s production of Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor* at the Metropolitan Opera (2007). Here I make use of Natalie Dessay’s image from an in-house Met video of the premiere, lent to me by Zimmerman, and not the Anna Netrebko performance that appears on the commercial DVD.
- E. Patrick Johnson’s *Appropriating Blackness* (2003).
- D. Soyini Madison’s *Critical Ethnography* (2005).
- D. Soyini Madison’s *Acts of Activism* (2012).
- D. Soyini Madison’s collection *The Woman That I Am: The Literature and Culture of Contemporary Women of Color* (1997).

- E. Patrick Johnson's *Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South, An Oral History* (2008).
- Carol Simpson Stern and Bruce Henderson's textbook *Learning to Perform* (2010).
- Ramón Rivera-Servera's *Performing Queer Latinidad* (2012).
- E. Patrick Johnson and Ramón H. Rivera-Servera's *Solo/Black/Woman: Scripts, Interviews, and Essays* (2013). I actually have a small, uncredited role in the production of the DVD of performances that accompanies this book. I worked with the performers and the videographer as lighting designer for the live performances on Northwestern's Evanston campus, and we had wonderful fun.
- Joshua Takano Chambers-Letson's *A Race So Different: Performance and Law in Asian America* (2013).

The video concludes with a certificate of compliance with the Dogme 95 Manifesto, signed by Lars Von Trier, Kristian Levring, Thomas Vinterberg, and Søren Kragh-Jacobsen. I was enormously grateful to work with them—as I was to work with Brecht at the Berliner Ensemble, when I was five years old.

“You’re not actually going to show that, are you?”

To accomplish the first version of the video, for presentation in 2010, I asked my friend and colleague Alan Shefsky (then Business Coordinator for the Performance Studies Department) to unlock Professor Johnson's office for me, just long enough to shoot some video of me sitting behind the desk of the department chair. As the day of the performance arrived, however, Shefsky got nervous about the uses to which I might have put this video, since it would be obvious to his boss that somebody with a master key had a hand in it. “You’re not actually going to show that, are you?” I told him not to worry—and, in the event, my faculty colleagues appeared to be delighted to have their work lovingly ripped off in a boast so shameless and so self-evidently false, and also—to borrow a phrase from *Measure for Measure*—performed by so unhurtful an opposite. Shefsky, watching my colleagues along with me, soon felt at ease. He paid my video essay the greatest of compliments: he laughed at it, and told me later he thought it was really funny. I dedicate this segment to the memory of Alan Shefsky, who left us tragically in 2014.

“Come! We have talked long enough” (Wilde 87).

Notes

¹ I was lucky to be teaching Shakespeare's plays in general, and Shakespeare's histories

² My dozen or so Bakhtin years spilled over into the early 1990s. The primary and secondary Bakhtin sources that have most shaped my thoughts about reading, teaching, and performing novels are these. Bakhtin's 1963 publication *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics* revises and expands the manuscript *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Creative Art*, published in 1929, the year of Bakhtin's arrest and internal exile. The book, as translator Caryl Emerson points out, did not re-emerge until "the other side of the Stalinist night" (xxix) with the somewhat misleading word "poetics" now stuck in the title. The ability to fully appreciate this text, as my colleague Saul Morson has shared with me in conversation, requires the ability to read Dostoevsky in Russian; many intentionally contrasted styles of speech and writing often get flattened in translation, into a kind of bland "translationese." (For this reason, in my own examples here, I have stuck with works in languages that I can read.) Nevertheless, the concepts of the polyphonic novel, the dialogues between author and hero, and "unfinalizability" (with its attendant concept of "loophole" discourse, the always-open possibility of revising *provisionally* finalized utterances) have been hugely productive in my own thinking. Of the essays collected in *The Dialogic Imagination*, "Discourse in the Novel" (completed in 1935) has proved to be the richest source of useful ideas in my work with stage adaptation, but also the most challenging in terms of the lexicon of neologisms and specialized terms that the reader must keep straight; my debt to this essay should become apparent, at least glancingly, as you proceed through the long annotation that you are now reading. Useful as well is the essay "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel" (completed in 1938, with concluding remarks added in 1973) which presents a conceptualization of "time-spaces" in the represented worlds of fictional works: environments that both enable and constrain the possibilities of characters' activities and utterances. The essay ultimately requires us to imagine—in addition to events "narrated in the work"—an "event of narration itself," which interacts dialogically with represented events, and negotiates somehow the "sharp distinction between representing and represented time" (255). When Bakhtin imagines "a special *creative* chronotope" (254) where the time-space of represented action interacts with the time-space of narration, he comes close to addressing my own long-time problem of characterizing narrators who "impossibly" stand onstage with their characters and perform interior "dialogues." Bakhtin's short "Response" to a 1970 question about "the current state of literary scholarship" (1) from the Russian journal *New World*, collected in the *Speech Genres* anthology, has given me (as noted above) the concept of a literary work's life over *great time*. And my Louisiana State University colleague Patricia Suchy and I spent many productive hours, back in the day, discussing the value of "outsideness" to one's ongoing project of fashioning selfhood (see for example Bakhtin, "Author"; Emerson, *First* 207-64). This project has become increasingly difficult for me as the years close in, and the youthful dream of achieving meaningful selfhood is running like sands through the hourglass.

Because I began my "adaptation" work decades ago, under the watchful and sometimes disappointed eye of Breen (to whose memory I remain devoted, as to a kind of second father), my theater work would begin with the published, "finalized" work on

the bookshelf. (Among the things that Breen and I disagreed about, in his emeritus years, was the sub-masterwork quality of some of the literature I chose to stage.) An aesthetic of “loophole” discourse and revisability, along with an aggressive embodiment of actively contested “zones” of character and narrator speech, was more useful to me than the maximally unfinalizable, centrifugal condition of clowning and carnival laughter. Only in the past fifteen years, as my interest waned in Breen’s ideal of a self-effacing performance in “the service of literature” (Breen 6), have I returned with increased interest to Bakhtin’s *Rabelais and His World* (1965) and the essay “Epic and Novel” (1941). My work with the video essay, as the present annotations explore, concerns itself with appropriations. These include one-directional stylizations of others’ utterances, but also utterances actively “double-accented” as well as “double-voiced”: video clips so inherently interesting that they “push back” against anything that I say on the soundtrack. My video work concerns parody, pastiche, and mash-up; and it requires a more flexible theorization of laughter and clowning than Breen provided, which I have begun to seek both in Bakhtin and elsewhere.

I will forever be in the debt of my colleague Morson and his writing partner Emerson for the indispensable, richly detailed study *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* (1990) which over the years grew as spine-cracked as my Bakhtin copies. While Emerson recently has taken a more skeptical view of the “Bakhtin industry” as well as certain Bakhtinian key concepts (see *First*), Morson has engaged more playfully with the possibilities held forth by his study of Bakhtin. His concept of literary “sideshadowing”—as opposed to “foreshadowing,” plot branching as a “paraquel” rather than a “prequel” or “sequel”—has deeply influenced my approach to literature in the classroom, the theater, and the editing room (see *Narrative* esp. 117-72). Fundamentally, the concept of sideshadowing is theatrical. In teaching them to “historicize” their characters, Brecht made his actors try to demonstrate a non-“fated” character in the act of making choices—“not that, but this” (see for example Willett, *Brecht* 91-99, 136-47). Helene Weigel’s work on the character “Mother Courage” provides some of the most famous examples of Brechtian “historicization” and, I feel, Morson’s “sideshadowing.”

⁵ I borrow the term “antiseptic” from the syllabus that Conquergood developed in the winter of 1998 for the Performance Studies Department’s graduate-level “History” course, originally a seminar entitled, “Studies in the History of Oral Interpretation.” In Conquergood’s redesign of the course, he lists among its goals: “To recuperate and reinvigorate the disciplinary history of performance studies—specifically elocution and oral interpretation—by moving beyond the antiseptic ‘history of ideas and teaching methods approach’ and locating it within a complex performative cultural politics shot through with issues of race, gender, and class” (Dwight Conquergood Papers, Northwestern University Archives, Box 5, Folder 3). This formulation, I think, helps us to appreciate Conquergood’s intellectual debt to Douglas.

⁴ See, for example, the two long sections of Bakhtin’s “Discourse in the Novel” (301-66) that address the topics of “Heteroglossia in the Novel” and “The Speaking Person in the Novel.” See also Morson and Emerson 325-30.

⁵ Breen’s 1978 book *Chamber Theatre* evolved from material that survives in the chapter on “Self” (6-20). While Breen’s frames of reference for “staging” split subjectivity were

William James, Freud, Jung, and American ego psychologists, his theatrical vision finds some rather surprising parallels in a theorist with whom Breen was not familiar. The revision of Freudian *Ichspaltung*—which Jacques Lacan elaborated in the 1940s and early 1950s, and mapped out in schematic form in his 1954-55 seminar (see *Seminar* 235-47)—presents a game of four. Lacan imagines a speaking subject (by analogy, Breen’s narrator) who is not, and never can be, the subject “in its totality.” “As usual,” this figure talks all the time, but “he doesn’t know what he’s saying. If he knew what he was saying, he wouldn’t be there.” The subject/narrator engages in interminable (“irreducible”) dynamic relations with his ego, the *moi* of Lacan’s schema—who in Breen’s theatrical model can be either the narrator’s “remembered self,” at an earlier age, or the “focal” consciousness of a character through whom the fictional world is witnessed. The “fictional direction” of the split subject (“the specular I” and “the social I”) was determined early in life, in the jubilant and aggressive “drama” of the “mirror stage” (see *Écrits* 1-7). The split subject’s imaginary relations with an other (the little *autre* of the schema) seek confirmation of a hopeful identity, but the search is doomed to failure because the subject perpetually misrecognizes the other with which it seeks to identify: I (*je*) speaks to an objectified me (*moi*) through an “other” third party. (By analogy, both the narrator and the figural character direct their gaze toward a third onstage party, typically a secondary character who frustrates their desire and redirects it back to the interminable I/me dialogue.) The puppet-master of this game never appears onstage: the Other is the unconscious, structured like a language (as Lacan would elaborate this) and functioning somewhat like the controlling *mise-en-scène* of Breen’s theater. The relational field of “speaking I,” “desiring me,” “desired other,” and “unconscious Other” does not schematize four different subjects. Rather, this *is* Lacan’s subject (circa 1955), spread all over the map but unknown to itself in its four co-ordinates. Regardless of whether Lacan’s persuasive but speculative “introduction of the big Other” is a verifiable phenomenon, it helps to locate the historical moment at which Breen’s “chamber theatre” disturbed the unified subject of “the art of interpretation,” as well as the unified subjects (Tesman and Hedda, talking to each other) present in the dialogues of play scripts.

The above note has been copied, almost verbatim, from several previous essays that touch upon Breen’s theater. What amazes me to this day, almost fifty years after meeting Breen, is how intuitively his theatrical imagination “embodied” high-modern and postmodern theories of the split subject in culture that he had never read. Such are the insights that arise from human bodies deployed theatrically, to play with ideas and make them materially present.

⁶ See especially Rhodes 617-747 and McCullough 390-464. With apologies to both authors, I borrow the phrase about “assumed inevitability” from John Barth’s novel *The End of the Road* (99) where it is applied in an entirely different (although high-stakes) context.

⁷ Since Onoda Power has sought permission for her images of Tezuka’s work, and I have not, I offer an image of Astro Boy grabbed from the internet.

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Section 2, “Performing beyond Liveness”: Rethinking Interpretation

The piece begins with the online promotional video for “I Speak Video” (“as featured on NBC”) that was being used in the early winter of 2009. The capture date in my video log is December 20, 2009. The company still exists, and advertises itself as a “Global Fortune 500 Company.” The current promotional video and description of services are available to view online at <<http://ispeakvideo.com>> as of May 19, 2016 (as this manuscript is being edited for final submission to *Liminalities*).

Photographs of the Northwestern campus and the Interpretation Department faculty are courtesy of Northwestern University Archives. My friend Kevin Leonard and his staff have been wonderfully helpful, as ever, throughout this process.

Footage of Wallace Bacon teaching a Shakespeare class is from *A Sense of the Other*, an independent film conceived and directed by Frank Galati (1977). The performer reading from Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* is Victoria Zielinski. Of studying with Bacon, Zielinski remembers:

We met in a shabby classroom four days a week. At times it was difficult to connect the gentleman we adored with the invisible tyrant of the syllabus who insisted we make a Herculean effort to prepare for readings and examinations. ...

Dr. Bacon would begin each class with a mind-bending question that the bravest of us would attempt to answer. He had a way of sitting on his desk while leaning one foot against the lectern, pursing his lips and leaving the rest of his face completely motionless that transformed him into a sphinx. His attitude was daunting to students who had a tendency to gauge the accuracy of their statements by the expression on the professor’s face. I remember trying to decide whether he agreed or disagreed with what was being said. I got better at it and proceeded to begin thinking on my own. (qtd. in Rein 155)

Let me corroborate Zielinski’s description of Bacon’s “sphinx”-like energy in class, and his punishing syllabi for the three-quarter course. For my first year of teaching Bacon’s celebrated course sequence, I tried to do the “sphinx” thing, until my students began to figure out that I was actually a clown—at which point I gave it up. About seven years later, I began to give up the course sequence itself in the form in which I had inherited it from Bacon.

Photographs of dissected bodies: in Florence, very close to the Palazzo Pitti, is a museum of anatomical waxes known popularly today as La Specola (after, I believe, the original use of the building for an observatory). Produced in the

seventeenth century for the teaching of medicine, the anatomical waxes will produce an impression upon you that will haunt your dreams (or at least have haunted my own). The museum catalog from which I took these photographs is Taschen's 2006 reprint of the *Encyclopaedia Anatomica* (Lamers-Schütze and Havertz 1999).

I quoted video footage of the Vietnam War and its stateside protests (including the protest in Chicago of the 1968 Democratic Convention) from three sources. The chief one is "Homefront USA," volume eleven of *Vietnam: A Television History* (1983). My Northwestern colleague Larry Lichty, the director of media research for the series, was a valuable resource in my navigation of the series in its original thirteen-volume format, as held by the Northwestern University Library and various other Northwestern University collections. The other two are PBS "American Experience" specials: *The Presidents: Nixon* (1990) and *Daley: The Last Boss* (1995). Mixed in with these images are photographs of me, taken from the desultory archive of my family in the United States, which has found its way into my hands.

The essay quotes extensively from Wallace A. Bacon's *The Art of Interpretation* (1966), which anthologizes Stevens's "Study of Two Pears" and Keats's "When I have fears," in the slightly modified version that Keats published. I studied the first edition of this book in my first "interpretation" course at Northwestern (a "general speech requirement") as a sophomore transfer student in the fall of 1969. In addition to my memories of learning the poem for this class, I also remember vividly the real world intruding abruptly into the surreal ivory tower of Northwestern's Evanston campus: during the week in December 1969 when our final exam was held, the news media covered the controversy surrounding the assassination of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark by the Chicago Police and the FBI COINTELPRO. (Welcome to Chicago.) Much of the rest of the class is a blur.

Because my copy of the first edition of Bacon's textbook is disfigured with notes and yellow highlighter, I have Photoshopped the very similar but somewhat expanded language from my cleaner copy of the third edition, which I taught as a junior faculty member in the 1980s. I should track down a clean copy of the first edition, and go back to fix this, but I never will.

John Keats's sonnet "When I have fears" first appeared in a letter to his friend, John Hamilton Reynolds, dated January 31, 1818. Mistake: in a couple of biographical annotations, I had read that Keats had not yet met either Fanny Brawne or Isabella Jones when he wrote this poem. But someone pointed out to me, after seeing this video, that he *had* in fact met Isabella Jones by the time he wrote this poem, and might have been intimate with her less than a year later. Oops. Well, I'm not going to go back to fix it now. To borrow a phrase from Dmitri Shostakovich, I'll fix it in my next work.

The London poet, musician, and video artist who styles himself “Jim Clark the Re animator” appears to be responsible for the 2008 animation of a Keats portrait “reading” the poem “When I have fears.” I discovered and downloaded this in 2009; but in the spring of 2016, I could no longer find it online (unless of course my aging eyeballs just crossed while reviewing all the thumbnails on his website). Having visited Clark’s website at various times over the past few years, all I can say is that I am in awe of the subversive brilliance of this appropriative artist.

The clip from the cartoon series *Clutch Cargo* demonstrates the low-budget “Syncro-Vox” optical printing system invented by cameraman Edwin Gillette. I draw the clip from episode 29 of season 1, entitled “The Jungle Train.”

To the best of my knowledge, Chicago was not attacked by a nuclear weapon in May 2010 or subsequently. The reference to an “electro-magnetic pulse” over Chicago is just a lie.

The copy of Randall Jarrell’s poem “The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner” that I used appears in *The Complete Poems* (1969). The Jarrell biography to which I have turned most often is Stephen Burt’s *Randall Jarrell and His Age*. I have drawn motion footage and some still images of B-17 combat over Germany from the 2004 expanded DVD edition of *The World at War* (1973-74). Once again, I have drawn upon my archive of family photographs to illustrate my father’s service in the South Pacific, and his marriage to my mother not long before he headed out for flight training.

Even after the post-Stalinist “thaw,” Dmitri Shostakovich remained ironically careful about praising the work of young composers that risked irritating the censors. Sofiya Gubaidulina, who studied with Shostakovich after 1952, remembers:

Suppose that you are fourteen or fifteen years old, you discover with delight a particular work by Shostakovich, and suddenly it turns out that this work is suspect, even dangerous. You are left with an urgent question, and there is no answer to be had anywhere. ...

My personal acquaintance with Dmitri Dmitriyevich could never be close because of our age difference. ... When I was in my fifth year at the [Moscow] Conservatoire, [my teacher] took me to see Shostakovich so that I could show him a youthful symphony that I was working on. He listened to it, and made some remarks, generally praising the music. But what struck me most was his parting phrase: “Be yourself. Don’t be afraid of being yourself. My wish for you is that you should continue on your own, *incorrect* way.” (qtd. in Wilson 305-06)

My suspicion and sincere hope are that I was earning that kind of praise—continue in your own incorrect way—from Breen, at the end of his life. I dedicate this segment to his memory.

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Section 3, “Legal: A Counterhistory of Turning Twenty-One”: Reflections upon Turf Wars

In the spring of 1984, on Northwestern’s campus, I first directed an original script called *The Future*, a stage adaptation of four texts. The production featured student performers, and lasted 100 minutes. The adapted texts were these (in order of appearance, not alphabetical order).

- John W. Campbell (as “Don A. Stuart”), “Who Goes There?” (1938).
- Walker Percy, “The Last Donahue Show,” a section of *Lost in the Cosmos* (1983).
- George Orwell, *1984: A Novel* (1949).
- Jack Finney, *The Body Snatchers* (1955).

The gimmick here was to produce *1984* in 1984, and to situate it in a context of dystopian popular fiction. Campbell’s novella became the source text for several film adaptations, including two significant ones: the 1951 version of *The Thing* signed by Christian Nyby, Howard Hawks’s greatest film editor, but produced and mostly directed by Hawks himself (see McCarthy 472-84); and John Carpenter’s more faithful adaptation of 1981, also called *The Thing*. Jack Finney’s novel, which began life in 1954 as a shorter *Colliers* serial with a somewhat different ending, inspired the 1956 Don Siegel film *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, as well as Philip Kaufman’s 1978 remake of the same name. Percy’s “The Last Donahue Show” imagines a space alien taking human form and appearing on the daytime *Donahue* talk show (in the company of John Calvin and a Confederate artillery officer) to deliver instructions on how to survive the impending end of the world.

What all four works have in common is the ultra-paranoid cold-war theme of unfeeling inhuman or literally non-human visitors taking the form of our friends and neighbors, in order to carry out their tyrannical plans for world domination (or in the case of Percy’s story, simply to dare us to believe preposterous-sounding advice in order to save ourselves, or not, from the coming catastrophe). We changed the date that begins Orwell’s novel, from April 4, 1984, to April 13 and 14 (the nights of our performances).

This was also the year that Northwestern’s Interpretation Department changed its name from Interpretation to Performance Studies. Lilla Heston—the department chair who oversaw this change (over serious misgivings that she confessed privately to several people including Bacon, as I found out when corresponding with him late in his life)—would die less than two months later after extremely invasive cancer surgery. I believe two things: that this was the

last theatrical production she ever saw, and that I was the second-to-last person who knew her to see her alive (the last being her mother, who accompanied her to the hospital). Heston did not live long enough to see the name change approved by a vote of the full faculty of the School of Speech (now Communication) in the fall of 1984. Despite the fact that (according to one eyewitness account) she kind of squirmed as she sat through my play—and offered to a neighbor the laughing verdict at the end, “That man’s out of his mind”—I dedicate this segment to my colleague and friend Lilla Heston, with undying gratitude and devotion. Among other things—but so few people seemed to figure this out about her—she knew how to tell a joke.

During rehearsals for the play, I received word that I had been promoted to the rank of Associate Professor, with tenure, and had to face the fact that I would be around for a while longer. In the spring of 2005, the year that the Performance Studies Department turned twenty-one, I organized a third production of *The Future* (the second being a failed off-Loop effort in Chicago’s non-Equity theater scene, in 1986). In 2005, on Northwestern’s campus, I organized my most elaborate incorporation to date of projected video. This segment enjoyed its first life, in slightly altered form, as a “video overture” to that production. Much of it was appropriated from television broadcasts circa 1984—dubbed onto VHS players, no less—and my documentation (since I never anticipated a publication event like this) is technically less than ideal. Bear with me.

As the 1984 production of *The Future* approached, I began to record VHS tapes of whole evenings of television, so that I could rip off the audio of programs and commercials for the production’s soundtrack. So did a friend of mine; my unindicted co-conspirator in video production during these years was Chicago actor Jerome Bloom, back in the day a winner of a Black Maria Film Festival award (shortly after he made the transition from Hi-8 editing to digital NLE).

These videos of OTA broadcasts were still playable as I prepared video footage for the 2005 revival. By now, sadly, they have begun to misbehave and fly away to VHS heaven, so I have lost some irreplaceable original material.

One evening of tape, for example, dates from Friday, March 30, 1984. On that evening, CBS appears to have bumped and rescheduled episode twenty-two of season six of its hit series *The Dukes of Hazzard*, “Cooter’s Confession” (with its Orwellian themes of police interrogation, confession, and betrayal)—to make room for an expensive but well-rated rebroadcast of *The Wizard of Oz* (see for example Harmetz 288-91). On this tape appears Bill Lynch, sometime anchor for CBS *Newsbreak*, announcing that President Reagan had presented an open letter to both houses of Congress—in the wake of the Lebanon barracks bombing and the offshore troop withdrawal—announcing that the United States participation in the Multinational Force in Lebanon had officially come to a

close (see Reagan). Leading into Lynch's *Newsbreak* is a promo for the second annual Miss Teen USA competition, scheduled to air on the telescreen the following Tuesday, April 3 (the night before Winston Smith would begin to write his diary).

Another identifying marker here is a promo for *The Dukes of Hazzard*. Episode four of season six, "Brotherly Love"—concerning the return of Luke's brother, and featuring the tasty stunt footage of a car going into a Hazzard County lake—first aired on Friday, October 14, 1983. This ad announces a "special presentation of *The Dukes*" on Saturday, brought about by the *Wizard of Oz* broadcast throwing off its regular Friday-night line-up. CBS appears to have re-run "Brotherly Love" on Saturday, March 31.

Along the way, we see advertising campaigns that were running in 1984, at the "real" historical time when Orwell's visionary novel is set: Loretta Swit for MasterCard International ("so worldly, so welcome"); a MacDonald's ad for the new "Sausage MacMuffin" ("a MacMuffin sandwich with a sizzle in the middle"); and—a lucky hit—one of the "You are the *new* coffee generation" spots that debuted in 1983 and ran throughout 1984. Sponsored by the National Coffee Association and developed by the N. R. Kleinfield agency, coming to the rescue of a then-"suffering" coffee industry, the spots all feature the great American wonder drug "being endorsed by cool people"; this one shows Ann Wilson and Nancy Wilson of "Heart," having a jittery but apparently productive session at the mixing console (Bryan).

You will ask why I have included nothing from April 4, 1984. My notes suggest that I consulted my *Chicago Tribune* "TV Week" that week, and saw that—aside from a Bill Moyers *Walk through the Twentieth Century* episode and a very serious documentary *Old Enough to Do Time*, about juveniles in the adult criminal justice system—there was very little on the telescreen that night to acknowledge the arrival of so momentous a date. We were now entering into reruns season in prime time, so in Chicago that night there were old episodes of *Barney Miller*, *The Jeffersons*, *One Day at a Time*, *The Facts of Life*, and *The Fall Guy*, as well as a new *Dynasty*—and on the local Fox affiliate, a socio-politically charged line-up that included *Taxi*, *Three's Company*, *Benny Hill*, *M*A*S*H*, and *Starsky & Hutch*. QED: either Orwell had gotten it very, very wrong, or else he had gotten it very, very right, and this was the video equivalent of Victory Gin.

Another evening of tape dates from November 20, 1983, when *The Day After* premiered on ABC. Following the anti-war film that night was a Ted Koppel *Nightline* episode that discussed *The Day After* in light of President Reagan's controversial SDI or "Star Wars" initiative. I cheated a bit, I know, by throwing in a few clips from 1983, but the rising anti-nuclear movement of the 1980s seemed an appropriate kick-off for 1984. (The Living Theatre agreed: in one of her or Julian Beck's rare references to American television, Judith Malina reports that "the company newly arrived in the USA met at 800 West End Ave."

and “watched together *The Day After*” [80].) When I revised this piece for NCA in 2007, into the form presented here, the Koppel clips hit the digital cutting-room floor.

A third tape dates from the evening of my birthday, on August 23, 1984. Bloom did me the inestimable favor of taping, as a birthday present, a whole evening of television on a single OTA channel. From this tape arises, for example, the Kentucky Fried Chicken “You’d Be Crazy to Cook Mega-Meal” commercial. For anyone bibliographically minded, everything used in “Legal” that looks like a video grab from a televised source, unless otherwise unidentified in these notes, comes from one of these VHS tapes.

After a while, I begin to travel around in time more freely, mostly with content broadcast (or at least available for broadcast) across the twenty-one years leading up to Performance Studies at Northwestern turning “legal.” Speeches from throughout Ronald Reagan’s political career and presidency have been gathered into the four-DVD set *Ronald Reagan’s Greatest Speeches*. Every Reagan speech quoted in this video essay appears in that source. Intercut with Reagan’s speeches are clips from Michael Anderson’s 1956 film of Orwell’s *1984*, starring Edmond O’Brien, which was withdrawn from commercial exhibition at the insistence of the Orwell Estate after the license for its first release expired. I remembered the film vividly from television broadcasts during my childhood; despite the freedom of its adaptation, it made a terrifying impression. At the time I made this video essay, however, the only copy I could locate was a poor VHS dub then available from an online reseller. It has since been remastered and reissued on DVD, and an inferior print (apparently struck from the same source as the VHS tape I own) has been posted to *YouTube*.

The source for the clip of George W. Bush’s March 2003 speech, in which he gave Saddam Hussein and his sons forty-eight hours to get out of Iraq, was initially another documentary; but when I refurbished parts of the video in 2009, I replaced it with the clip that appears in a 2008 *Frontline* episode—to no apparent purpose, for I took this admirably clean copy and proceeded to distort it with a kind of “outer-spacey” look and sound. Following this is a clip of Henry Fonda’s Wyatt Earp—“Indian, get outta town and stay out”—from the 1946 John Ford western *My Darling Clementine*. Then we see Will Smith deliver what is arguably the most famous line from *Independence Day* (1996): “Welcome to earth.”

There follows a series of clips from my own VHS dub of the Fox Television broadcast from August 28, 1995, *Alien Autopsy: Fact or Fiction?* The basis for this “Fox-umentary” is a seventeen-minute black-and-white hoax staged and shot by Ray Santilli earlier in the 1990s.

The centerpiece of this video essay, however, is a dialogue between live actors and clips from the legendary *Twilight Zone* episode “To Serve Man,” originally broadcast on March 2, 1962, as part of the third season of the series.

Richard Kiel (later to ascend to celebrity status as “Jaws” in the James Bond franchise) plays the nine-foot “Kanamit” who arrives on earth “to serve man” (allegedly, allegedly; see Zicree 235-37, but please, not until you’ve watched the episode).

As a pimply youth, I was a somewhat irregular *Twilight Zone* fan. But to say that this episode changed my life (at a mere eleven years and change, when I stumbled across it on a Friday night in spring) would be a preposterous understatement. Watching this haunted my dreams. It haunted me like the threat of “the Bomb” itself, or the fear of falling from high places.

My “therefore experience” was the decision to stage a dialogue between a space alien and the faculty of a hypothetical Performance Studies Department at a major American university. I play a version of myself (who might or might not be the “Mister Chambers” of the segment’s penultimate scene, we never decided). My unnamed colleagues in Performance Studies are performed by (in order of appearance): Mshai Mwangola, Jennifer Tyburczy, Gary Ashwal, Lori Baptista, Raffaele Furno, and Natsu Onoda (now Onoda Power). I also perform the voice (pitch-shifted) of the space alien. One of the happiest moments in my “trash aesthetic” video essay years is the scene in which I got ambient echo for my “human” voice (in the main hall of the United Nations) and an acoustically flat sound for the alien (projecting its voice without benefit of speech organs). To quote the character of Old Lodge Skins (memorably played by Chief Dan George of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation in British Columbia) in the 1970 film *Little Big Man*: “Well, sometimes the magic works. Sometimes it doesn’t.”

The dialogue that follows is a mash-up of lines from “To Serve Man” and the first private meeting of Jack Horner and Joe Morgan in John Barth’s *The End of the Road* (18-20). After this last encounter between me (as the space alien) and me (as a version of myself) I include some footage from the 1951 version of *The Thing* (as well as one atomic extra) accompanied by the opening of Bernard Herrmann’s suite of his remarkable music for the 1959 film *Journey to the Center of the Earth*.

When I made the turn into the final section of this segment, I happened to be going through a significant, years-long Samuel Beckett phase, including the grim whole-life review of works like *Worstward Ho* (“Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better”) and “What Is the Word?” Here is roughly the second half of what is apparently Beckett’s final poem. As was Beckett’s habit, “Comment Dire” was written first in French, and then translated by the author.

voir —
 entrevoir —
 croire entrevoir —
 vouloir croire entrevoir —
 folie que de vouloir croire entrevoir quoi —

quoi—
comment dire—
et où—
que de vouloir croire entrevoir quoi où—
où—
comment dire—
là—
là-bas—
loin—
loin là là-bas—
à peine—
loin là là-bas à peine quoi—
quoi—
comment dire—
vu tout ceci—
tout ce ceci-ci—
folie que de voir quoi—
entrevoir—
croire entrevoir—
vouloir croire entrevoir—
loin là là-bas à peine quoi—
folie que d'y vouloir croire entrevoir quoi—
quoi—
comment dire—

comment dire
.
see—
glimpse—
seem to glimpse—
need to seem to glimpse—
folly for to need to seem to glimpse—
what—
what is the word—
and where—
folly for to need to seem to glimpse what where—
where—
what is the word—
there—
over there—
away over there—
afar—
afar away over there—
afaint—
afaint afar away over there what—
what—
what is the word—

seeing all this —
 all this this —
 all this this here —
 folly for to see what —
 glimpse —
 seem to glimpse —
 need to seem to glimpse —
 afaint afar away over there what —
 folly for to need to seem to glimpse afaint afar away over there what —
 what —
 what is the word —

what is the word (see for example Bishop)

Here is a short lesson in “adaptation studies,” which I often bring into class. My thanks to Nicholas Johnson, a faculty member at Trinity College Dublin and the artistic director of Painted Filly Theatre, for introducing me to this poem.

So: returning to *Krapp’s Last Tape* after many years, I had another “therefore moment.” Krapp says, “Just been listening to that stupid bastard I took myself for thirty years ago” (222). And yes, I said to myself, it *had* been just about thirty years since I last studied with Bacon and, like many of his students, used him in my professional imaginary as an ego ideal—little thinking then that I actually would inherit Bacon’s most famous course. Krapp, of course, has been listening to tapes of himself, and the “stupid bastard” to whom he refers is himself, not the imaginary model he once might have aspired to become.

Viewers unfamiliar with Beckett’s play have assumed incorrectly, however, that my invocation of Krapp’s phrase “stupid bastard” is meant to characterize my view of Bacon, rather than my view (thirty-some years on) of myself. Bacon was (and remains, in my memory) one of the handful of teachers I most admired. His gracious correspondence with me after the publication of my *Unstoried* essay in 1999—in which he thanked me for, among other things, praising the influential work of his colleague and friend Don Geiger, and corrected me on some small details (Charlotte Lee, for example, had merely a fur-*collared* coat, not a full-length fur)—justified the effort that I put into researching and writing it.

But things only get worse, of course. Here I was playing with all these videotapes, and thinking about the man whose faculty line I had inherited, and something began to come together. I show the actor John Hurt performing this line from Beckett’s play (from the *Beckett on Film* series), and then cut to Bacon (in Galati’s *A Sense of the Other*) teaching his Shakespeare class about “the banquet scene” in *Macbeth*. I then cut from this to John Hurt, twenty years younger, playing the hapless “Kane” in *Alien* (1979) having his first “banquet” since the alien intubation mask has fallen off his face, and I take this clip as far as the bald-headed baby alien popping out of Kane’s chest (“a naked new-born

babe / Striding the blast” and all that, yadda yadda). Cut from here to the bald-headed Bacon applauding a student performance in his class, and then *back* to Hurt—once again as Beckett’s Krapp—muttering the line, “Thank God that’s all done with anyway” (222). All this is the basis of what, slightly expanded, I show at NCA in 2007.

And so there I am, in the convention hotel hallway after the scholarly panel where this gets shown, standing next to a cartload of audio-visual equipment. Up walks a professional colleague from another campus, and the dialogue goes something like this.

LEARNED COLLEAGUE: Hey, I got your joke about Bacon. That was pretty fucking funny.

ME: What joke?

LEARNED COLLEAGUE: How much he looked like the alien who popped out of John Hurt’s chest.

ME: What? That wasn’t a joke about *Bacon*. That was about John Hurt, as the Krapp character, you know, being a pathetic version of *me* as his career dragged on.

LEARNED COLLEAGUE: Oh, yeah, right, but even so, the Bacon thing was pretty funny.

ME: But it *wasn’t*! [Staring up and down the convention hotel hallway in exhausted anxiety, as the sweat begins to roll down his butt crack.] What are you *saying*? I *loved* Bacon!

LEARNED COLLEAGUE: Oh yeah, well, sure, whatever, but even so, the alien thing was pretty fucking funny.

By the end of the following week, the random pieces of hate e-mail had begun to arrive: “Ha ha. Very funny. You destroy his Shakespeare class, and then you try to destroy his reputation.”

So: this was a painful but valuable life lesson in Bakhtinian double-voicing and Hutcheon-esque irony. But it would be intellectually dishonest to remove the apparently offensive footage *now*. Too many people have seen it. With a sincere apology to Bacon, for my having created an utterance so capable of misinterpretation, I sent off my annotated video segment to continue its troubled little life across “great time.”

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Section 4, “Report of the Task Force on Heritage”: The Place of Digital Video in the History and Study of Live Performance

So, of course, let me begin the next batch of notes by dedicating this segment to the memory of Wallace A. Bacon, as a way of sincerely thanking him for the great gift of his inspiring teaching. If he actually enjoyed the *Unstoried* monograph as much as he told me he did, then I suspect he might have enjoyed this as well.

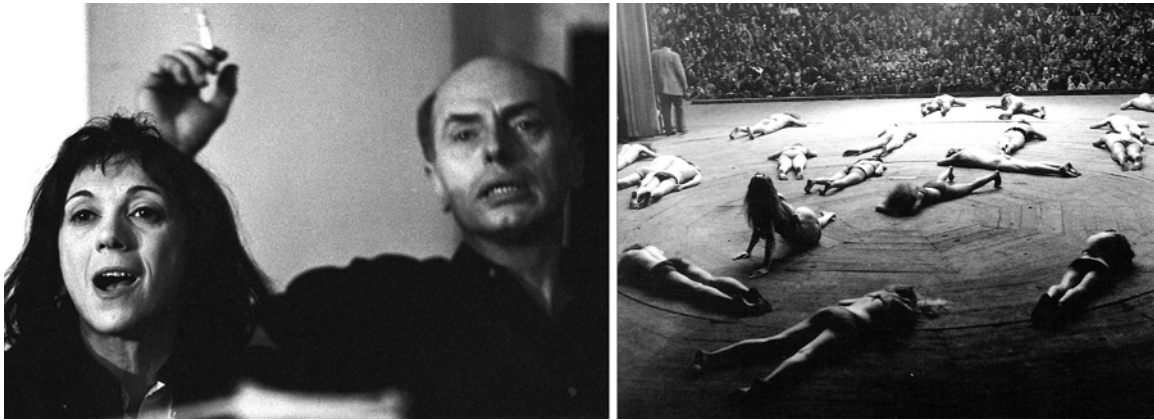
To the best of my knowledge, Northwestern University is not doing the kind of cryonics research I describe. Interested as I am in seeing the NCA annual convention of 2114, I have not yet made arrangements to be there. The segment begins with an outright lie, performed as an act of clowning by a facetious and ironic persona: the chair of a nonexistent “Task Force on Heritage” reporting to the business meeting of a nonexistent NCA division.

The activities and publications of the founders of the NCA described by this persona, however, are not lies. The sections of *Unstoried* that talk about all this (see especially 54-78) are carefully documented in the monograph itself, and its “works cited” list will lead you to assessments of the organization’s founding and long life that are very different from mine.

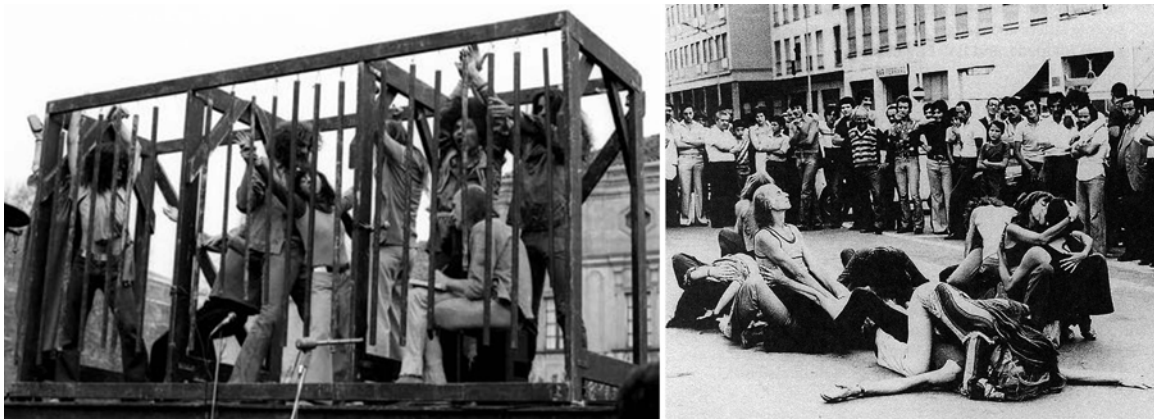
Oppositional performance: the example of The Living Theatre

Let’s turn, then, to one of the main interests of the quasi-fictional Task Force chair: the history of performance studies as it first began to take shape in the 1960s and 1970s. Where do we say it starts? Why not begin, however tentatively, with some often-reproduced images of The Living Theater in performance, intercut with images of Richard Schechner’s *Dionysus in ‘69* with The Performance Group? Let’s try out The Living Theatre as a possible point of origin.

The last of the Living Theatre photos—Judith Malina and Julian Beck in Berlin in 1965, at the time of *The Maids*—is chronologically the first of these. The image of near-naked actors lying on the stage floor is from a performance of *Paradise Now* at Yale University in 1968, following the work’s controversial premiere at the Avignon Festival the previous summer.



We first see the image of the jail-cell cage used in the *Six Public Acts* performance, which premiered in Pittsburgh in 1975—moving “through the city like a medieval mystery play” (Tytell 322; see 321-27)—and then toured to more receptive audiences in cities across Europe. The image that comes later became one of the group’s most widely circulated publicity photos: a street performance of *The Love Play* in Cosenza, Italy.



Malina (*Full* 57) associates this photo with performances in 1978, but Schechner (“In Memory” 12) identifies it, on the basis of research in the archives of The Living Theatre, as having been taken in late 1976, while the play was still being workshopped.

In many ways, as I briefly explore below, these last two images provide a précis of the group’s history following the notoriety it gained from the year and a half spent touring *Paradise Now*. The image of the jail cell—which recurs throughout documentation of the group’s work—can suggest many things. The only true escape can be to take “theater” out of the bourgeois playhouse and

back into the street. The collective embrace *in* the street is also, we come to understand, an embrace *of* the street. For here are the last words of Beck's *The Life of the Theatre*, written from a jail cell in Brazil in 1971, where he serves time for making theater in the streets that a repressive government suspects of being subversive: "To break out of the prison, the theatre, into the world" (233).

A useful, engaging introduction to the work of this group is John Tytell's *The Living Theatre: Art, Exile, and Outrage* (1995) which takes the form of a dual biography of co-founders Beck and Malina (written with Malina's full cooperation). Tytell's study tends to focus on Beck, and treats the decade of the group's activity following his death (a decade characterized by a return to texts and playhouses) as a one-chapter coda. By contrast, "Because We Are Crazy," Schechner's moving contribution to "In Memory: Judith Malina 1926-2015," calls Malina the group's "epicenter": like Beck, "she kept working to the very end" (8-9) on the decades-long project that seemed to define her professional life. Taken together, these pieces highlight one of the many dilemmas faced by Beck and Malina during the group's long history. Their vision, charisma, and force of personality clearly formed the leadership core of The Living Theatre through its constant changes of personnel—perhaps what one might call the through-line across time of the group ethos—in ways that often seemed at odds, to the two founders, with their goal of collective creation. In attempting to review and assess the group's evolution across many decades, I have found indispensable such primary texts as Beck's *The Life of the Theatre* (1972/1986) and Malina's published diaries, including *The Diaries of Judith Malina, 1947-57* (1984), *The Enormous Despair* (1972), and *Full Moon Stages* (2015).

Tytell calls *Paradise Now* the work that "would become the defining experience of The Living Theatre" (225). Newcomers to the story of The Living Theatre might begin by reading Tytell's chapters that situate *Paradise Now* in the socio-political context of the late 1960s (see 224-52) before turning to performance footage in the Mystic Fire video of *Paradise Now* by Sheldon Rochlin or the remarkable 1983 documentary *Signals through the Flames: The Story of the Living Theatre* by Rochlin and Maxine Harris. (These videos, sadly, appear never to have been digitally remastered and are hard to find, although some libraries maintain the VHS tapes. After much searching and general exasperation, I have not yet been able to locate an available copy of the recent digital reconstruction of Marty Topp's 1969 film record, released with other material in 2011 as *Paradise Now: The Living Theatre in Amerika*. Any help would be greatly appreciated: <edwdoyle@northwestern.edu>.)

I had just turned eighteen when *Paradise Now* began its American tour at Yale University, in the deepening shadow of violent street theater surrounding the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Not only would I never see this "defining" piece performed live, but—since the company hurried back to Europe after its 1969 swing through California, and mostly remained there until

Julian Beck's final illness—I have come to know all of their important early works merely through scripts, narrative descriptions, or heavily edited film and video documentation.

Yet it seemed necessary that my Task Force chair begin his genealogy of “performance studies” in the sixties and seventies—“performance” understood as first and foremost an embodied and oppositional *practice* rather than a set of theoretical ideas—with the work of this group. At the historical moment when literary and cultural critic Susan Sontag declared herself, in the form of the essay, to be *Against Interpretation*, The Living Theater used performance to take a stand “against theater” as it was being practiced in commercial venues.

In describing the inspiration Beck and Malina drew from Artaud's desire to achieve a “cruel” theater, Tytell highlights certain features of their breakthrough work of 1968. We see here The Living Theatre's final transformation from the “poet's theatre” it aspired to be the 1950s (see for example 150-54) into a political theater of action, improvisation, anarchism, and communal composition. Tytell writes:

For *Paradise Now*, Julian wanted to devise a form that could allow the release of spontaneous creative forces which could transform audience and society. Activating the audience was a key. ...

Instead of an enactment that could be repeated night after night, Julian declared he wanted the act itself, primary and unrepeatable. The act would project a revolutionary situation and lay the groundwork for anarchist action cells which would begin the work of revolution. The premise of the first scene was that the human condition was that we are temporarily excluded from the gates of Paradise, prevented from entering by the frustrating and controlling prohibitions of the authoritarian state, which in the next scenes would be overcome. (226-27)

So viewed, performance is not a merely *rehearsal* for the revolution, in a world forever open to being remade by theater: it is the revolution itself.

First developed in Sicily in early 1968 and pushed forward conceptually in the streets of Paris during the large-scale protests of May, *Paradise Now* famously disrupted the Avignon Festival in midsummer. Far from being an isolated, freakish phenomenon, *Paradise Now* participated in a more widespread “re-reading of” or “return to” Artaud. Tytell describes how, during the 1950s, Beck and Mary Caroline Richards of Black Mountain College began to move in the same intellectual and artistic circles. Not only did Richards urge Beck to explore Artaud's example, but in 1958 she put into Beck's hands the galleys of her recent translation of *The Theatre and Its Double*, about to be published to considerable acclaim by Grove Press (87-88, 146-48). The impact was profound and long-lasting: in the long quote above where we find Tytell paraphrasing Beck, we can also hear Beck paraphrasing Artaud, whose voice was very much in the air at this time. By 1965, Lawrence Ferlinghetti—whose City Lights Books would

solicit and ultimately publish the manuscript of Beck's *The Life of the Theatre* in 1972—would issue a revised edition of Jack Hirschman's *Antonin Artaud Anthology*. And an important reconsideration of Artaud would appear in France in 1967, when Jacques Derrida's *Writing and Difference* reprinted two close readings of Artaud's writings about theater, "La parole soufflée" (1965) and "The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation" (1966).

Although they are deconstructions of blind spots in Artaud's articulation of his ambitious project, Derrida's essays capture, and double-voice, the passionate energy in Artaud's writing that first inspired Beck's enthusiasm. "The theater of cruelty is not a representation," Derrida writes. "It is life itself, in the extent to which life is unrepresentable" (234). In both essays, Derrida revoices Artaud's desire to do away with "a theater of interpretation, enregistrement, and translation," a theater in which the "preestablished text" is "a table written by a God-Author who is the sole wielder of the primal word." A thoroughly reinvented, "nontheological" theater (235) would rescue directors and actors from the status of textual "slaves" (185) and refocus their energy on the production of the unrepeatable event. Such concerns lead Derrida, in "La parole soufflée," to reflect upon the familiar concluding paragraph of Artaud's preface to *The Theatre and Its Double*. The Richards translation reads:

... when we speak the word "life," it must be understood we are not referring to life as we know it from its surface of fact, but to that fragile, fluctuating center which forms never reach. And if there is still one hellish, truly accursed thing in our time, it is our artistic dallying with forms, instead of being like victims burnt at the stake, signaling through the flames. (Richards 13; see Derrida 179)

Artaud—and after him, The Living Theatre—would strive to stage the primal discourse of "signaling through the flames" rather than the representation of "life" (in Artaud's scare quotes) that we find in any textualized "surface of fact." Derrida's hybridized "Artaud" voice continues its critique of western theater:

The Occident—and such is the energy of its essence—has worked only for the erasure of the stage. For a stage which does nothing but illustrate a discourse is no longer entirely a stage. ... Released from the text and the author-god, mise en scène would be returned to its creative and founding freedom. ... The stage ... *will no longer represent*, since it will not operate as an addition, as the sensory illustration of a text already written, thought, or lived outside the stage, which the stage would then only repeat but whose fabric it would not constitute. (236-37)

By describing Artaud's project as something played for high stakes "as close as possible to the limit," Derrida suggests that Artaud exposes both "the possibility and impossibility" of the "pure theater" he desired to achieve. Is such ambition achievable in an actual theater? Probably not. Artaud calls for a "presence," Derrida concludes, that "has always already begun to represent itself, has always

already been penetrated”: “Theater as repetition of that which does not repeat itself,” at “the fatal limit of a cruelty which begins with its own representation” (249-50).

I very much doubt, however, that Beck and Malina would have been reading any of this brilliantly nuanced skepticism by early 1968, as they began to conceptualize and workshop *Paradise Now* in Sicily with their raggedy band of “beggars and stepchildren” (Malina, qtd. in Tytell 217). The naive, ecstatic hopefulness that informs the project appears far more clearly in the richly detailed *Paradise Now* book, “written down by” Malina and Beck, than in the surviving film footage of performances from the summer of 1968 to early January 1970. So too do the project’s complicated ideology and overall plan. To watch the footage that Rochlin captured—especially of the grotesque “final performance” at the Berlin Sportpalast—is to gather an impression of freak-show intensity and barely contained chaos. But the retrospectively prepared script that Beck and Malina published was far from chaotic.

The “charted” voyage of *Paradise Now* typically required well over four hours for its completion—prompting Clive Barnes to complain, in his *New York Times* review, that the performance he saw at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 1968 was even longer than *Parsifal* (see Tytell 244, 402-03). *Paradise Now* ascends a symbolic “ladder of eight Rungs”:

It begins in the present and moves into the future and returns to the present.
The plot is The Revolution.
The voyage is a vertical ascent toward Permanent Revolution.
The Revolution of which the play speaks is The Beautiful Non-Violent
Anarchist Revolution. (5)

It is important to remind ourselves that, although Beck in his writings on anarchism sometimes invoked Bakunin, his guiding spirit was Gandhi. Beck’s commitment to theater as a method of social reform signaled his rigorous advocacy of nonviolence. This extended from pacifism and techniques of nonviolent resistance to a refusal to kill animals for food:

When the pacifist does not combine his pacifism with vegetarianism, maybe it too easily and too quickly breaks down into that moment when the pacifist says, “But there’s a certain moment when you *have* to kill”—and that’s the moment when the truth flies out and it all disintegrates, it all falls apart, and we get back into the same old story again. ... A. J. Muste once ... said ... “Being a pacifist between wars is like being a vegetarian between dinners.” And I think it’s part of sensibilization ... the struggle to increase our sensitivity. Gandhi said, “You don’t believe in it? *Do* it.” Put on the mask. The mask then will become your face. You make a choice for an ethical action. ... You say no, and you opt for the vegetable instead—and then you begin to dig it. (Rochlin and Harris 31-34 m.; see 29-34 m.)

The profound connectedness of re-educated impulses and ethical choices at every level of human behavior, from the street protest to the kitchen, helps to explain what might be called the organicism of the hybridized *Paradise Now* script. And, as noted, this organic connectedness—which promises nothing less than an ascent by means of performance into a new paradise on earth—is not immediately apparent from the noise and bustle of isolated film clips, even when assembled lovingly by an acolyte like Rochlin.

Movement from Rung to Rung of *Paradise Now* seeks to free “the actors’ and spectators’ bodies” alike from social and cultural “taboos,” so that the group returning to the street at the end of a long evening “should be ready for action” (7). In this carefully restricted sense—seeking to inspire the nonfictional, nonrepresentational “action” of nonconformity and civil disobedience, as opposed to an eruption of terrorist violence against forces of oppression—the work of The Living Theatre was Artaudian and “cruel.”

Each Rung presents its own “rite,” “vision,” and “action,” supported by mythico-spiritual premises drawn from world religions. And the complexity of this is best encountered in Beck and Malina’s published script, begun six months after the work’s premiere in Avignon. Two of these Rungs are worth examining closely in the present context.

Rung 1, “The Rung of Good and Evil,” begins with a “Rite of Guerilla Theatre” that foregrounds the evils of societal prohibition. The many actors (thirty-six company members are listed in the front matter of the published script) appear on the stage and in the theater aisles. They chant a series of statements:

I AM NOT ALLOWED TO TRAVEL WITHOUT A PASSPORT.
 I DON’T KNOW HOW TO STOP THE WARS.
 YOU CAN’T LIVE IF YOU DON’T HAVE MONEY.
 I’M NOT ALLOWED TO SMOKE MARIJUANA.
 I’M NOT ALLOWED TO TAKE MY CLOTHES OFF.

The repetition of each phrase takes the form of a two-minute crescendo: beginning in “a very quiet, urgent, but personal voice,” one actor after another approaches one audience member after another. The actor allows each repetition to “express greater urgency and frustration . . . at the taboos and inhibitions imposed” by the structure of society. The climax of the crescendo is a “flipout,” sometimes accompanied by “a collective scream” that, in the view of its creators, “is the pre-revolutionary outcry.”

Then the actors perform a “flashout,” releasing themselves artfully from “all the hangups of the present situation”:

At this point the actors return to the artist’s quiet center. They stand still and breathe.
 Pause and begin again.

The most notorious of the “flipouts” accompanies the repetition of the final statement:

Even the nearest, the most natural, is prohibited. The body itself of which we are made is taboo. We are ashamed of what is most beautiful; we are afraid of what is most beautiful. The corruption of the fig leaf is complete corruption. We may not arouse each other; we may not act naturally toward one another. The Culture represses Love. (Flipout.)

Having come to the final human absurdity that the body is somehow bad, the actors do not scream about it, but act it out by removing as much of their clothing as the [local] law allows. As they reach the climax of their flipout they begin to tear their clothes off in a frenzy while shouting out I'M NOT ALLOWED TO TAKE MY CLOTHES OFF. (15-17)

The sometimes-total disrobing of the Living Theatre actors, which by Rung 4 invited the participation of audience members, could be played before an audience: repeatable and “dramatized” as an ordered segment of a script, but unrepeatable in terms of a given audience’s reaction and degree of willingness to participate. It was a demonstrable version—and a frequently policed one—of the violation of a social taboo.

Let’s situate the legendary actor nudity of *Paradise Now* in its historical moment. We are approaching the end of the decade that definitively crashed the Hollywood “Production Code,” and in 1968 began policing “adult” content in film distribution with a ratings system. In the arguably more polite world of galleries and “live art” venues, the work was also growing “X-rated.” A significant, exemplary figure at this time is the abstract expressionist painter Carolee Schneemann (who as of this writing continues to work, teach, and achieve admiring recognition). During the 1960s she began to work in multiple media, including performance, and “re-oriented the history of twentieth century Western art towards a radical engagement with the flesh.” Ara Osterweil of McGill University has recently commented:

By the early 60s, meat was everywhere. ... Even before encountering poet Michael McClure’s theory that all human beings were nothing more than “bags of meat,” Schneemann had already begun to articulate a nascent ontology of the flesh. As the daughter of a country doctor, Schneemann witnessed the fleshy vicissitudes of living and dying bodies at an early age. ... (136)

With works like *Eye Body* (1963), *Meat Joy* (1964), and such anti-war experiments as the film *Viet-Flakes* (1965) and the multi-media “kinetic theater” piece *Illinois Central* (1968), Schneemann “foregrounded the actual meat of the body rather than just the marks that it left,” in “provocations that would continually earn her wrath, derision and degradation by the phallogocentric art world” (136). Her erotic film *Fuses*, completed in 1967, attracted “charges of

narcissism and exhibitionism” (136)—but also won the Cannes Film Festival Special Jury Selection prize in 1969.

In April 1968, the musical *Hair: The American Tribal Love-Rock Musical* reached Broadway, after its 1967 debut at The Public Theater. In August 1969, a few months after the end of The Living Theatre’s American tour, the news coverage of the Woodstock Festival had fun describing the pot-smoking, skinny-dipping, “free love” antics of “Woodstock Nation” (as Abbie Hoffman would call it): an important social performance by half a million counterculture members, in the relatively safe space of a music festival on a huge dairy farm in the Catskills. Tytell takes the position that, despite the “frontal nudity” and occasional audience interactivity of *Hair*, the theatrical product was consumer merchandise offering a “superficial kind of joy,” “sassy and good-natured”: “because of its banality, it could both appeal to the values of peace and love and satisfy tourists” across its many-year run (260). Beck, writing in November 1969, takes an even dimmer view of the “Woodstock rebellion,” characterizing it as an extension of consumerism:

The establishment encourages it: it has buying power. Abbie makes that clear in his book: the establishment encourages it in order to encompass it and exploit it economically.

Time, *Life*, & *Newsweek* praise dope (soft stuff), praise the life-love style, praise the music, and the beads and customs.

Woodstock Nation frees the children of the bourgeoisie from the from the bourgeois form of life.

But it does not free the worker who manufactures the records or the guy who harvests the weed. ... [I]t is clear to the laborer breaking rocks in the street that the alternative life style of Woodstock Nation lives off the cake crumbs of Capital’s table. ...

Sing. Dance. Love. Peace. Get High. Graze. Flip out. Trip. Free Yourselves. Do your own thing. ...

This revolution, this hedonism, exploits gently while capitalist democracy exploits ruthlessly. Is that how to do it?

Woodstock Nation: Superior Product of Bourgeois Culture. ...

My job is to tell you this, to goad. Because I know who I am and who you are, and I know what you and I can do. (*Life* 170-71)

Most revealing about this critique, reprinted as a three-page rant in *The Life of the Theatre*, is that Beck truly believes in the higher revolutionary mission and value of his own company’s theatrical work. As long as the surface details (including actor and audience nudity) remain mere aspects of style—artistic style or a resulting “life style”—“the forces of repression can tolerate changes” (171) inspired by the likes of “Woodstock Nation” or *Hair* on Broadway. Beck and Malina sought to create a theater that would be *intolerable* to these forces—just as Schneemann (who once presented a piece, early on, at the 14th Street venue

of The Living Theatre) came to take pride in work that was disparaged by the critical establishment as “unforgivable” (see White, Introduction 8).

So what makes *Paradise Now*, according to its creators, significantly different from more commercialized “scandals” offered up by merchants of the counterculture? One thing might be what, after Brecht, we can call its alienated mode of presenting the undressed body to public view.

In John Willett’s translation of Brecht’s “Short Description of a New Technique of Acting which Produces an Alienation Effect,” Brecht imagines someone asking:

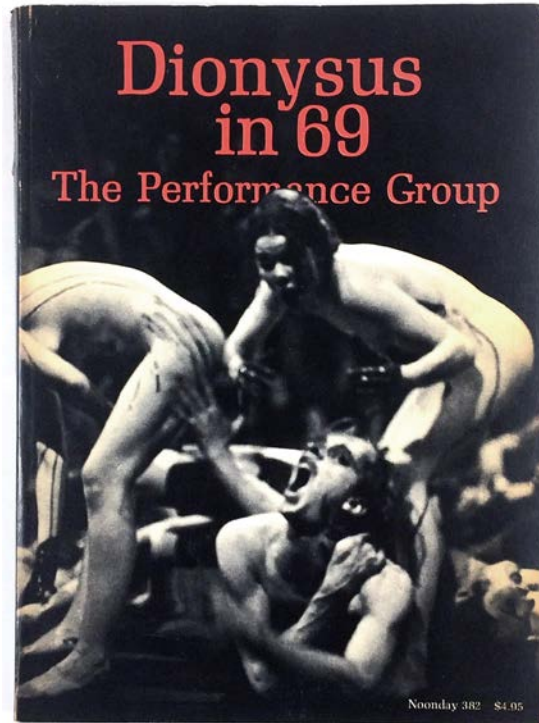
“Have you ever really looked carefully at your watch?” The questioner knows that I’ve looked at it often enough, and now his question deprives me of the sight which I’ve grown used to and which accordingly has nothing more to say to me. I used to look at it to see the time, and now when he asks me in this importunate way I realize that I have given up seeing the watch itself with an astonished eye. ... (*Brecht 144*)

Transfer this insight onto the scene of interpersonal relations. We tend to encounter human bodies masked in uniforms and generic costumes, in which they perform social roles: cop, emergency room nurse, administrative “suit.” And we look *through* these costumed bodies for the information we want from them: read me my rights, explain what’s wrong with me, lay out the deadlines, tell me the time. How often do we look at a body before us, beyond its role and function, with “an astonished eye”? What does it take to arrest and alienate our habitual vision?

In *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms*, Bert O. States riffs on the idea of Brechtian alienation, by describing two modes or extremes of perception familiar to western theatergoers. One extreme is what he calls semiotic or significative viewing: everything on stage (actor body, object, painted backdrop) is a sign for something else. (The actress uses her voice and body in a certain way, and dons these costume pieces, to become a sign for Reginald Denny; then she uses her voice and body in a different way, and dons other costume pieces, to become a sign for LAPD police chief Daryl Gates.) The other extreme is what States calls phenomenal viewing: we pay attention to the presence and materiality of a person or object or animal onstage as a unique “phenomenon” existing in our own world, at the present time. (Isn’t it amazing how Anna Deavere Smith can change her voice and body like that, so quickly and completely?)

These are not discrete modes of perception: States acknowledges how the theatergoer’s attention tends to slide continually between significative and phenomenal extremes of viewing (see 19-47)—that is, until a truly unexpected phenomenon arrives onstage to arrest what Brecht calls our “astonished eye.” States invokes limit cases of viewing “phenomena.” A dog onstage just “behaves” (sometimes charmingly, sometimes disobediently) since it does not know that it

is in a play. A “real” fire, signifying a fire in the play’s fictional world, sets a “real” actor’s clothing “really” on fire. At the end of the 1960s, one such phenomenon was still the naked actor body (or, with increasing frequency, a group of them) walking onstage into an unexpected setting, a production of “legitimate” or “serious” theater.



But this, of course, is the kind of calculated “scandal” that *Paradise Now* shared with *Hair* and similar playhouse events. In appreciating differences, a more useful comparison to *Paradise Now* would be its exact contemporary, Schechner’s hugely popular production of *Dionysus in '69* that opened at the Wooster Street Performing Garage in June 1968.

Like The Living Theatre, Schechner’s Performance Group attempted a critique of repressive social attitudes, by presenting a play “somewhat like” Euripides’s *Bacchae* but reimagined for the production’s own moment in history. Like The Living Theatre, The Performance Group witnessed the arrest of naked actors (six men and four women) when *Dionysus* toured to Ann Arbor for a performance on the campus of the University of Michigan (see “10”).

But the usually conservative Clive Barnes, who saw the production in New York five months after it opened, reassured readers that the production’s

“modest degree of nudity,” along with “the most graphic description of homosexual sex I have ever heard in the theater,” were appropriately motivated by the integrity and ambition of the adaptation. (Artaudian “cruelty,” in other words, is redeemed for the critic by offering itself “as the sensory illustration of a text already written, thought, or lived outside the stage”: a backhanded compliment.) “There are moments when it plunges you into the depths of Greek tragedy with an intensity that no conventional version,” of the sort desired by Barnes’s disparaging colleague Walter Kerr, “could quite match” (Barnes 52; see Kerr A6; Sullivan 35). Rumor-driven spectators in search of salacious cheap thrills, in other words, should stay away: “the few items perhaps conducive to voyeurism are too isolated and too mild” (Barnes 52).

In February 1969, *Dionysus* completed the eighth month of its long run, and the *Paradise Now* tour packed up to head south from Berkeley to USC. In the week after Valentine’s Day, Richard L. Coe—for over two decades the esteemed chief critic of my hometown paper *The Washington Post*—crankily declared all this nudity lately on stage to be “drearly dull.” Recalling the 1965 relocation to Broadway of the RSC’s *Marat/Sade*, he complained:

I suppose Peter Brook ... started it all when he persuaded Ian Richardson, who was playing Marat [in the tour], to step out of his bath, *au naturel*, albeit with his back to the audience. ... Living Theater has contributed to the excitement by its so-called “political” plays. The belief there seems to be that anger over what Living Theater deems contemptible is heightened by tearing off one’s clothes, and it doesn’t matter whether or not one is a member of the cast. Audience participation was an obvious next step in nude drama. (H5)

Naming Schechner a “prime cheerleader for this development” (H5), he cites the performance of *Paradise Now* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. The director of *Dionysus*—in response to a confrontation with an actor in the aisle shouting, “I AM NOT ALLOWED TO TAKE MY CLOTHES OFF”—gleefully responded, “Oh, yeah? Well, *I’m* allowed to take *my* clothes off,” and proceeded to do so, sitting naked for the production’s remaining hours (see also Tytell 244). Richard Coe’s cold eye, in any case, had grown un-astonished after one too many exposures.

As States suggests, the new can be shocking in the theater only while it is “preconventional.” He uses the example of “practical furniture” first being put onstage in European playhouses of the early 1850s,

directly upstage of the prompt box, as a way of forcing the actors out of the semicircle into more lifelike positions. From all reports, this created a temporary frenzy among the actors, since the art of acting—or grand acting, at least—had never required skill in moving around household obstacles. ... But one can guess that so much furniture, intruding insolently on this sacred space reserved by long tradition for the great set speeches of the drama, would not have been received simply as images and signs of chairs and tables

belonging to the fictional world of the play, but as things imported from the realm of the real, as unforeseen on the stage as the nude in Manet's *Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe*. It goes without saying that practical furniture soon ... lost whatever shock value it may have had. ... (41-42)

Real tables and chairs rapidly became *conventional* onstage, and thereby began to “disappear into the order” (43) of a new paradigm of stage representation. So too did onstage nudity, after astonishing the eye at the end of the 1960s, begin “disappear into the order” as the ten-year run of *Hair* wore on. The Living Theatre, having contributed so powerfully to its “preconventional shock,” moved away from featuring the “convention” of the naked actor in its productions of the 1970s.

But to return to Clive Barnes's surprisingly generous and perceptive review of *Dionysus*: it concludes by asking viewers to approach this revolutionary achievement “with a pure heart and an open mind.” Unlike The Living Theatre, he concludes, Schechner and company demonstrate that such an environmental, interactive rethinking of traditional staging practices “need by no means be inimical to the further growth and prosperity of the conventional theater” (52). At stake for Barnes is not the preconventional shock of indecent exposure, but the loss—to “environments” and audience interaction—of the entire theatrical apparatus that sustains and makes meaningful his career as a reviewer.

For without question, the signifying value of phenomenal nudity in *Paradise Now* was to call for a revolution against social conventions and laws that discouraged “public indecency” in all policed forms. In the process—played for high stakes “as close as possible to the limit”—the production sought to inspire a larger revolution that would send Barnes's beloved “conventional theater” from bourgeois playhouses back out onto the streets.

The public controversy surrounding *Paradise Now* often focused on “The Rite of Universal Intercourse” that began “Rung IV: The Rung of the Way.” In the Beck and Malina script, we read:

The actors gather near the center of the playing area. They lie down together on the stage floor, embracing. Their bodies form a pile, caressing, moving, undulating, loving. They are breaking the touch barrier. ... All the bodies are beautiful. They reach out toward one another. The actors make a low humming sound. If a member of the public joins this group, he is welcomed into the Rite. (74)

On a few occasions, hundreds of viewers apparently broke the “touch barrier.” As Living Theatre members discovered, sometimes to their dismay, audience members who accepted the production's invitation to disrobe and join the “pile” were capable of acts of sexual assault; the very different memories of Malina and performer Jenny Hecht are worth reviewing in this connection (see Tytell 244-45, 259). The Reichian goal of performing this Rung, ironically, was to cultivate a revolutionary awareness of the history of violence: “To overcome violence we

have to overcome the sexual taboo. ... The Beautiful Non-Violent Anarchist Revolution will only take place after The Sexual Revolution because before that the energy is violent" (80). Among the "bitter carnivals" of *Paradise Now* performances were interactive encounters with audience members who entered the sexual revolution without first transcending impulses toward violence and aggression.



But to view "The Rite of Universal Intercourse" in isolation is to misrecognize its place and function in "The Rung of the Way." The script instructs the performers to abruptly withhold and disband the rite, after it is underway. There follows an image-specific "vision" that keys the production's revolutionary ambitions to flashpoints in current events:

The actors rise from The Rite of Universal Intercourse and take positions in pairs, a victim and an executioner. The executioner stands with his back to the audience, his right hand extended toward the head of the victim, his fingers pointing in the children's-game representation of a gun. The victim stands with his hands behind his back facing the audience. The position is as close an approximation as possible of the photograph taken by Edward Adams which appeared in the newspapers ... showing the execution of a captured Vietcong ...

The photograph was, at that moment in time, one of the world's most powerful and widely circulated anti-war images: combat photographer Eddie Adams's Pulitzer-Prize-winning still image of General Nguyen Ngoc Loan, Saigon chief of police, executing a Viet Cong prisoner on a public street on February 1, 1968, at the beginning of the Tet Offensive during the American involvement in the Vietnam War.



The *Paradise Now* vision continues with the violent transformation of the group recently engaged in “universal intercourse”:

The executioners in unison make the sound of the firing of a gun. The victims fall simultaneously. The victims rise again and resume their original positions; the executioners fire, the victims fall. The victims rise, the executioners fire, the victims fall. ... At the end of twenty enactments of this repeated dream, the victims begin to address the executioners with the words of The Rite of Prayer [from Rung II]: Holy Eyes, Holy Legs, Holy Mouth. ... And the executioners reply with the phrases of The Rite of Guerilla Theatre: I Am Not Allowed to Take My Clothes Off, You Can't Live If You Don't Have Money, I Am Not Allowed To Smoke Marijuana (75)

And so forth. Eventually, however:

the executioners are moved to respond, not with violence, but with love, and gently address the victims with the words of The Rite of Prayer. The Vision ends with the embrace of victim and executioner. (Flashout.) (75-77)

The name of this performed vision is “APOKATASTASIS”: Greek for “restoration to an original or primordial condition,” with the connotation of a return to Eden or Paradise. (The lower-stakes “Woodstock Nation” version of this would be the lyric to the Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young cover of Joni Mitchell’s “Woodstock” anthem: “We are stardust, we are golden, we are billion year old carbon”—or later, “we are caught in the devil’s bargain”—“And we’ve got to get ourselves back to the garden.”)



The accompanying “action,” which concerns a site of confrontation on the world stage—on this particular Rung, “the problem of Arab-Jewish hostility” (79)—contains the following prompts to the actors.

Apokatastasis. The transformation of the demonic forces into the celestial.

...

Find a way to reverse history.

Who are the victims? Who are the executioners? What do you chose? (78)

Every Rung of the ladder contains an action that calls our attention back from performed sensuality and “sensibilization” (Beck’s word) to complicated, seemingly insoluble problems of the world at the present day.

The scripted “action” for Rung 2, for example, reflects upon the 1967 execution of Che Guevara in Bolivia, in a military action initiated by a CIA operative. But the script prompts the actors to respond improvisationally to

whatever is happening in the world at the time of any given performance, and not slavishly follow a prescribed scenario:

If the play is being performed on a day on which there has been news of some significant action pertinent to the revolutionary theme of this Rung, the name of the city in which the event took place and reference to the event may be substituted for Bolivia. (44)

Then Beck and Malina provide examples of how this was done in actual performances.

Several years later, Augusto Boal would provide the following description of how his “Joker” figure (in one of its early formulations) engaged in improvised dialogue with the audience:

If on the day of the performance some important event occurs which is related to the theme of the play, that relationship should be analyzed. (185)

Boal’s Joker—a narrator, existing not in a fictional scene (like Thornton Wilder’s “Stage Manager”) but in the presence of an actual audience—must acknowledge the fact of the audience’s own here-and-now. The Joker must begin the performance by observing that the actors happen to be performing an ancient tragic tale on the day that, let’s say, the Twin Towers fell—or on the day that Jared Lee Loughner shot Gabby Giffords and a crowd of bystanders—or on the day that Omar Mateen killed forty-nine people and wounded fifty-three others in an Orlando club. And then we need to *talk* about it, as part of the performance: what does that old play have to say to *this*? Apparently Beck and Malina’s company, in 1968, had been prepared in rehearsal to act as Jokers (although The Living Theatre did not use this term).

For years I have been curious about the coincidence that Beck and Malina, along with other members of The Living Theatre, were imprisoned in and later exiled from Brazil in 1971, after a year of practice that included conducting theater workshops with impoverished populations in Brazilian favelas. While the blotter charge in the group’s arrest was possession of marijuana, the “evidence” was believed to have been planted by the police; during booking, Malina noticed that “the phrase ‘suspicion of acts of subversion’ had been stamped on their dockets” (Tytell 299; see 278-304). 1971 was, of course, the year in which Boal was arrested, tortured, and ultimately exiled from Brazil, by the police arm of the same repressive administration that had harassed and jailed members of The Living Theatre.

Although I have not yet come across any evidence of this, perhaps the interest in exploring a “theater of the oppressed” might have brought together these three figures after Beck and Malina’s arrival in Brazil at the end of July 1970. Subject for further research: I have recently become aware of a panel discussion at Hunter College on March 15, 1972, moderated by Bernard Dort, the Brecht scholar and one-time colleague of Roland Barthes. Presented as part

of the Latin American Fair of Opinion, the panel “about theatre and the revolutionary movement” brought together Judith Malina, Julian Beck, and Augusto Boal. (Now that the school year has finally ended, I will devote some time and energy this summer to viewing the one copy of a VHS recording of this event that apparently lives in the library system of New York University.)

Regardless of whether or not a professional relationship or dialogue existed outside this event, however, what I find significant here is the shared ambition of diverse “performance” practitioners to develop a truly political art—a theater of action, dedicated to remaking the world, nonrepresentational, “nontheological,” post-literary, post-Artaudian, post-Brechtian—that is conceived oppositionally to the commercial, bourgeois apparatus of “theater.” Studying the career of Boal has had far more traction in the development of “devised” and “applied” theater within the academy of the industrialized west.

For there is admittedly something messier, looser, more unhinged, and yes, more time-locked and *dated* about the example of The Living Theatre, at least up to the time of Beck’s death in 1985. In tracing the idealism that drove the founders of The Living Theater, I wonder if it ever added up to an ideology, let alone the sound basis for an ongoing political practice.

When I read Beck’s declarations about using performance to move the world beyond capitalism, for example, I keep returning to words like ecstatic, utopian, visionary, dreamlike—as well as terms like self-contradictory and naive. Having discovered Quimbanda practices during his first months in Brazil, for example, Beck immediately sees in the “forbidden ritual,” with its “sexual/spiritual” liberation, the model for a theatre. Here, he believes, is the very “ceremony of repressed people”:

It is the plan of their revolution. It is the truthful expression of a popular dream: it is desperate theatre full of hope. (111)

The performance of his own “desperate theatre,” filled with rites, visions, and actions, would lead audience members in a single long evening toward a state of radicalized consciousness, and a movement back out onto the street. “What to say to the people in the street,” he muses:

That money is not essential to natural order; that we can live better without it than with it. That we don’t need barter either.
 That the people need only to produce what is necessary for everyone, and to distribute it without using money.
 That the food and materials we need can be brought to open markets and storehouses, and people can come and take what they need.
 That in order to produce enough food, clothing, shelter, etc., for everybody in the world, everyone needs to work about two months a year.
 That the remaining time can be used for leisure, love, creative work, grooving, ecstasy, as each one wishes....

That, once we do away with money, we can do away with government, police, armies. End of punitive systems. End of ownership. ...
 That we can do without jails. Stealing begins not to exist at the moment at which we abandon private property.
 That we don't need mental *institutions* (ill-disguised jails). We can take care of our brothers and sisters without metal and bars. (*Life* 228-29)

Problematic here is Beck's idealization of madness, which springs in part from his fascination with Artaud. Such idealizing inspired the company to develop workshops in European psychiatric hospitals, beginning in 1976.

Film footage of one such "play about liberation" (Tytell 326)—a "madhouse play" performed in a Paris hospital in 1982—appears near the end of *Signals through the Flames* (see Rochlin and Harris 83-89 m.). An unprepared viewer, casting a cold eye on this footage, would find much to critique. The improvised spectacle might be dismissed as a naive romanticizing of madness, essentializing and even condescending in its view of the patients: at best an act of ideological wish-fulfillment by well-intentioned dilettantes, who themselves are not health care professionals.

And yet the spectacle is compelling, in much the same way that the sadly dated footage of *Paradise Now* performances is nonetheless compelling. These people truly believed that what they were doing could make a difference. "None of us is free, until we all are free," we hear Beck say on the *Signals* soundtrack, while the company leads patients through the streets outside the psychiatric hospital. "All or nothing, that's the only reality. Utopia. Paradise Now. Love is affection" (Rochlin and Harris 88 m.).

At about 57 minutes into *Signals through the Flames*, near the end of the compilation of clips from various performances of *Paradise Now*, the live artist Steven Ben Israel (who left the company finally in 1977) delivers a rant to audience members about the performance's political agenda:

I'm gonna flip out every day to *blow your mind*. You know why? So that the next day you blow *her* mind. It was the same thing in New York, and it was the same thing in San Francisco. We have to make this clear. *This is the struggle*. I'm flipping out, and you're saying, "What?" That is the struggle. Tomorrow, *you* have to flip out, so somebody else can say, "What?"

Is The Living Theatre's program of political action, in the final analysis, no more complicated than this? Or, to state the matter more generously, is it precisely this complicated? Was the goal of Beck and Malina's company to challenge social convention and legal restriction so profoundly that audience members, having said "What?" would walk out of the theater and "flip out," to blow somebody else's mind?

The saddest notes in the documentary *Signals* are sounded when Beck and Malina, in the early 1980s, look back to the wild ambition of the company's goals at the time of *Paradise Now*. After the heady enthusiasm of the first days of

Mai '68, "we were not prepared" for, Beck admits, "nor did we calculate, the great strength of established power" (Rochlin and Harris 40 m.; see 38-45 m.). Malina speaks even more ruefully about "the period that we came through very recently,"

in which there was an *enormous* spurt of revolutionary fervor, in which there was an energy that made us feel that we could, within a very short period, um, certainly before 1980, change our entire form of structuring our lives in the world, how we eat, how we live together, how we work, how we supply our needs, how we educate ourselves and our children. We thought we were going to change everything. (Rochlin and Harris 6-8 m.)

Instead, after Beck's death at the beginning of Ronald Reagan's second term, Malina admits that "we have arrived at a moment in history when we witness the apparent triumph of materialism over that 'utopian dream'" (Beck, *Life* xi).

"Nomads live shorter lives," Beck wrote in *The Life of the Theatre*, "but the wide range of their experience is their compensation" (53). I therefore nominate The Living Theatre, circa 1968, as the ancestor of "performance" (the key term in "performance studies") in the genealogy provided by my sock-puppet Task Force on Heritage chair. The company's history does not reduce easily into the generalizing tendencies of theory. The oversimplifications and self-contradictions of their public pronouncements are not easily papered over by politically or academically correct speech. But the range of their experience was wide, and continues to teach me things.

Among those things: while assembling these notes in the spring of 2016, my review of Living Theatre materials inspired me to take a few weeks out to edit one more video essay. The final piece in the video anthology is a fifty-two-minute "footnote" to what I have just written, entitled, "Julian Beck, Near the End of His Life, Takes a Role on a Cop Show." I began by admitting to myself that, for at least the last decade, when I mentioned Judith Malina, Julian Beck, The Living Theatre, or *Paradise Now* in my adaptation classes, almost none of my students had any idea what I was talking about. I might as well be holding forth about Alcibiades or Hroswitha.

The "footnote" began as a teaching module: long enough to cover some territory and hopefully ignite curiosity that might lead to "further research," but short enough to show in a fifty-minute class session. But my use of mystory techniques turned it into something else entirely. The Living Theatre—which declares itself, on its website, to be still alive, even though it just lost yet another of its venues—is my exact contemporary. It was conceived at the end of the 1940s, launched itself with productions in 1951, and reached young adulthood in the tumultuous late sixties. I wanted to use the company's history as a funhouse mirror: to see how something my age, with many of my own interests, grew and changed over time, and to get a sense of where it's headed as it turns the corner

into senior citizenship. More than that, however, I wanted to better understand why Julian Beck, close to death, took a role on a stylish, trend-setting cop show.

A necessarily incomplete review

When the invitation arrived to participate in a sham “business meeting” at the NCA conference in November 2014, celebrating the Association’s hundred-year anniversary, I couldn’t say no. The first NCA convention I attended was in Minneapolis in 1978, when I was laboring to complete my doctoral dissertation and just entering the job market. For the next two careerist decades, I was pretty much a regular attendee and presenter at NCA.

What first made me think twice about wanting to continue attending, however, was an assault on a scholarly journal sponsored by the NCA, which in 1997 published a juried essay by Frederick Corey and Thomas Nakayama called “Sextext.” The special issue of *Text and Performance Quarterly* examined “Alternatives in Writing about Performance,” and the essay in question—an acknowledged fiction narrated by a constructed “I” in place of a co-authorial “we”—explored in sometimes explicitly erotic, sometimes melancholy ways “the scholarly potential” of “pornographic writing” (Corey and Nakayama 65).

The cries of protest came mostly from mid-career academics, well-respected for work in areas ranging from rhetorical theory to interpersonal and organizational communication; a few of them, by their own admission, were dubious to begin with about the claim that “performance” could function as a research methodology. But some of the outrage arose from Association members who once located their work in the old Interpretation Division—the study of literature through reading aloud, the NCA division with the closest historical ties to the organization’s elocutionary origins—and who had stayed aboard in 1991 when Interpretation reimaged itself as Performance Studies. “When our authors, editorial boards, journal editors, and professional organizations are unable (or unwilling) to distinguish between scholarship and pornography,” one communication professor warned, “we are in trouble”: how can we convince “the public at large that we are a serious, worthy academic discipline that merits the society’s trust and treasure”? Another lamented that the more “embarrassing” writing in the journal’s issue just “ain’t scholarship,” and scholarship ain’t just “evocative.” To be accepted by the academic community it “must involve something more than the mere ability to evoke a feeling or response.” But some of the best stuff came from a college dean who—while rhetorically affirming the “right” of a scholar journal’s editorial board “to publish gay pornography”—worried about the drying-up of state funding in response to publications that demonstrate “our triviality, our irrelevance, our anarchy” to state legislators whose very sense of “performance studies” as an academic discipline might be based on their encounter with this essay. The author concluded by announcing

that he was dropping both his subscription to the journal and his long-time affiliation with the NCA Performance Studies Division (qtd. in Edwards 36-37; see 34-39).

This all blew over quickly, of course. The NCA's Executive Director issued a poker-faced response. While refusing to support or oppose the specific content of "Sextext," he felt "that no justification" of its publication "is warranted": "Until we are made aware of better policies, NCA will continue to trust its peer review and editorial procedures to produce journals that publish scholarship of the highest possible quality" (qtd. in Edwards 38). For indeed, the journal's editor, my former teacher and dear friend Paul Gray, had played by all the rules. His duty was to respond to a diverse community of scholars: he took the essays seriously enough to circulate manuscripts to his board, weighed carefully the reader responses, and at length (since he had a "varied" response) proceeded to a difficult editorial decision. Accusations of professional irresponsibility were particularly painful for him: "I have devoted my professional life to Performance Studies, and do not believe anybody in the field loves it more" (qtd. in Edwards 38). At its annual business meeting on November 21, 1997, the Performance Studies Division passed by unanimous voice-vote a motion of support for Gray's editorship.

I took away from this incident two valuable gifts. First, I was soon able to appreciate the "Sextext" controversy as nothing particularly new in the centuries-long Anglo-American pedagogical tradition that eventually gave rise to the NCA. It was, rather, the latest scandal in a history of Grundyism that responded to the ongoing "problem" of the performing body by disparaging its intolerable, unforgivable acts. The jeremiads responding to "Sextext" provided me with a lens for viewing and researching that history, and the result, a few years later, was the monograph *Unstoried*.

Second, when the opportunity arrived to prank the history of the NCA, the controversy provided me with a character to play. I confess that, as the deadline approached, I was in a bit of a jam. There was the perpetual problem of the time limit on a scholarly panel: whatever "history" I chose to present, I had to unfold it in ten short minutes. But beyond this, I couldn't be there: on the afternoon that the convention program met, I was teaching a class at Northwestern that I couldn't reschedule. I needed a persona with a good reason to be present digitally on that afternoon, rather than in the flesh. Gratefully, my recollection of the "Sextext" police came to the rescue.

The Task Force persona to whom I lent my voice, image, and name was not based on any specific individual. It was, rather, a kind of composite version of the "Sextext" cops, or perhaps merely the attitude or type that they represented: two decades older but no less alarmed by the scandal presented by "performance" as a research method and "performance studies" as a scholarly discipline. The character I played hopes to steer us through the present state of institutional

disorder by appealing to the wisdom of “the Seventeen,” the NCA’s founding fathers. My sock puppet arises from a tradition that extends from Juvenal through Swift’s *Modest Proposal* to the right-wing host of *The Colbert Report*. Once I was free to make the Task Force chair, in Colbert’s words, “a well-intentioned, poorly informed, high-status idiot” (qtd. in Strauss 61), I was free as well to riff on the history of oppositional performance—to trace that history, moreover, in the short segment I had, in a way that would not need to be answerable to anyone else’s version of it.

As discussed above, two important pieces were already in place. Like *Paradise Now*, Richard Schechner’s *Dionysus in 69* at Manhattan’s Performing Garage (still the home, today—garage door and all—of the breakaway Wooster Group) is well-documented. Not only did Schechner publish a book about it, and write about it in various other places—notably in his book *Environmental Theatre*—but the very young Brian DePalma shot a raw but watchable film of a performance. *Dionysus in 69* participated significantly in the revolutionary space then being opened by The Living Theatre. Schechner’s own anecdotes about *Dionysus*, such as an audience’s “kidnapping” of Pentheus, suggest that the show could often go on under extraordinary circumstances. But even Schechner admits that the company “began to resent participation especially when it broke the rhythms of what had been carefully rehearsed.” By the time the production closed, “most of the performers had had it with participation” (*Environmental* 44; see 40-46).

The much-reprinted photograph of Peter Brook and Jerzy Grotowski was taken by Zbigniew Raplewski in 1975, at a time when the controversial careers of both artists were well underway. Grotowski had organized a “University of Research of the Theatre of Nations,” which met (along with an accompanying performance festival) from June 14 to July 7 in Wrocklaw. I send my eternal thanks to the late Lisa Wolford, who made possible a couple of face-to-face meetings with the aging Grotowski in the 1990s. Concerning the Nixon resignation, the Bee Gees, Donna Summer, “Hello Kitty,” and the Ayatollah Khomeini: contextualization of these figures in the history of postmodern performance is beyond the scope of the present essay.

Following the cover page of the first edition of Richard Schechner’s *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (2002) are images of the following artists.

- Karen Finley, performing *We Keep Our Victims Ready* (1989).
- Tim Miller, performing *Shirts and Skins* (1997).
- Carolee Schneemann, performing *Interior Scroll* (1975).
- William Mapplethorpe and Patti Smith, hanging out in front of the camera during the “just kids” years.
- Jim Morrison, mug shots from three of his arrests (1963, 1967, 1970).
- Charles Ludlam, posing with birds.

- Ludlam performing in *Salammô* (1985) at the Ridiculous Theatrical Company.
- Brecht's *Mother Courage* by Schechner and the Performance Group at the Performing Garage (1975).
- Lorraine O'Grady's "Frame Me" (a.k.a. "Art Is . . .") performed as part of the 1983 African-American Day Parade in Harlem.
- The Wooster Group: *Route 1 e³ 9*, directed by Elizabeth LeCompte, at the Performing Garage (1981).
- The Wooster Group: *L.S.D. (. . . Just the High Points . . .)*, directed by Elizabeth LeCompte, at the Performing Garage (1984).
- William Pope.L in 1997, appearing in *Eracism* (apparently version #7b of a performance series begun in 1992 and continuing into the twenty-first century). The image appears on the back cover of the catalog *William Pope.L: The Friendliest Black Artist in America*, edited by Mark H. C. Bessire, curator of the retrospective of Pope.L's work that traveled across the United States beginning in 2002.
- Senga Nengudi, *Performance Piece*, performed by Maren Hassinger (1978), as part of the *R.S.V.P.* series revisited in the exhibition *Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art* at various galleries, 2013-15.
- Anna Deavere Smith performing three characters in *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* (stage, 1994) as recorded for broadcast on PBS Great Performances (2001).
- Ryszard Cieslak in Grotowski's Laboratory Theatre production of *The Constant Prince*, Wrocław, 1965.
- Grotowski, late in life.
- Unidentified woman reclining on a bed of nails.
- Images of suspension art, featuring Stelarc's "Ear on Arm Suspension" at a gallery in Melbourne, Australia on March 8, 2012.
- "Trans-Fixed": Chris Burden "crucified" on a Volkswagen, on April 23, 1974 in Venice, California.
- Carolee Schneemann: a still from the *Eye Body* portfolio (1963).

The significance of these figures to me and to the character I'm performing no doubt would be different.

Prior to the recent publication of the retrospective collection *Carolee Schneemann: Unforgivable*, the books that most influenced my sense of her importance were the volume *More Than Meat Joy* (1979), which thoroughly reviews her work to 1978, and *Correspondence Course* (2010), the "epistolary history" of Schneemann and her circle (or "tribe") which sheds some light on her contacts with performers like Beck and Malina. But *Unforgivable* lays a heavy stress on her career-long artistic identification with painting. In an interview with Ron Hanson, she comments:

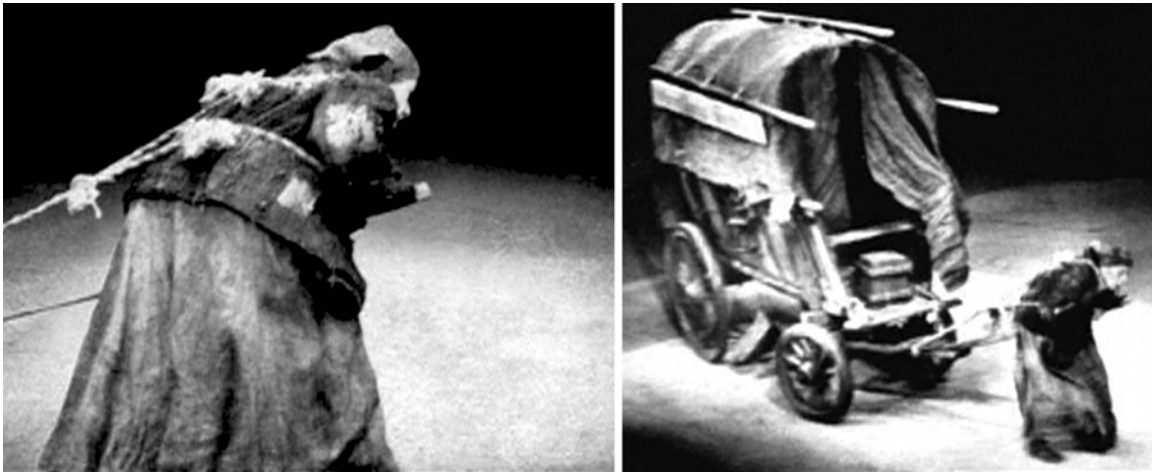
I still define myself, as you know, as a painter. I never say I'm a performance artist. I'm appalled by that term. I don't know why.... It limits the range of my

essential work. It's not "performative." ... I object to the terminology because I associate performance with trained animals. Judges perform and the stock market performs. The last thing on earth most radical artists expected to do was to "perform." You know, we were inventive and risking and exploring, and not ever repeating something exactly over again as a performative concept. (Hanson 14)

By associating "performance" and "performative" with "theatrical" and "conventional" and "repetitive"—rather than with the oppositional, Artaudian stance of The Living Theatre—Schneemann nevertheless urges us to rethink "plastic" arts, widely defined, in kinetic terms. "I'm still painting in my way with video and other materials," including "kinetic sculpture" (Hanson 14). Although I did not encounter this quote until a year and a half after presenting the video, it does not make me rethink the inclusion of Schneemann on my short list of "performance history" flash cards.

In speaking, above, about the impact of Chicago's 500 Clown, I discuss my hesitancy to use terms like "life-changing" in connection with playgoing. But Schechner's production of the Ralph Manheim translation of *Mother Courage*, which I was fortunate to see in a gymnasium on the campus of American University in August 1975, was life-changing. In December 1970, at Arena Stage in Washington, I suffered through the well-intentioned production by Gilbert Moses of George Tabori's translation, featuring Viveca Lindfors, Jane Alexander, and Howard Witt—all excellent, but thrown away on the bungled execution of a director's concept. In the lengthening shadow of Nixon's Cambodian Invasion and the Kent State shootings, Arena's *Mother Courage* replaced the projected "epic theater" legends with television monitors, on which a commentator tried feebly to induce the effect of "watching the war" on the evening news; the device was handled so clumsily that even the on-camera actor, stumbling over his lines, kept breaking into unintentional laughter. (I say this with all humility: as a concept director, I've subjected audiences to worse.)

In most other respects, the production (my second) was tediously familiar—in part because the director had done his homework with Brecht's Model Book a little too rigorously. The text of the *Couragemodell* documents the 1949 production on the proscenium stage of Berlin's Deutches Theater. It explains, among other things, how a large and apparently noisy revolve (not motorized but cranked by stagehands) was used to signifying effect. At its first appearance, "Mother Courage's cart is rolled forward against the movement of the revolve," thereby allowing Courage's two sons to walk forward and the wheels to turn while the wagon stayed in place (Willett, *Mother* 96).



At the end, however—following the elaborate harnessing business documented as well in the *Couragemodell* photos—Courage apparently pulled the wagon in the direction of the revolve. Weary but determined, she “described a complete circle with [the wagon] on the revolving stage, passing the footlights for the last time”:

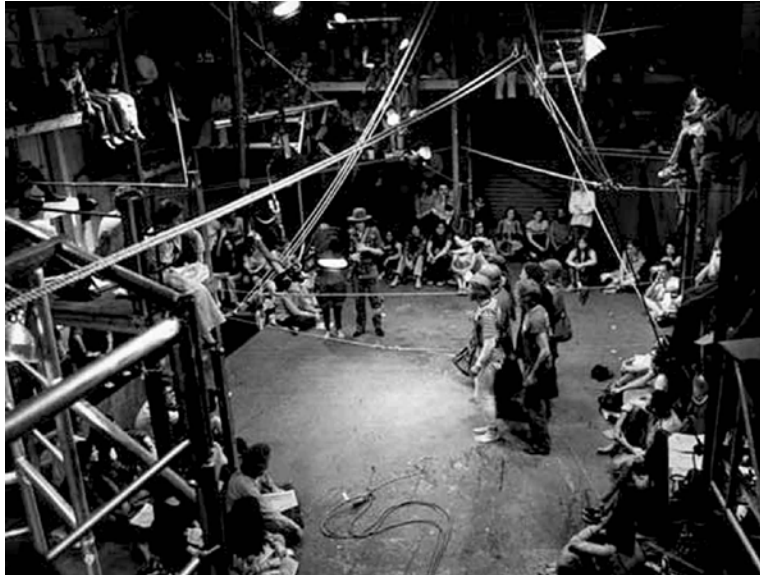
*Alone, Mother Courage harnesses herself to her empty cart; still hoping to get back into business, she follows the ragged army. ... The last stanza of the “Mother Courage Song” has begun as she is bending down over the shaft. The revolve begins to turn and Mother Courage circles the stage once. The curtain falls as she turns right rear for the second time. (Willett, *Mother* 132-33)*

Whereas walking in place had earlier emphasized and alienated the horse-like labor of the sons, here the rotation of the revolve emphasized the distance Courage would have to travel without assistance in order to catch up with the army

Well, since Brecht had used a mechanized revolve, the Arena production would also use a mechanized revolve. The problem: the 1970 production was staged in a large, steeply raked arena, the size of a boxing ring, in which the actors would have been *more* visible to more of the audience had they simply pulled the wagon in a circle. On the night I saw it, a board operator appears to have pushed the wrong button: in scene seven, the energetic actors pulled the wagon in the direction of a rapidly spinning platter, and appeared to the mystified audience rather like a 45-rpm record. “Brecht is destroyed,” Peter Brook had warned us in 1968, “by deadly slaves” (69). Or as Brecht himself put the matter, “The model should not be used to excess” (Willett, *Mother* 92) but merely as a stimulus for fresh thought.

Schechner, reconfiguring his platform “environment” from the Performing Garage for a campus gymnasium, wanted to sweep the cobwebs off of “Brecht,”

and began by performing an amazing edit on the source text. The first thing he got rid of was the wagon.



Instead, the *audience* moved, by navigating (as they saw fit, at the production's invitation) a broken circle of platforms. My eye was instantly astonished. In New York, the actors carried "cold and dismal" second-act scenes through the open garage door onto "the sidewalk of Wooster Street" in late winter "to a background of traffic and pedestrians" (Thomson 115). These scenes lost much of their punch, I suspect, when the bucolic midsummer campus of American University was revealed through gymnasium doors; but the juxtaposition of contrasting "environments" was still palpable. "Joan MacIntosh was an undisguisedly young Mother Courage, Spalding Gray a boy-scout Swiss Cheese, Eilif a recognisably American paratrooper," and a twenty-something Ron Vawter memorable in a progression of smaller roles.

The attitude towards performance was well represented by Elizabeth LeCompte's playing of the Swedish General. She wore a moustache as a sign of masculinity but made no attempt physically or vocally to disguise her femininity: this was not caricature but straightforward indication of function. (Thomson 114)

The production encouraged the audience to be aware of the Southeast Asian war that was at long last winding down, but did not narrow the play to the calculus of allegory. "We didn't set the play in the 17th century," Schechner commented, "but we didn't modernize it either. The costumes were emblems of class" (qtd. in Thomson 114). The design notably deployed a complicated

network of ropes and pulleys to grotesquely stylize the deaths of Courage's children. Numerous commentators have focused on Courage's "mercenary stripping" of the dead body of Katrin, so that she could sell the clothes (Thomson 114). But for me, the production's most startling image was its final one. Courage, as noted—trying to catch up with a passing army—pulls the wagon all by herself. Schechner reimagined the effect by running ropes of some kind (I would have sworn they were parachute lines) from multiple, widely separated points high and low on a huge gymnasium wall. Courage, wearing a harness, attaches these to herself and marches forward, futilely, as if she could somehow, by a renewed force of will, budge a gigantic immovable object. Of the production's many ingenious alienating devices, this one unmasked most fully both the phenomenon and the signification of Courage's final gesture. The effect was overpowering. Although I can restate it only in trivial, generalizing terms—at the communicative level of what Roland Barthes, in 1970, dubbed "obvious meaning" (44)—I found that it addressed me *obtusely*, as Barthes suggests, at the level of imagery and intuitive feeling rather than language.

I read this production from the perspective of "adaptation studies," which has been the focus of my long career. The four-hour performance was "faithful" to Manheim's translation, the "script," which I dutifully re-read prior to attending the performance—even though Thomson has noted cuts that Schechner and company made. It was *unfaithful*, rather, to Brecht's painstakingly well-documented instructions about how he felt the play should be produced, and how those instructions had been adapted over the course of a still-growing production history.

What constitutes the "text" that adaptation addresses? How does a performance situate itself oppositionally in relation to staging traditions and performance history? And why should the history of "performance studies" be interested in any of this?

How does writing and producing a play in response to one war shape the responsibilities of a producer responding to another war, thirty years later? Schechner has precisely sixteen years on me (we share a birthday with Mary Zimmerman, the late Gene Kelly, and the late Keith Moon). Approaching the end of a long career, in 2014, Schechner contributed to an edited volume a fanciful essay entitled "Can We Be the (New) Third World?"

I sit here this morning (does it really matter which morning?) trying to be optimistic. I want to write how performance studies and the performing arts can save the world, or at least help to save the world. I am typing while rockets and bombs are exploding in Gaza and Israel; Egypt is in turmoil, Syria in the throes of civil war; ... suicide bombings and assassinations continue in Iraq and Afghanistan. ... The Shoah is not ancient history.

I am more than halfway through my 79th year. For 71 of those years, the United States has been at war: big wars, small wars, long wars, short wars,

good wars, bad wars, just wars, greedy wars, invasions, incursions, missions, actions. . . . (41)

And he offers a long list of them. His narrative registers not merely the horror, but the frustration and growing sense of helplessness, of the liberal intellectual and artist in North America: the aging ex-hippie who is old enough to remember the Mosaddegh and Árbenz coups, and the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the bombing of North Vietnam, and to reflect at last upon how little we seem to have learned.

Then Schechner recalls the coining in 1952, by French anthropologist Alfred Sauvy, of the term “third world.” In the nervous early years of the cold war, Sauvy gave this name to the vast stretches of Africa, Central and South America, Asia, the Pacific islands, and even parts of Europe that refused to align themselves with either the capitalist, industrialized west or the communist east. How do we reclaim and reinvent this long-worn-out term for a digitally globalized age? Schechner suggests:

Today, artists, activists and scholars are a new third world. . . . Today’s new third world is a proportion of people present everywhere with a majority nowhere. What unites the new third world is a community of purpose, a mode of inquiry (the experimental, if you will) and a sense of being other—of not being hangers-on. The new third world is incipient, seeds, not yet fully self-aware. The new third world needs to organize itself as “non-aligned,” neither capitalist . . . , nor knee-jerk communist/socialist, nor fundamentalist religious. . . . The vanguard of this new third world are—and here I hope you won’t think me too arrogant—performance theorists and artists who practice collaborative performance research; persons who know that playing deeply is a way of finding and embodying new knowledge, renewing energy, and relating on a performative rather than on an ideological basis. (48)

And while he proceeds to offer a four-point manifesto of what this “new third world” might proclaim, Schechner’s anatomies have never been as persuasive or compelling to me as his ecstasies. (Compare merely, as expressive styles of writing, the taxonomic textbook *Performance Studies* to the ecstatic book-length documentation of *Dionysus in 69*.)

He concludes the essay by wondering how “the crisis of old age” can navigate the dangerous shores of “integrity/wisdom” and “disgust/despair” (51). One way, he suggests, is to critically revise and continually reject the “self-appointed mortal gods” and their rigid ideologies that psychologist Erik Erikson diagnosed in 1959 (qtd. 52). As scholars and artists in the “new third world” of performance, our job is to “imagine, invent, and perform alternative ways of becoming” (52). As if in answer to one of the critics of “Sextext” (discussed at the beginning of this section) Schechner seems to say: yes, indeed, the ability to think critically about alternatives to our current ways of living together on the

planet *very often* might *not* involve anything “more than the mere ability to evoke a feeling or response.”

Such musing would not appeal to my video persona of Task Force chair, who sees the solution to institutional chaos and social unrest in a fundamentalist return to the constitution of the founding fathers. Nor would he share my enthusiasm for Jill Dolan’s concept of “*utopian performatives*”:

small but profound moments in which performance calls the attention of the audience in a way that lifts everyone slightly above the present, into a hopeful feeling of what the world might be like if every moment of our lives were as emotionally voluminous, generous, aesthetically striking, and intersubjectively intense. . . . Utopian performatives, in their doings, make palpable an affective vision of how the world might be better. (5-6)

The examples she considers in the 2005 book *Utopia in Performance* “allow fleeting contact with a utopia not stabilized by its own finished perfection, not coercive in its contained, self-reliant, self-determined system, but a utopia always in process, always only partially grasped, as it disappears before us around the corners of narrative and social experience” (6). She relates performatives to Brecht’s concept of *gestus*, as well as to the hopefulness of Brecht and later Boal that moments and “doings” in theater can “provoke affective rehearsals for revolution”: “Utopian performatives persuade us that beyond this ‘now’ of material oppression and unequal power relations lives a future that might be different” (7). But I understand her concept best when she applies it to a theatrical production with which I am very familiar. This is my Northwestern colleague Mary Zimmerman’s *Metamorphoses*, which opened off-Broadway in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, and provided what one critic called “a consoling antidote to the tragedies . . . especially in the ways it deals with grief” (Michael Kuchwara, qtd. 151). Dolan discusses those moments in Zimmerman’s adaptation “when the work ‘clicks’ with the audience because something true, something recognizable, something felt and mutually believed, even though only imagined, passes among those present.” At such moments we “give ourselves over to the potential of not just personal but political transformation”: “in their doing, the audience’s imagination is stretched to see new things in the quotidian materials of daily life” (157).

Dolan’s enthusiasm for the possibility of utopian performatives—like Schechner’s belief that “playing deeply is a way of finding and embodying new knowledge”—helps to explain my late-career turn to video production, filled with acknowledged fictions and clowning and outright lies, as an appropriate medium for the “essay.” Desktop video production as an expressive medium came of age at just the right time for me. Unlike live performance, it yields a relatively fixed product. But unlike old-school film production (which I studied and practiced in the late 1960s and early 1970s, mainly at Northwestern) video is highly revisable. The multi-track “drafts” live on my back-up hard drives for

years after the provisional completion of a video essay for its first public presentation. Like MS Word files of text essays, and in important ways like the process of play rehearsals, Final Cut timelines are easy to fix and change: they are Bakhtinian “loophole” discourse.

The video essay—especially when developed in an applied version of Gregory Ulmer’s “mystory” techniques (as I explore below in the three parts of *Up the River*)—is a space for improvisation, “playing deeply,” and self-discovery. Even when an extended piece of writing accommodates a relatively informal voice, as this one does, I find that I express myself with relative sobriety, and guide my statements with at least the desire to tell the truth. But when I write in video, the spirit of Wilde’s “The Decay of Lying” takes over. Tonight we improvise. All these words (over 74,000 in the final draft, I discover) are merely the footnote. The important discoveries appear in the videos. This is one of the many reasons why I feel that “writing in video” has an important place, alongside live performance, in the big bag of interests and concerns that make up contemporary performance studies.

Staking the body

As the “Report of the Task Force on Heritage” concludes, the chair persona collapses together some diverse images—in support of his call for NCA members, in their pedagogy and research, to re-embrace the beliefs and practices of the organization’s founding fathers. They should begin once again “to regard the performing body as a persistent, lingering, historical embarrassment.”

We first see familiar images of the “passions” by Charles Le Brun, “First Painter” of Louis XIV. (An indispensable critical text that situates Le Brun’s significance in the linked histories of “passion psychology” and western acting is chapter two, “Nature Still, but Nature Mechanized,” of Joseph Roach’s *The Player’s Passion*.) These give rise to a sequence of similarly tagged images: first, of unidentified contemporary individuals doing passion poses on the internet, and second, of the many faces of the surprisingly expressive John Boehner, former Speaker of the House of Representatives. There follow four images of celebrities whose bodies have been newsworthy in recent years: Anthony Weiner during his “sexting” years, with headlines from 2011 and 2013; Miley Cyrus twerking on the MTV Video Music Awards in August 2013; the exposed torso and midriff of Justin Bieber, who poses in his London hospital bed after collapsing during a performance in 2013; and Stelarc, suspended in a gallery, in March 2012.

By including Stelarc in the contemporary group, my Task Force chair crosses the line from social media, political notoriety, and celebrity gossip into a gray area of gallery art. The work of Stelarc (born Stelios Arcadiou in 1946) incorporates bloody suspension art and physical disfigurement. The career of

Chris Burden (1946-2015) included pieces in which he was shot in the arm at close range by a .22 rifle, and crucified on the roof of a Volkswagen Beetle. Operating at a special kind of physical limit, Stelarc and Burden have given freshly literalized meaning to the old cliché in performance theory and criticism about the importance of “staking the body” to one’s artistic work.

The controversy that has long attended the careers of both artists (see esp. Goodall, Hoffman; see also “Performer,” Schjeldahl) returns us to a question at the center of the work of The Living Theatre. Is theatrical performance an act of representation, designed to be repeated more or less accurately from night to night? Something that interests Joseph Roach in *The Player’s Passion* is the way in which “the actor’s spontaneous vitality seems to depend on the extent to which ... actions and thoughts have been automatized, made second nature.” Although “every night the actor’s experience ... is somewhat different,” nevertheless “the words, gestures, and movements that the actor embodies are so nearly the same as to be indistinguishable from those of the night before.” Ballet dancers provide some of the most striking examples of this (15-18).

Or did Artaud have it right? Is a genuinely “cruel” theater dependent upon its unrepeatability—its refusal to be merely a representation, “the sensory illustration of a text already written, thought, or lived outside the stage”? Are artists operating at the extremes of Stelarc and the late Chris Burden our closest approaches to Artaud’s vision of actors “being like victims burnt at the stake, signaling through the flames”?

My sock puppet, the Task Force chair, has narrated his flash cards of performance history, post-1960s, with a list of attributes. These have circulated so widely as to have hardened by now into commonplaces, even clichés, of performance pedagogy:

the celebration of the excessive and unruly body; performance as an embodied way of knowing; the performance paradigm as a post-textual, post-archival, post-positivist epistemology; the authority of experiential understanding; participatory ways of knowing; sensuous engagement; intimate encounter; radical presence; and the consequences of disappearance. *You know.*

The last of these has been teased out of Peggy Phelan’s often-cited 1993 critique of “the economy of reproduction.” For Phelan, this includes the *academic* reproductive economy, which can more easily evaluate faculty worth, on a competitive basis, in terms of reproducible achievement (academic press books, published reviews of artistic work, major awards, and other quasi-material signifiers) than in terms of evanescent, “unmarked” achievement (unreviewed and undocumented public performances, along with successful classroom teaching and untabulated “invisible hours” of college or university “service”). Passionately but polemically, Phelan writes:

Performance’s only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of

representations *of* representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. ... Performance's being ... becomes itself through disappearance. ... Without a copy, live performance plunges into visibility—in a maniacally charged present—and disappears into memory, into the real of invisibility. ... Performance ... saves nothing; it only spends. ... Institutions whose only function is to preserve and honor objects—traditional museums, archives, banks, and to some degree, universities ... must invent an economy not based on preservation but one which is answerable to the consequences of disappearance. (146, 148, 165)

The utopia of such a non-reproductive economy, it seems to me, is a true “nowhere.” At the school where I teach, the likelihood of an administrative economy responsive to “the consequences of disappearance” has steadily receded over the last thirty-seven years.

But the valuing of such consequences appears in the work of artists themselves: in the utopian performatives celebrated by Dolan, and the “playing deeply” urged by Schechner. Concerning the dialectic of visibility and disappearance (as both compositional theme and performance practice) C. Carr observes the following, in her review of the career (to around 2002) of William Pope.L:

Pope.L is interested in the troubling notion of embracing one's “lack,” basing an identity on what you don't have. For example, there's a choice involved in living on the street, he says. “But that choice is very complicated, or, at least, it's not simple. ... My brother even says—if he can't have his big job making big money, he would prefer to be the bandito. He'd prefer to reveal his strength through his lack.” ...

Being “of lack” puts one in an uncertain place in the world, but this might also be a liminal place, says the artist, an ideal space where you're neither “this” nor “that”—where you're at the locus of possibility. ... The problem with racism is that it makes you very much “this” or very much “that.” So he's constantly constructing pieces that allow him to enter that inbetween space. This is why he so often covers himself with white stuff in performance—flour, [milk,] mayonnaise—becoming a kind of cultural object in white/black. This is not a disguise or some kind of “whiteface.” It's a shamanic gesture, intended to connect others with his enterprise. (52)

Pope.L has adopted sometimes grotesque personae in performance pieces such as *Eating the Wall Street Journal*: a spectacle of repeatedly eating strips of printed newspaper, washing them down with catsup and milk, and then vomiting the unhealthy mouthful. And he describes his role in making such performances as “part shaman, part clown” (qtd. in Carr 49). The “disappearance” of his body into disgusting masks of “white stuff” is never successful. Quite the reverse: he alienates his blackness, thereby making his “melanin” (qtd. in Carr 49) more visible. What Carr describes as the feeling of being “In the Discomfort Zone,” while watching Pope.L's live work in the 1990s, relates to the critical spirit of

clowning that I describe earlier in my notes. His location of his body in a liminal, “inbetween space”—at what Carr calls “the locus of possibility”—aligns itself with the “doings” admired by Dolan and Schechner.

Carr views Pope.L’s “signature” performance work (48) to be his *Crawl* pieces, begun in 1978 with the *Times Square Crawl*, and continuing throughout his career, more recently as group pieces. Sometimes in a business suit and awkwardly carrying a potted flower, sometimes in a Superman costume with a skateboard strapped to his back, Pope.L would give up his “verticality” and crawl, laboriously, up and down urban streets for extended durations (sometimes interrupted by police or outraged passers-by).



“Those crawl-a-thons,” Hamza Walker observes to the artist, “have made your bod the stuff of legend”—to which Pope.L, then fifty-eight, admits that the “long and grueling” crawls became “unbearable” as he grew older (Walker 143). “And if his self-appointed ordeals seem absurd,” Carr reminds us, “they are often physically risky” (49). Martha Wilson of the Franklin Furnace comments:

art is a visceral process that feels like the right—or maybe the wrong thing to do—which makes it the right thing to do. His *Crawl* pieces literally place his body in the position of homeless people, taking it out of the vertical posture representing power, forcing him and his unwitting audience to look at bodies that have been rendered invisible. The contradiction he used to focus us upon his body in *Tompkins Square Crawl* (1991)—which would be unremarkable in tattered clothes—was a very nice suit. ... Another black man told him to get up because he was degrading the image of black people. To William this was the signal that the piece was working. Now that all of our lives are provisional, as William’s has been all along, it’s uncomfortable to not know what will happen next, to not have middle-class security to believe in anymore. William’s work rubs our noses in it, makes us look, feel, and smell troubled culture. (45)

The reference to *all* lives suddenly seeming “provisional” refers to a fact of timing: Wilson is “writing this in the wake of the biggest performance event in world history,” the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center towers (45). No less a cultural luminary than the composer Karlheinz Stockhausen was vilified for describing the airliner attacks on the World Trade Center as “the greatest work of art that is possible in the whole cosmos”:

people practice like crazy for 10 years, totally fanatically, for a concert, and then die. ... You have people who are so concentrated on one performance, and then 5,000 people are dispatched into eternity, in a single moment. I couldn't do that. In comparison with that, we're nothing as composers. (qtd. in Tommasini)

Stockhausen, sadly, was right—as we have come to appreciate by early August 2016. As early as 2002, it seems, sheer horror and patriotic news-service outrage were giving way to a rueful thoughtfulness. Across the past fifteen years, Wilson's conceptualization of terrorism as Artaudian “performance”—unrepeatable spectacle, prepared and rehearsed, and then performed only once for a huge audience—had grown more understandable as a way of addressing and comprehending what we might call “dystopian performatives.” As economies of “art criticism” so seldom are, this conceptualization unquestionably *is* answerable to the consequences of disappearance.

Pope.L's live work, by contrast, stakes the body, in physically demanding and “risky” ways (Carr's term), to the creation of *utopian*, not dystopian, performatives. It seeks to “imagine, invent, and perform alternative ways of becoming” (as Schechner articulates this familiar challenge). I take great interest, therefore, in a recent turn in the work of this most physically engaged of artists: a turn toward video production. The 2014 book *Showing Up to Withhold*, created in response to Pope.L's *Forlesen* exhibition, reviews the artist's work since the publication of Bessire's 2002 catalog.

The introduction to *Showing Up* notes that Pope.L's “video practice . . . changed gradually from documentations of his performances to being works in their own right” (14). Significant about some of this video work is its elimination—or “withholding,” as the book would have it—of Pope.L's own performing body. Concerning *A Dome Like Structure* (2003-ongoing), for example, Pope.L comments:

My body did not appear in the film. My attitude about this—the decision to not use my body to anchor my film work—has perhaps been a little confusing to some folk who know my solo performance work. I sense a similar confusion when I insist that edited videos of performance can be artworks in their own right. Chris Burden was very clear about this, and he was great at the essential cut, but he was careful not to edit too much, at least in his canonical videos. (Walker 143)

In words that echo my own experience editing video, Pope.L describes his recent obsession with “image-sequencing” in an art-making environment *beyond liveness*, “which for me is almost always about world-building and storytelling, how story sculpts time” (Walker 145). Walker’s interview with Pope.L is wide-ranging and hard to summarize, but it confirms for me the fundamental connectedness of digital videomaking to the very different experience of live, embodied performance—at least within the scope of activities and doings that might redefine what constitutes performance studies in the twenty-first century.

Does Pope.L’s work in multiple media incorporate what I have called “clowning”? In her close reading of the *Forlesen* exhibition, Lauren Berlant suggests that it does. In moving “through pain and slapstick,” the work provides the measure of “wobble room” that comedy provides, when bringing us “close to the unbearable” (109). She reflects:

The aesthetic space of this encounter is not funny, but deadpan, offering and yet withholding metacommentary and solutions in order to still and distill the mutual embeddedness of the political and the personal sensorium. In a tragic relation, there is the comfort of a finitude that can be mourned; in a melodramatic one, the disbelief that after great pain one is still forced to show up for life; and in the comic, the shock of sudden insecurity followed by an even more unpredicted resilience. ...

David Robbins suggests that “We use the term ‘deadpan’ to describe those products that display the emotional neutrality of data yet retain an existential charge of theater.” So deadpan emerges under the sign of *maybe* (you may be in on the joke of life, or not; or the artwork’s strategy of inclusion, or not; you may be an insightful reader, or not; or welcomed in the world, or not). *Maybe* is a big keyword in this artwork. ... (110)

Berlant’s explorations of “deadpan” and “withholding” are better served by encountering them in the context of her full critique. I introduce them here to bring my exploration of clowning full-circle, to the short piece “Hello” that introduces the group of works collected here as *The Video Essay: Performing Beyond Liveness*.

Improvising with video in applied “mystery” fashion, at any rate, gave me a genuinely performative opportunity to discover what I think about certain things, as my professional engagement with them draws to a close. Staging myself as a *character*—in this case, an obtuse eyewitness to my own enthusiasms, Colbert’s “poorly informed, high-status idiot”—generated a high degree of what Bakhtin called outsideness, and filled this work (for me, at least) with some real surprises.

Incidental: I appropriate four musical pieces here. The introductory jingle, which I also use elsewhere in these video essays, is a piece called “Romance in the Breeze,” from a decades-old long-playing record of royalty-free orchestral “needle-drop” (as we used to call it) called *Background Music for Home Movies*. As

underscoring for the end of the world, I first use the 1967 song “The End” by Jim Morrison, as recorded by The Doors; the song figures memorably in Francis Ford Coppola’s film *Apocalypse Now*, which I address in later video essays. I then use the “Finale” from Bernard Herrmann’s score for Alfred Hitchcock’s *Psycho* (1960), as performed by the National Philharmonic Orchestra in 1975. At the end of the video, the fight song “Go U Northwestern” receives a rousing performance from the Northwestern University Wildcats Marching Band.

When I first assembled my images for the end of the world, in summer 2014, I raided my own photo archive and the internet. Many of these images are manipulated photographs of real places. Some are the works of dystopian and post-apocalyptic artists. When I went back to look, I could locate only the “Manchester Apocalypse” work of UK artist James Chadderton, one of whose images I quote (see “In”).

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Section 5, “Coda”: The Velocity of Change

The “Coda” concluded my presentation “The Video Essay: Performing Beyond Liveness” on May 26, 2010, as part of a Performance Studies Faculty Lecture Series at Northwestern (see above). On that occasion, my video essays (including several that reappear here) “lectured” for me. The “Coda” was an afterthought, a last-minute rush job, and looks like it: the transfer from SD to HD is just plain grubby, and magnifies some editing errors.

My first impulse was to cut the “Coda” from the present collection, because of its datedness. But that very datedness, I realized, is what makes it interesting.

In the spring of 2010, I had been living for a dozen years with permissions and exemptions granted by the Digital Millennium Copyright Act of October 1998 (see “Digital”) but without fully understanding what they were or how they worked. I knew that I could now do legally what, prior to October 1998, I had been doing regardless of whether it was legal or not: creating teaching modules that appropriated vidcaps, still images, recorded music, and so forth, without bothering to inquire about myriad permissions from copyright holders. In 1998 the federal government had upgraded my criminal status from “digital bandit” to “film teacher,” and I enjoyed the fully credentialized permission to bring my acts of theft and reassembly into classrooms and scholarly conferences.

A gray area was my use of certain “black box” equipment for removing copyguard from commercial tapes and DVDs. I tended to acquire this hardware from furtive-looking online sites and “international merchandise” retailers operating in warehouses out by the airport, because—depending on how you read the DMCA—it might have been illegal for *anybody* to own and use this stuff. My anxiety surfaces in the brief “Coda” video. Little did I know in May 2010 that the legal approval to use such gear would be granted to certain “exempted” individuals by a rulemaking the following July (see “Librarian”). I kept using the old gear for another year and change, through the technically compromised production of *Up the River*, Parts Two and Three, in the summer of 2011. Since then I have purchased a software ripper for the kind of digital appropriation in which I engage. The vastly superior vidcaps it produces from commercial DVDs (but not, of course, from aging VHS taps) are on display in *Up the River*, Part One (completed in February 2016) and the long video *Footnote* about Julian Beck (completed in June 2016).

The other gray area, however, was then and remains the legal limit of public presentation. At the beginning of these notes (“Introduction” 1-3) I throw myself proleptically on the mercy of the court. I have created this material for presentation in academic settings, not commercial settings or even social media

sites. I have never made a penny from this work: quite the reverse, the audio-visual work that I incorporate in my teaching and research presentations has cost me a small fortune over the past thirty-plus years. Does the publication of this work in an on-line scholarly journal cross the line, out of safe spaces exempted by the DMCA and subsequent revisionary rulemakings? Or does this legislation continue to shield me from “cease-and-desist” letters and “takedown” orders?

What are the currently applicable limits of “fair use”? I have taken this question to a variety of people, ranging from video artists to copyright lawyers to university archivists dealing with digital display on websites. And they all have interesting, unique ways of saying basically the same thing: “There’s only one way to find out. Put the stuff out there, and see what happens.”

One of the most interesting responses came from my Northwestern colleague, the video essayist John Bresland, who also serves as an editor of video submissions to *TriQuarterly* magazine (which went paperless after issue 134 in 2009). He confirmed for me that, while *TriQuarterly* and other online magazines that publish video lean toward “original” video content, “there is no hard-line policy not to use appropriated material. Still, as an editor [at *TriQuarterly*], I wasn’t going forth into that swamp without a damn good reason, a damn good work.” He describes his experience submitting for online publication a video essay he authored that “appropriated most of the visuals from the Seinfeld Show—a highly protected Warner property. . . . Nobody would publish it”:

A few years later, though, dozens and then hundred and then thousands of “video essays” began to spring up, mostly they were supercuts of, say, various cinematic techniques employed by Spielberg. These “essays” tended to be low on analysis and thought, but they were and are hugely popular and exciting—in part because of the way they suggest a new kind of film criticism. . . . I think the popularity of this form . . . nudged the copyright hawks toward a less aggressive stance. This fall, I submitted to Blackbird a wholly appropriated work built on the visuals from Peyton Place, the old tv series, and poems by David Trinidad. Blackbird was one of the journals that declined the Seinfeld project, and they did voice concerns with Peyton Place—but they ultimately published it, and actively promoted it. A decade has made a difference.

Anecdotes like this are “metrics” for Bresland of how “the landscape over the last decade or so . . . has been altered significantly” (Message; see Bresland, *Peyton*).

In attempting to stake out the territory of the video essay, Bresland has noted the very recent technological advances that make digital editing as available as pencil and paper once were:

Today artists have access to video editing tools that ship free on most computers. A generation ago, such capability didn’t exist at any price. Now all

it takes for a young artist to produce a documentary is an out-of-the-box Mac, a camera, and the will to see an idea through to its resolution. ... Video, ... from the way it's acquired (on small, light digital cameras with startling image quality) to the way it's consumed (on mobile devices, on planes, as shared links crossing the ether) is now being carried everywhere, the way books and magazines once were. ("On")

The difference between "film" (in scare quotes, as in "major motion picture") and video is thereby as much material and sensory as it is romantic-expressive:

Film is visual; the essay is not. Film is collaborative; the essay is not. Film requires big money; the essay costs little and makes less. ("On")

But video is made up of images and sound, "those engines of emotion," and not just text—and images and sound "have their own story to tell" ("On"). Then what, aside from the ability to make one all by yourself, constitutes the category of a "video essay"? Instead of asking what it *is*, we might ask rather what it *does*: "it's changing the way we write," Bresland suggests, "changing our conception of what writing means" ("On").

While *Liminalities* has continued to express interest in publishing this material, we have not yet reached a decision about the appropriate delivery system for video essays whose stated primary aims are teaching, scholarship, and research, rather than entertainment and public clowning. While they do not aspire to the condition of parodic mash-ups and "YouTube poop," they might impress the first-time viewer that they are nothing more than that. We'll see. In the meantime, the future looks bright for a more expansive and tolerant "landscape" for fair use interpretations of video essays that make quotational and derivative use of appropriated content. Things are changing, and the velocity of change is increasing.

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3. The Winter Barrel (17 Minutes)

Eileen Cherry Chandler, who completed a doctoral dissertation at Northwestern in 1997, currently teaches in the Department of Theatre and Film at Bowling Green State University. By the mid-1990s, Cherry Chandler had published two stories about a young girl (twelve at the time of the first story, “The Winter Barrel”) who has come north from Alabama to live in Chicago with her grandmother’s sister Ma Dear. She has warm, comforting memories of her childhood in Alabama:

We’d be riding in the back of Daddy’s pickup, and the pine and spruce looked like they hung from the heavens like curtain fringe. The sun pounded friendly-like on our faces as we juggled around to the road’s rhythm. ...

On third Fridays in the summer, it seemed like all our people in the county gathered at Uncle Ned’s and Aunt Pat’s for a party. ... Uncle Ned always strung up his Christmas lights and everything had an amber, nightclub glow. ... The song “Finger-poppin’ Time” played over and over on the old RCA console in the house. ... We kids would dance ... and dash into the darkness of the adjoining fields to watch the party from a distance. (“Winter” 68)

Since Hank Ballard and the Midnighters had a big hit with “Finger-Poppin’ Time” in 1960, this remembered action seems to take place in the early 1960s, and the story’s first-person narrator might remember herself here at age five. Seven years go by: the girl is now twelve in, let’s say, 1970, and she is living at the western edge of the area on Chicago’s Near West Side that has recently been devastated by riots.

Rioting on the West Side in July 1966, brought on by confrontations between police and African-American residents, resulted in the mobilization of over a thousand National Guard troops. In the violent summer of 1967, Chicago somehow avoided the major disturbances experienced in Detroit and other cities. But in the wake of Martin Luther King’s assassination on April 4, 1968, widespread destructive rioting erupted in the area that sociologist Janet Abu-Lughod calls Chicago’s “West Side Second Ghetto ... , leaving some 20 square blocks along West Madison Street and Roosevelt Road in rubble” (93). Relying heavily upon newspaper accounts, Abu-Lughod analyses Mayor Richard J. Daley’s “let it burn” policy, and goes so far as to call this an act of “Ethnic Cleansing”: “At the risk of sounding paranoid, I am tempted to suggest that, because this area stood in the path of white ‘desire,’” the “consequence”—“an enormous swath” of urban destruction that displaced many residents—“may have been intended” (93; see 79-125).

The adult narrator of Cherry Chandler's "The Winter Barrel," looking back on her arrival in Chicago at age twelve, reflects that the West Madison bus route from Ma Dear's neighborhood to downtown would have taken her through the center of this devastation. Though a short distance in miles, the psychological distance from her neighborhood to downtown was enormous: "I would never see the sunrise over Lake Michigan until I was nearly eighteen" ("Winter" 68). In comparison with her beloved Alabama, the neighborhood near her school is grim and hostile. The scene for the story's climactic "battle" is a vacant lot, where "brown men" guard "a barrel of fire":

All around were wild children, brown crates and garbage, brown patches of snow and brown mud glistening in the cold. ... [T]he wild girls ... formed a loose moving gauntlet down the rest of the paved block toward the vacant lot off West Madison with its flame-licked barrel and dazed men. ... I felt as if we were flying toward the flame they were building with old newspapers, two-by-fours, and peanut shells. ... Their leathered hands trembled as they picked in the ashes with sticks, coaxing the flame, paying little mind to the seriousness of what was about to go down among a bunch of little schoolgirls. ("Winter" 73)

What is about to go down: the girl's new best friend, another transplant from the south named LaNell, has been hassled by a girl gang led by Rosalind—a tough girl who looks "like a full-grown woman" ("Winter" 73). LaNell and her new friend carry out a surprise attack on Rosalind, beat her to the ground, and steal her knife, before running off:

Nobody followed. They just stood there looking in awe. The men of the barrel, who had paused to notice our assault for that quick moment, chuckled among themselves as Rosalind struggled to find her feet. The fight was over. ("Winter" 74)

"The Winter Barrel" ends more or less as it begins, with flames popping from the trash-barrel fire and "taking a final snip at the cold blue air" ("Winter" 74).

The same narrator tells a second story, "Her Crowning Glory," which takes us more deeply into the life of Ma Dear, the great aunt. In "The Winter Barrel," we learn that Ma Dear finds the world she inhabits, Chicago's West Side at the beginning of the 1970s, to have lost touch with the things she most values. "'Decency,' she'd hiss. 'Decency. These people up here done forgot all about decency'" ("Winter" 69). In "Her Crowning Glory," Ma Dear's critique of the loss of decency extends to a member of her congregation:

Deenie MacDaniel could have been a tall, bronze showgirl, but she was the mother of nine children and the wife of a dreamer, musician, and handyman. She was under heavy strain. The strain meant people putting her in hospitals, ... episodes of walking outside naked, sometimes balancing one of her small babies on top of her head like an African urn. Those were moments I thought she looked so bizarre, but so beautiful. ... She walked. Everybody

gawked, and Ma Dear called the police. Ma Dear's eyes would be transfixed on her, but unlike the other members of the church, not one modicum of pity could be found in them. Ma Dear's eyes would freeze over, watering and blinking only when she turned away. ("Her" 78)

The story puts Ma Dear and Deenie MacDaniel once again on a collision course: the great aunt suffers intense humiliation when Deenie shows up at church wearing "a hat that looked exactly like Ma Dear's" ("Her" 81). For a full appreciation of this moment in the story, the reader would be well-repaid by consulting the magnificent photographic collection by Cunningham and Marberry, *Crowns: Portraits of Black Women in Church Hats*.

To appreciate the story's ending, however, one might review the legend of the martyred St. Lucy (the third-century Lucy of Syracuse). Her greatest sacrifice is the gift of her own eyes, the beauty of which seem to deprive a suitor of peaceful rest: "St. Lucy is sometimes represented with her eyes on a dish in her hand" (Ferguson 78). "Her Crowning Glory" presents Ma Dear's censorious regard of Deenie, as noted above, through imagery of deficient sight: a pitiless gaze, and eyes that would "freeze over." Sight re-enters the story as indignity follows indignity: the paranoid Ma Dear seems to feel that all eyes staring at her in the church are "laughing at her" (82). The story engages in its own kind of magical realism, as the narrator remembers preparing for her baptism, and sensing that Ma Dear is in need of the gentler gaze of a different pair of eyes:

She sought them, she needed them without an ounce of mockery, and so I gave them to her. I brushed my fingers, pressed their cool tips to the tender socket around each white eyeball, pressed and pulled. It was my ultimate act of love. ("Her" 82)

While the moment can be read figuratively, it shocks and arrests the reader with a hallucinatory literalism characteristic of any powerful image. "Her Crowning Glory," appropriately, ends with the descent of grace:

I had to be helped into the baptismal pool. ... Until my spiritual eyes grew I had to rely on what other people told me. ... They told me the spirit was so high that Deenie MacDaniel broke into a dance and almost tore off all her clothes. ... Ma Dear had to tell me because I couldn't remember. There are only these little marks on my forehead—little scratches that remain from the clawed feet of some descending dove. ("Her" 82)

And here, as of 1996—when the two stories appeared together in the collection *TriQuarterly New Writers*—the saga of the Alabama girl in Chicago comes to rest.

In 2007, however, Cherry Chandler returned to some unfinished business. I first encountered the story "Rosalind's Song" as a typescript, although in 2010 the online *TriQuarterly* published it. "Rosalind's Song" takes place two days after the battle that concludes "The Winter Barrel." The twelve-year-old girl encounters Rosalind, who pursues her through the snowy streets: "My first

impulse was to run and yell. But I wasn't a baby girl anymore. I owed her one. I had started this one, and now I had to finish it" ("Rosalind's" 6). Rosalind demands the return of her knife—but, to the girl's surprise, she realizes that Rosalind "was trying to reason with me. I was still OK and not being beaten to the slippery ground" ("Rosalind's" 7). The grim history of sexual abuse that Rosalind recites elicits the terrified girl's sympathy:

"I needs that fuckin' knife back. ... It ain't mines. It was Bubby knife. ... I told my mama's boyfriend I lost the knife, and he told me he would give me some money to pay Bubby 'cause he like me. But he want me to go to the motel with him."

"The motel?" I stuttered. I was so naive. I just stood there looking dumb.

"Yeah!" she answered. "Ain't you hip? ... Naw," she finally said. ... "I guess you ain't. Don't no men mess with you?"

I shook my head no. That was yet to happen in my life.

"You need to gimme the knife. ... I don't want to go to no stinky butt motel with mama's leftovers 'cause I ain't no whore. Got it?" ("Rosalind's" 7).

She leads Rosalind "through the dim streets" to Ma Dear's gray stone, and tells her to wait outside. But inside, Ma Dear—her eyes "moist with rage"—confronts her with the knife.

"I'm too tired to whup your behind tonight. Just too tired. But you can believe on Lord Jesus that I will in the morning. Now go to bed." ...

I closed my door. ... I put on my nightgown and sat on the edge of my bed. ... One hour, then two hours went by. Then I watched the world freeze and dribble down my frosted window—the one above the street—the one with the drab lace curtain I touched around midnight that obscured Rosalind's footsteps in the snow. ("Rosalind's" 8)

Although in conversation, Cherry Chandler stated that the stories are not autobiographical in any strict sense—just as Gwendolyn Brooks said about the proportion of "fact meat in the soup" of her lyrical novel *Maud Martha* (see Brooks 190-93)—she admits that a number of incidents, characters, and images were suggested by her own experience, and that the fictional world was at least inspired by a very real one.

In 2008, E. Patrick Johnson, then chair of Northwestern's Performance Studies Department, invited Cherry Chandler to visit Northwestern's Evanston campus and give a reading of her latest story, "Rosalind's Song." Plans came together between April and July to stage all three stories, in an event that would surround her public reading. I adapted the trilogy of stories as *The Winter Barrel: Stories by Eileen Cherry Chandler*, for performance in Northwestern's Alvina Krause Theatre on March 4-7, 2009. Because Cherry Chandler wished to feature the prose of the original stories, and because she had studied Robert Breen's "chamber theater" style at Northwestern, I adapted the trilogy for

chamber theater, with only a few deletions of phrases and sentences that were adequately conveyed by the action.

The narrator of the stories—a kind of “older self” looking back on her experience as she talks to the audience—was performed by a guest artist, the Chicago writer, radio commentator, and teacher Jessica Young. Her younger “remembered self” was performed by Northwestern undergraduate Johanna Middleton. The other characters were performed by Northwestern undergraduates Carlynnne Robinson, Sonya Roberts, and Dominique Johnson.

The Krause Theatre is extremely small, and can seat only about forty people. Since it doubles as a classroom space on weekdays, we were not able to put up a set: anything we brought into the space (on the order of chairs and rolling carts) had to be stowed away at the end of the night. But the “real” neighborhood, in all its burned-out, other-worldly presence, needed to be thickly described—and if not by language, then by what? I would argue that the stories assume some familiarity on the part of the reader with the real world of the Near West Side, post-1968. This world is rarely mentioned in the stories but is implied by such imagery as that of the barrel fire in “The Winter Barrel”—and implied as well by Ma Dear’s ongoing, outraged concern with “decency.”

My solution to the sparseness of physical scenery in the space was to use an elaborate image track of photographic “scenery.” Scare quotes intended here: I regularly meet “theater” people (scare quotes again intended) who declare resistance to or outright rejection of the aesthetic of projected scenery. I do not share such resistance or rejection, and have not ever since the days of my earliest research into the dialectical aesthetic of Piscator and Brecht. It helps, I think, to remember that I first arrived at Northwestern as an undergraduate transfer student with the intention of studying to become a film director—until I saw Robert Breen making “stage movies” out of novels, and promptly transferred over to *his* department. Incorporating projected video and still images into the spectacle of live actors, as I turned the corner into high mid-life, achieved the fusion of several early ambitions.

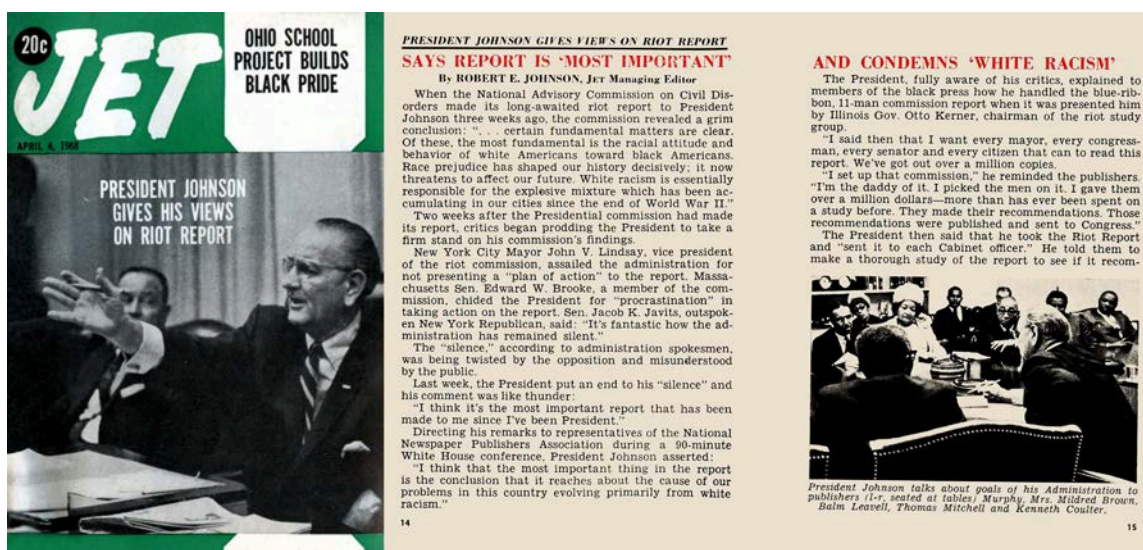
Grounding every line of dialogue and every piece of business was a projected digital image based on a photograph or motion footage. My production committed itself to creating a fictional world whose images and perspectives had been “stenciled off the real,” as Susan Sontag maintains about all photographs. For Sontag, a photograph automatically has the status of “a footprint or a death mask” (154). Or as Roland Barthes insists:

in Photography I can never deny that the *thing has been there*. There is a superimposition here: of reality and of the past. ... The name of Photography’s *noeme* will therefore be: “That-has-been,” or again: the Intractable. ... (76-77)

Acknowledging this addressed my sense that the “real” neighborhood itself, so rarely mentioned in the stories, was entirely present to the characters—

newcomers and long-timers alike. As I found myself saying in the narrative that introduces the video essay: “The video overture must take us to what has been, before the fiction can take us to what might have been.”

I knew that I could not contextualize the Near West Side riots of the late 1960s by way of a long-winded program note, so I hit upon what, in the event, proved a successful expedient. I created a “video overture” that audience members would see while walking in and taking their seats. The overture was developed from the following sources. The PBS “American Experience” documentary, *Daley: The Last Boss*, provided motion footage of Daley’s administration up to and including 1968. The motion footage of the July 1966 riots comes from a lucky find in a Chicago-area library: a CBS News “Special Report,” *The Chicago Riots*, narrated by correspondent Mike Wallace. The transition from 1966 to 1968 employs another lucky find.



A copy of *Jet* magazine from April 4, 1968, features a seven-page article on President Johnson’s response to the final report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders: the so-called “Kerner Commission,” after the chair of the study group, Illinois Governor Otto Kerner. The article reports that a long-silent Johnson has finally aligned himself with the Commission’s view blaming “the racial attitude and behavior of white Americans toward black Americans” as the force most responsible “for the explosive mixture which has been accumulating in our cities since the end of World War II” (qtd. in Johnson 14). Ironically, however, *Jet*’s coverage of Johnson’s call for unity, and for a full implementation of the report’s findings, hits the stands on the day of Martin Luther King’s assassination.

The audio-visual montage that follows draws heavily on a variety of photographic archives (available through the electronic resources of Northwestern's library system) and individual reproductions of photographs appearing on the internet, as well as my own photographs of Chicago streets and buildings. An invaluable source was ProQuest Historical Newspapers (available through the Northwestern library's electronic resources) which enabled me to copy and "animate" pages from major newspapers covering the 1968 riots, principally the *Chicago Tribune*. I also drew photographs from books as diverse in scope as Jay Wolke's *Along the Divide: Photographs of the Dan Ryan Expressway* (2004) and Robert Cameron's *Above Chicago* (1992). I quoted documentary motion video primarily from two sources: the above-cited *Daley: The Last Boss*; and Howard Alk's 1971 documentary *The Murder of Fred Hampton*, which includes footage of daily life in the Chicago communities that the Black Panthers were trying to serve.

But the figure who deserves special mention, not merely as a source of quoted photographs but as a critical and conceptual guide to my own work, is Camilo José Vergara. In 1965, the twenty-one-year-old Vergara first arrived in Chicago from his native Chile, on his way to begin undergraduate work at Indiana's Notre Dame University. The differences between Santiago and post-industrial Chicago were shocking: "I thought I was hallucinating," he writes in 2009 ("Projects" 155). Vergara's perpetually astonished eye has given rise to four-plus decades of using photographs and texts to document urban ruins, primarily in large American cities.

The "Methodology" section of the introduction to his 1995 book *The New American Ghetto* characterizes his work, beginning in 1977, as "the result of an uninterrupted dialogue with poor communities, their residents, and the scholars who study them":

Represented in the collection are the poorest and most segregated urban communities in the country, particularly those in New York City, Newark, Chicago, Los Angeles, Detroit, Gary, and Camden. My choice of locations coincides with areas called "hyperghettos"—places where at least 40 percent of the population lives below the poverty level. ... Each picture represents an instant in history. Like sensors dropped in the water by oceanographers to be regularly monitored, successive photographs of the same places serve to track change over time. ...

I first record the changes evident from close observation of images—that is, what has been added to or disappeared from a block; what seems to be ailing and what seems to be thriving; and what is happening to the vacant land. Secondly, I compare aspects of different cities, for example, their commercial streets. I supplement the description through interviews with those who live and work in these neighborhoods. (xiii)

While Vergara's work has often been associated with the photographic movement of "ruins photography" or "ruin porn," Vergara is a serious researcher whose reconstruction and thick description of the life of a neighborhood—from sources as various as "census data, newspaper accounts, telephone directories" (xiii)—includes both oral histories of neighborhood residents and the technique of "rephotography" (photographic documentation over time of the same site, shot from the same perspective). A compelling demonstration of his rephotography work appears in the *Granta* photo-essay "The Projects," in which he assembles photos of several Chicago sites taken over the period from 1981 to 2009.

In the 2011 essay "Detroitism," John Patrick Leary situates Vergara's work on ruins in Detroit, which remains "the Mecca of urban ruins" (4), in the context of a growing group of ruins photographers. Leary shares a widespread dim view of the movement's "'pornographic' sensationalism," especially when it "aestheticizes poverty without inquiring into its origins" and "dramatizes spaces but never seeks out the people that inhabit and transform them" (3). Some of Vergara's work, at first glance, seems to indulge in "aestheticizing" or "sensationalizing" the bizarre surface of a found object, rather than inquiring into its historical depth. Consider, for example, the photograph of an old Montgomery Ward warehouse in Detroit, which appears in *American Ruins* (16):



When we encounter this in the context of one of Vergara's book-length studies, however, we can better see what sets Vergara's work apart from the disengaged voyeurism of many other photographers. In longer studies, the isolated photograph documents a moment in a neighborhood's storied history. In *American Ruins*, Vergara reviews the complicated economic considerations faced by preservationists and public officials alike, when trying to address the persistence of urban ruins:

I happened to come to the United States during a period when people and capital were abandoning the cities, at [a] time when the economy was relocating to the suburban periphery and domestic industries were expanding to locations all over the world. ...

Many magnificent buildings have already disappeared or are being demolished. Factories lie rusting, their cavernous interiors dark, their roofs covered with greenery, demolition their sure fate. Schools and libraries are closed, and once vibrant neighborhoods have been reduced to empty lots and scattered houses. ...

My photographs, exhibitions, and articles on downtown Detroit helped begin a national dialogue on the future of urban ruins. Without pretending that structures in the process of being discarded can retain their former economic and social importance, I continue to argue that their power as symbols remains strong. They are an essential part of understanding America. (12-14)

His "utopian" dream is for a kind of counter-museum or national park to promote such understanding:

That urban ruins have acquired new meanings—that they are now being used by such marginal groups as homeless people, addicts, prostitutes, goth rockers, adventurous teenagers, and artists—is of no importance to an institution like the Smithsonian, whose function is to create a mainstream consensus. ...

The "nation's attic," an enormous institution, shows no concern for the current condition of the places that produced the objects it so proudly houses. What would Senator X say if a record of urban destruction were placed alongside these objects to haunt viewers? I imagine him saying, "None of this junk for the Mall; it makes my constituents feel bad. America is young. Stick to space exploration, to Silicon Valley, to Hollywood. If we want to refer to the past, we'll show Shaker furniture and quilts. ..."

My "Smithsonian of Decline" is much more interested in downtown Detroit. I would do nothing but secure the buildings and would allow the passage of time to create an urban ruins park, an American Acropolis. ... (14-15)

The closest thing to his "Smithsonian of Decline," however, is likelier to consist of representational images than monumental ruins. In the introduction to his 2013 *Tracking Time* website, he describes himself as "a builder of virtual cities. I

think of my images as bricks that, when placed next to each other, reveal shapes and meanings of neglected urban communities” (“About”).

The inspiration I drew from Vergara’s work, aside from its conscientious rigor and thoughtfulness, is the fundamental connectedness of image and story. In many ways, of course, I was approaching this connectedness from the opposite direction. I was staging a fictional world that was based on a real world, and sought to represent that world with visual images “stenciled off the real,” in Sontag’s words. I began with the depth, in other words, and sought a plausible representation of the surface, descriptions of which the stories by Cherry Chandler often did not provide. My photo and video research on Chicago’s West Side began during the summer preceding the production. This wide-ranging research yielded constant surprises. One was the persistence, through photographs of different eras, of certain images and themes. Consider the descriptions of the trash barrel fire—a Chicago “winter barrel,” as opposed to the welcome sensation of the Alabama fire barrels at Uncle Ned’s—that run through the first story. The earliest image I located was one of the South Side series photographed from 1946 to 1948 by Wayne Miller, taken at an unidentified location and suggestively titled “Storyteller” (8):



By contrast, consider Vergara’s photograph of three friends “boiling a frozen Butterball turkey given to them for Christmas dinner by a ‘good Samaritan’” (*American* 25), taken on Chicago’s West Side in 1996:



Each photograph takes me a quarter-century outside the time I calculate for the trilogy of stories, and one probably takes me out of the immediate neighborhood. But both testify to a tradition that predates, runs through, and moves beyond the fictional time and place of Cherry Chandler's stories. If the photographs contribute to what Diana Taylor would call the "archive" of a cultural practice, the photographic subjects engage in performing the "repertoire" of that practice—as do the subjects of other photographs I located, and "the men of the barrel" in the first story ("Winter" 74).

It was my practice to search for photos and motion footage that placed me close to Chicago's West Madison Street, as it runs from the River through Garfield Park to South Austin, and brought me as near as possible to the year 1970. But the rephotography style employed by Vergara—which revisits a single place across decades—had a liberating effect on my imagination. My problem, as I say, was quite different than his has been. Since I could not grab a camera and go back in time, I was tied to an archive of photos that already existed (including a few of my own). I gave myself permission, in composing a fictional world out of glimpses of a real one, to trace certain practices and styles across time. In a few cases, I might find an image of a building located many blocks to the south of the "real" of my fictional world, taken many years in the past or the future. But if the image demonstrated stylistic continuity with other images of buildings closer to home, I might incorporate a glimpse of it in the rapidly moving progression of projected photos.

My freeform appropriation and recasting of ideas, loosely influenced by Vergara's methods, suggested a compositional method of my own. My more

literal borrowings throughout the adaptation are photographs that appear in Vergara and Timothy J. Samuelson's *Unexpected Chicagoland*. The present documentation addresses only the introductory "video overture," and not the full range of image sources for the entire production.

I selected music for the "video overture" that anticipates the central narrating situation in the chamber theater staging: an older narrator in conversation with her "remembered self." In June 1965, John Coltrane's "classic quartet" (including pianist McCoy Tyner, drummer Elvin Jones, and bassist Jimmy Garrison) made its final soprano saxophone recording: Coltrane playing an overdubbed duet with himself. Bob Blumenthal writes:

"Living Space," originally titled "The Living Room Rug," finds Coltrane reinforcing the beautiful melody by overdubbing a second saxophone part on the master take, which renders a haunting phantom vibrato with added reinforcement from Garrison's bow. (68)

In the video essay, the superb photographs of the *Winter Barrel* production are by Ian Epstein. I am grateful to Epstein as well for first introducing me to Vergara's work.

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4. Word and Tone (30 minutes)

As I revise this, in early August of 2016, I have become aware of a phenomenon in international tourism called the “Trump Bump.” First it was Inishturk, Ireland, and then it was Breton Island, Nova Scotia: in joking (?) announcements, picturesque locales outside the United States borders “have offered refuge to any Americans who want to flee from a Donald Trump presidency” (Ajaka; see Johnson, “This”).

The last time I found myself entertaining such thoughts of flight was in late summer 2004, as my wife and I were preparing to return from a month at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. The BBC’s scathing coverage of the 2004 Republican National Convention had begun before we left, and I was wondering (idly and self-indulgently, I admit) if I could remain in a country that seemed ready to elect George W. Bush and Dick Cheney to a second term. That outcome seemed about as bad as it could get—but, to borrow a line from Gloucester in Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, “I have heard more since” (4.1.35). Or, to borrow Edgar’s line from the same scene, “the worst is not / So long as we can say, ‘This is the worst’” (4.1.27-28).

Opera, not opus

On the eve of my birthday in 2004, my wife took me to see Richard Strauss’s operatic “swansong,” *Capriccio*, in a concert performance at Edinburgh’s Usher Hall. And despite my love for the opera, I had trouble relaxing into this splendid performance, at so disappointing and even embarrassing a moment in my own country’s political history. Strauss’s very life-story made me uncomfortable. As Pamela M. Potter reminds us,

Strauss has been singled out as the most illustrious musical figure to have served the Third Reich, and although nearly half a century has passed since the end of the Second World War, the nagging question about Strauss’s relationship with the German National Socialist government remains unanswered. . . . [Biographer] Dominique Jameux believes that Strauss “must plead guilty” [to Nazi collaboration], speculating that while it would have been unreasonable to expect him to resist or emigrate, he could have retired into solitude rather than serve the regime, taking the path of “inner emigration.” (93, 99)

Yet as I read these words for the first time, and appreciated Jameux’s idea of “inner emigration” as an alternative to active collaboration (as, for example, in his acceptance in 1933 of the presidency of Goebbels’s Reich Music Chamber), I

could not help but feel that Strauss's commitment to his own work *did* form a kind of "inner emigration." In a real sense, Strauss disappeared into private work. The composition of *Capriccio*—even in the absence of a finalized libretto—was well underway by July 1940, and the premiere took place in Munich in late October 1942, as the major Allied air raids that would bomb the city flat were about to begin. The irrelevance of *Capriccio* to the world surrounding Strauss makes the opera seem, at least in hindsight, the most absurd of *non sequiturs*.

Strauss biographer Matthew Boyden pursues this second sense of "inner emigration," seemingly in answer to Jameux, when he writes:

Even for someone as single-minded as Strauss it is remarkable that he was able to tap such a rich creative well while his country violated almost every human right worth protecting. Of course, he was far from unique in this respect; most of his German contemporaries continued to work throughout the war, but very little of it was any good. *Capriccio*, on the other hand, is a masterpiece . . . and the finest opera produced by a German composer during the Third Reich.

That Strauss chose to write a "conversation piece" set in eighteenth-century France denotes an inner emigration; no one would blame him for turning away from the grimmer realities of the war, but that he could write music of such beauty and inspiration while so many crimes were being perpetrated in the name of a Germany to which he had contributed so much, and in which he continued to believe, suggests a near-total moral and ethical detachment. (340)

Defenders of Strauss's cooperation with the Reich have pointed to his desire to protect his beloved daughter-in-law Alice, who was Jewish, and her children, who in the eyes of the Reich were therefore Jewish. Boyden, who greatly admires Strauss's musical genius, will have none of it:

... Strauss simply thought he was superior—above the mire of sociopolitics and beyond conventional issues of morality and responsibility. His supreme confidence and self-belief, and his understanding of his significance within Germany's cultural hierarchy, reinforce the cultural pessimism that led him to welcome the Nazis' embrace. ...

The issue of Strauss's "Jewish" family has been wildly exaggerated ... but it is worth noting that he wrote to the SS in Prague on behalf of his daughter-in-law's grandmother, Paula Neumann, who had been dispatched to the concentration camp in Theresienstadt. This was an isolated gesture ... and the old woman remained in Theresienstadt, where she perished. Other members of Alice's maternal family were taken to the camp in Lodz, and a total of twenty-six of her relatives were murdered. ... Unlike [conductor Wilhelm] Furtwängler, he saved no one, and risked nothing beyond a solitary letter to save even one of his own family. ... (373-74)

I am happy, I suppose, that I knew none of this, when I first fell in love with *Capriccio*, in the all-star recording produced by Walter Legge in the late 1950s.

Long before I could take a critical stance toward the history of the opera's creation, I was hooked.

The excellent production of *Capriccio* over which I'm talking, in the video essay, was staged in 1993 by Stephen Lawless for the San Francisco Opera, and subsequently released on DVD. The scene from the 1911 *Der Rosenkavalier* is from the celebrated 1994 production by the Vienna State Opera, conducted by Carlos Kleiber, and subsequently released on DVD. The "Cannon Song" from *The Threepenny Opera*, by Kurt Weill, Bertolt Brecht, and Elisabeth Hauptmann, is from the controversial 1931 film by G. W. Pabst, digitally restored and remastered for release on a 2007 Criterion Collection DVD (along with a wealth of welcome extras). In adding Elisabeth Hauptmann to the list of writing credits, I follow the scholarship of John Fuegi about Brecht signing his name to the work of his collaborators:

After examining the original manuscripts of "Brecht" short stories of the 1920s, John Willett conservatively notes, "The major responsibility was quite likely to be Hauptmann's." The original manuscripts, notes Willett, often show few or "no marks of Brecht's hand." ...

Later in the twenties, ... huge sections of some of the most famous "Brecht" plays and large sections of new dramaturgical theories are clearly written by Hauptmann. ... Indeed, the manuscript and biographical evidence strongly indicate ... that even the most famous text of them all (and certainly the biggest money-maker), *The Threepenny Opera*, is overwhelmingly her work. (144-45)

Fuegi also offers detailed insights into the grounds and outcome of the lawsuit Brecht and a reluctant Kurt Weill brought against the producers of Pabst's film (248-52).

Postmodern Strauss: one of the most surprising chapters in Boyden's biography, "Premature Post-Modernism," builds to an analysis of the 1911 *Der Rosenkavalier* by Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal. Strauss's Hofmannsthal operas, Boyden feels, "are the embodiment not of conservatism, but of post-modernism." And he carefully qualifies the term:

Strauss was instinctively sympathetic to Hofmannsthal's preoccupation with cultural history, and the sources for *Rosenkavalier* underline their shared delight in the sort of pluralistic, anti-modern attitudes that animated twentieth-century post-modernism. Vienna for Strauss and Hofmannsthal was the imperial Vienna of waltzes and sentimentality; neither felt the slightest connection with the contemporary city, or its foremost residents Schoenberg, Berg, Freud, Neurath, Schnitzler, Klimt, Kokoschka, Schiele and so on. The use of ornament, quotation and self-quotation (with which both the libretto and the score are saturated), the conscious allusion to obsolete tradition, the parodistic application of distorted cultural references, the general reordering of the past, and the manipulation of time as a narrative constituent attest to *Rosenkavalier's* prescience as a work of post-modernism. ...

As an eighteenth-century pastiche, the counterpoint is necessarily less dense than in *Elektra* [1909], but *Rosenkavalier's* construction is, if anything, more complex. (209-10)

The detailed and persuasive analysis is worth reading in its entirety. Boyden concludes by arguing that the Second Viennese School of Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern laid the groundwork for twentieth-century musical *modernism*—but the stylistic eclecticism that eclipsed this school in the postwar era owes far more to *Rosenkavalier's* “premature post-modernism”: “Strauss prefigured the more lasting post-modern instincts that have come to dominate music since the 1970s” (211).

Listening through the ears of Wagner: in the twelve years since I first began to present the *Word and Tone* video essay, no phrase in the narration has drawn so much resistance from opera lovers as the suggestion that Strauss revered Wagner “above all composers.” Strauss’s father Franz, for decades a noted musician with the Munich Court Orchestra, despised Wagner the man as well as his music, and regarded Wagner’s sometime patron Ludwig II as “the very embodiment of decadence.” The composer “brought out the worst in natural conservatives such as Franz Strauss, which was doubly unfortunate since Wagner thought him one of the greatest horn players in Germany” (Boyden 3). While young Richard was initially baffled by Wagner’s music when played in the theater, he experienced a “conversion” to Wagner while still in his mid-teens; as his “passion for Wagner deepened,” Strauss would “take his first tentative steps towards creative autonomy” (Boyden 12). To his father’s growing dismay, Strauss felt the influence not only of Wagner’s music, but of his theoretical essays and his approach to conducting as well. By the summer of 1890, Strauss had become devoted to what Hans Bronsart disparaged as the “fanatical Bayreuth cult” and had earned the admiration of Cosima Wagner (Boyden 39, 67). The “sonic world” of Strauss’s first opera *Guntram* “is closer to Wagner than anything Strauss had written before” (Ashley 57), and “late Romantic, Wagnerian ecstasies” fill the music of his great early successes *Salome* and *Elektra* (Boyden 211). Only by the time of the “daring and adventurous achievement” of *Intermezzo*, which premiered in 1924, has Strauss broken free of “the weighty symbolic, motif-ridden washes of Wagneriana” into a more forward-looking style (Boyden 264). While Wagner’s influence on Strauss was profound, I agree with my critics that it was more complicated than I suggest. Were I to redo this video essay (which is unlikely) I would qualify and moderate my observation.

“Phenomenal” and “noumenal”: the distinction between these two types of music in opera has a more familiar parallel in film criticism and theory. As David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson remind us about sound film in general, and fiction film in particular:

If the source of a sound is a character or object in the story space of the film, we call the sound *diegetic*. The voices of the characters, sounds made by objects in the story, or music represented as coming from instruments in the story space are all diegetic sound. ...

On the other hand there is *nondiegetic* sound, which is represented as coming from a source outside the story space. ... Music added to enhance the film's action is the most common type of nondiegetic sound; when a character is climbing a sheer cliff and tense music comes up, we do not expect to see an orchestra perched on the side of the mountain. (241)

In the video essay *Word and Tone*, I quote a famous example of diegetic music. Midway through *Casablanca* (1942), the Germans gathered around Major Strasser in Rick's Café Américain begin to sing the anthem "Die Wacht am Rhein": "Dear Fatherland, put your mind at rest, / Firm stands, and true, the Watch, the Watch on the Rhine!" Victor Laszlo marches up to the bandstand and orders the musicians to play "La Marseillaise." Although Max Steiner's music department has cleverly orchestrated this quodlibet, we in the audience are to understand that, within the fictional world, the characters are actually singing and playing these songs, and can hear each other doing so. (Strasser and friends, overpowered by the singing of "La Marseillaise," finally give up in disgust.)

By contrast, the film ends with Rick and Captain Louis Renault walking away from the camera toward "the beginning of a beautiful friendship." Around them swells non-diegetic "background music": "La Marseillaise," first softly and then in a triumphant, martial rendition. As in Bordwell and Thompson's example: there is no orchestra sitting on the airport runway. Rick and Louis do not literally hear this music, within the fictional world—although arguably, at this moment, they feel the patriotic emotions that the music seeks to stir up. They are "deaf" to music that the audience hears, as commentary on the action. Non-diegetic music typically addresses the audience from the space of a film's narration, not from the space of its on-screen action.

A distinction like this is trickier to apply in opera—at least the European opera of the nineteenth century that musicologist Carolyn Abbate examines in *Unsung Voices*, and that Strauss carried forward into the mid-twentieth century. In such work, *everything* happens in music, and "diegetic" utterance in scene tends to flow seamlessly into and out of the "non-diegetic" context. Abbate calls diegetic singing "phenomenal" music. She uses the "Bell Song" from *Lakmé*, in which a character sings a song to a crowd onstage, as an example:

the Bell Song is a scene of performance on two levels: a narrative performance, and a musical performance that the onstage audience can *hear as music*. The scene involves "phenomenal" performance, which might be loosely defined as a musical or vocal performance that declares itself openly, singing that is heard by its singer [as well as] the auditors on stage, and understood as "music that they (too) hear" by us, the theater audience. (5)

By contrast: music that is “noumenal” is music “as it is in itself,” my *New Oxford American Dictionary* tells me, “as distinct from a thing as it is knowable by the senses through phenomenal attributes.” Characters “speak” non-musically to this music and “think aloud” non-musically to this music—and further, this music surrounds them (unheard by them) as commentary. Abbate explores in several places the “deafness” of characters, in their fictional world, to the very music that is the medium for representing their dialogues and soliloquies, as well as for conveying narrative utterance.

Gary Tomlinson, reflecting on Abbate’s distinction, expresses it as follows: “The ‘deafness’ of the characters onstage to the noumenal music heard by the audience, then, is breached by moments of phenomenal song” (88) when suddenly the characters perform music for each other in the fictional world and hear that music *as music*. Tomlinson rehearses Richard Taruskin’s critique of Abbate’s distinction, before articulating his own more careful one. Like Abbate, he seeks to define the nature of narration (as distinct from dramatic action) in operatic storytelling (see, for example, the chapter on “Modern Opera,” 73-103).

Despite the objections of musicologists who find “the ever-present, sonorous environment” of grand opera to be too seamless, too organically knit, to be so divided—into categories of “heard” and “unheard” (Tomlinson 89)—I cannot fully appreciate the *storytelling* achievement of Strauss’s *Capriccio* without such a distinction in place. My video essay explores the ways in which I see and hear “phenomenal song” interact with “noumenal” narration in that opera.

This opens the door to my examination of the other art form that regularly uses noumenal narration, in the form of background music, to comment on dramatic scenes in the fictional world. I speak of course about the “classical” Hollywood film. And I set off from an exact contemporary of *Capriccio*: the Warner Bros. film *Now, Voyager*, featuring a celebrated score by Max Steiner, enjoyed its New York premiere less than a week before the Munich premiere of the opera, and general release only a few days after. The other Warner Bros. films I consider are: *Casablanca* (as noted above); *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex* (1939), featuring a score by Jewish composer Erich Wolfgang Korngold, who remained in Hollywood after the Anschluss; and Howard Hawks’s *To Have and Have Not* (1944), the “verbal music” of which I discuss at length in the video essay. Hawks’s dislike of background music was never more evident than in this film: only a diegetic song by Hoagy Carmichael (who plays the café singer “Cricket”) and Johnny Mercer receives a credit. The main title by Franz Waxman, another émigré from Hitler’s Germany, is uncredited; interestingly, after the great success of *To Have and Have Not*, the same title theme appears (credited) in Bacall’s second Warner Bros. film, *Confidential Agent* (1945), no doubt to suggest to the audience that it was in for a second helping of Bacall’s sensational debut appearance.

In reviewing Hawks's reshaping of Hemingway's very different novel, I have returned most often to two sources: Bruce Kawin's richly annotated edition of the screenplay of *To Have and Have Not*, prepared for the University of Wisconsin/Warner Bros. Screenplay Series; and Todd McCarthy's 1997 biography of Hawks, especially the chapter "Not in the Script: *To Have and Have Not* and *The Big Sleep*" (358-96). In attempting (with decreasing success) over the past quarter-century to interest my undergraduate students in this film *as adaptation*, I can merely echo McCarthy's assessment:

From almost every possible angle, ... this is the decisive film of Howard Hawks's career, the one in which nearly all of his vital interests intersect in some way. ... [I]f one isn't turned on by *To Have and Have Not*, if it doesn't make a viewer "see the light," as it were, then it is doubtful if any of his films will. (360)

Pictures of Hemingway in Havana and Key West come from a variety of biographical print sources. Of special interest, in connection with the novel *To Have and Have Not*, is the "reality check" of the photographs reproduced in Walker Evans's *Cuba*, which Evans took in 1933 while spending time with Hemingway in Havana.

Most useful to the central interest of the video essay, as it began to emerge, was Gerald Mast's perceptive examination, in *Howard Hawks, Storyteller*, of the delivery of dialogue in his greatest films. Hawks came to call his dialogue "three-cushion":

To take Hawks's billiard analogy, the talk does not move directly at its target but bounces in several directions at several angles before reaching its mark.

The fact that Hawks's dialogue is so spare, so indirect, that it implies much more than it says, may ... seem related to an abstract notion of cinematic virtue ...—the less dialogue (and the more picture) the better. ... Hawks's characters don't tell everything they know. ... For Hawks, talk is cheap and actions speak louder than words—whether in personal or professional life. Second, because they aren't always sure what it is they know. That is why they must undergo the process of the narrative—to make their discovery of what it is they know. ...

If Hawks lacks faith in the ability of talk to reveal thoughts and feelings, he has great faith in it as sound itself, as a kind of music. ... The rhythms of Hawks's dialogue scenes—the dizzying speed of the comedies, the laconic saunter of the westerns, the brittle crackle of the gangster and detective films—reveal the power of his ear for dialogue. ... (48-49)

Mast calls *To Have and Have Not* "a film of verbal 'singing' in which vocal harmonies imply spiritual harmonies":

The dropping of Bacall's voice allowed her vocal purr to "sing" duets with Bogart's mellow growl, wrapping their low and lowing voices around the terse but measured cadences of the dialogue. ... [T]he verbal "singing" of *To Have*

and Have Not is a languid, liquid, stately largo. Both Bogart and Bacall “sing” in terse, simple phrases, dominated by monosyllables, their voices perpetually falling at the end of each phrase, then rising again at the start of the next and falling at its end. Their “songs” are dominated by rests and caesuras. (259)

The video essay quotes some of the best examples of this kind singing.

As I set out to compose the video essay, I had in mind the significant number of composers, many seeking to escape the Nazis, who had abandoned or put on hold their careers in European concert halls or opera houses, and who sought a new livelihood in the Hollywood studios. Steiner, of course, had arrived early, at the very beginning of sound. After his breakthrough movie, *King Kong* (1933), Steiner—at Warner Bros. after 1937—contributed importantly to the development of studio music departments, and to the practice in “classical” Hollywood of extensive non-diegetic underscoring. It was my intuition that the *narrative* impulse in background music travelled easily from the noumenal music of grand opera to the orchestral scores of Hollywood’s golden age.

Hawks’s rather anomalous achievement—the speaking of dialogue “as a kind of music”—quickly moved to the center of this project. It was an easy step from the operatic narration of Wagner and Strauss to the Steiner soundtrack, but a bit more of a reach to “the ever-present, sonorous environment” (to borrow Tomlinson’s phrase) that Hawks uniquely achieved through orchestrated speaking. To describe this, as Mast does so effectively, is one thing; but to demonstrate it, in the medium of a video essay, is another. When I broke through to this as the goal of my project, I was on my way to a demonstration composed of vidcap quotations. To borrow McCarthy’s phrase: if this demonstration does not convince you, “then it is doubtful if any will.”

Mystory

Concerning the compositional process of *Word and Tone*: this is the closest early approach I made to “mystoriography.” At various places in these video essays, I have spoken about the influence of Gregory Ulmer’s attempts to theorize contemporary post-literacy, under such labels as “electracy” and “videocy.” Ulmer’s writing can be a workout. One problem is a fondness for neologisms—“mystory,” “heuretics,” “popcycle,” “punccepts,” “textshop,” “oralysis,” “Emer-Agency”—in which the sometimes multi-layered puns can be real groaners. Another is the highly discursive style of musing through European post-structuralism of the Barthes-Derrida-Lacan vintage, from its jumping-off points (Freud, Benjamin, Wittgenstein, Heidegger) to its Anglo-American inheritors (Craig Owens, Hayden White, Sherry Turkle, Fredric Jameson, Bill Nichols, Laura Mulvey). Even when he offers applied theory in the guise of an exercise-driven textbook (as he does in *Internet Invention*) one can easily lose track, among his digressions and diverse examples, of the lesson at hand.

Yet Ulmer has been worth the effort for someone as inclined as I have become, by this late stage in my career, to find in video the appropriate contemporary medium for the essay. Long before I became a “mystorian,” Michael Bowman—who, with Ruth Laurion Bowman, has distilled a teaching method for mystory work in the performance classroom—insisted to me that my video essay work had much in common with Ulmer’s compositional interests. Ulmer’s project came into focus for me with the books *Teletheory*, which I first encountered in its revised edition (2004), and *Heuristics* (1994).

I will focus here on *Teletheory*, which imagines the nature of post-literate composition, in an age when “oral, literate, and video conduct in our society” are our “three orders of discourse” (11).

My project ... does not take video as its object, but as its cause. ... My goal ... is not to explain video, but to think with it. ... People will not stop using print any more than they stopped talking when they became literate. But they will use it differently. ... [V]ideo can do the work of literacy, but no better than literacy can do the work of speech. (11, 18-19)

Ulmer offers an expanded definition of “television,” his theory’s delivery system—which is not to be confused with your great-grandparents’ vintage Zenith or Admiral console with the rabbit ears and the candy dish and the copies of *Life* sitting on top of it.

“Television” therefore is now your computer monitor, your laptop screen, your smartphone screen, your 60-inch flatscreen, or the HD projector in your classroom—as well as your great-grandparents’ retrofitted Zenith or Admiral (whatever receives the signal and gets the job done).

Mystory is a compositional genre for people who think with video. Ulmer concludes *Teletheory* with an unconventional print essay called “Derrida at the Little Bighorn.” But despite its accommodations to the medium of print, this mystory “is not in fact a book. It is a video” (17). It was “thought with” video. “My belief is that in the age of television, academic discourse in the humanities will function mystorically” (18). The composition of a mystory is driven by images as much as (more than?) by words. It is driven, moreover, by quotation, appropriation, and sampling. Importantly, mystoriography is not hermeneutics. It is *allegory*, as Craig Owens famously qualified this term for postmodern aesthetics in *October*, in the spring and summer of 1980:

Allegorical imagery is appropriated imagery; the allegorist does not invent images but confiscates them. He lays claim to the culturally significant, poses

as its interpreter. And in his hands the image becomes something other (*allos* = other + *agoreuei* = to speak). He does not restore an original meaning that may have been lost or obscured; allegory is not hermeneutics. Rather, he adds another meaning to the image. If he adds, however, he does so only to replace: the allegorical meaning supplants an antecedent one; it is a supplement. This is why allegory is condemned, but it is also the source of its theoretical significance. (205; see Ulmer, *Teletheory* 120, 185)

So great is Ulmer's interest in distancing mystoriorgraphy from hermeneutics that he teases out another neologism, *heuretics*, to apply to invention (in a post-rhetorical sense) rather than interpretation:

There is no need to be against hermeneutics in order to be for heuretics, only that heuretics provides an alternative to interpretation that has been lacking in most of the discussions of the problem. Hermeneutics, in any case, comes after heuretics, applied to ... invention. ... (33)

While searching for examples of mystories produced in classroom situations, I came across the work of Professor Michael Jarrett, of the York Campus of Penn State University. In the teaching module "Heuretics Defined" posted online, he offers this elegantly concise example of Ulmer's distinction:

Hermeneutics asks, What can be *made of* the Bible? Heuretics asks, What can be *made from* the Bible? (Jarrett)

Hermeneutics addresses Barthes's "work," whereas Heuretics engages Barthes's "Text."

Quoted or appropriated content of some kind always precedes invention, but invention always precedes utterance, and utterance always precedes interpretation. This relates, of course, to the familiar distinction that Barthes explores in "From Work to Text." Do we approach a piece of writing as closed and finished, waiting on a library shelf to have its "obvious" meaning interpreted and restated in a critical metalanguage? Or do we approach the "work" as "Text"—as a kind of invitation or starting place, as something "*experienced only in an activity, in a production*" (58)? (Hopefully, says the pedagogue in me, something of both—but as a lifelong theater practitioner, I lean toward "Text.") Barthes develops this idea differently in "The Third Meaning," when he importantly distinguishes between a work's "obvious" and "obtuse" meanings; this also helps to inspire Ulmer's need for both a hermeneutics and a heuretics.

Writing in the age of video, Ulmer revisits (with the aim of reimagining) the canon of classical rhetoric called *inventio*, which concerns itself with methods for discovering one's arguments. In *Teletheory* he writes: "A mystorical essay is not scholarship, not the communication of a prior sense, but the discovery of a direction by means of writing" (113). Like Owens's allegory, Ulmer's mystory generates "post-meaning," which he associates with Barthes's "third" or "obtuse" meaning (123; see 118-26). A similar concern arises in the mystorian's

interpretation of history. One cannot, as Benjamin argued, “articulate the past historically” as “the way it really was”; rather, one must “seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger” (qtd. 137). Ulmer sees in Benjamin’s insistence

one crucial difference distinguishing the project of mystory from the traditions that rely on critical distance. In mystory, the punctum of emotional recognition is put to work in the service of invention, bringing to bear on disciplinary problems the images and stories of autobiography. (137)

What saves such an approach from degenerating into self-indulgent “me-search,” Ulmer would argue, is the constant interaction, in mystory composition, of three distinct styles or levels of discourse: the personal, the popular, and the expert.

Teletheory’s long chapter on mystory (105-39) is wide-ranging, heady, and quotational, although it reduces to a few manageable premises. But how would one translate this into practice? By way of answer, Ulmer introduces his mystory “Derrida at the Little Bighorn” with an “assignment to a class” (245), which is worth quoting at length:

Write a mystory bringing into relation your experience with three levels of discourse—personal (autobiography), popular (community stories, oral history, or popular culture), expert (disciplines of knowledge). In each case use the *punctum* or sting of memory to locate items significant to you; once located, research the representations of the popular and expert items in the collective archive or encyclopedia (thus mixing living and artificial memories). Select, for inclusion in your text, fragments of this information most relevant to the items in your oral life story. Arrange the entries to highlight the chance associations that appear among the three levels. (245)

In organizing these “fragments” that have turned up in your personal archive, acknowledge the “‘images of wide scope’ in your personal and community background” (245). As Ulmer explains in *Internet Invention*, the mystory search will reveal a “core image guiding [one’s] creativity,” or perhaps several of these. Once recognized, how does an “image of wide scope” produce meaning? What feelings does the image evoke? What does this image reveal “about what the world is like,” and “how one should live” (10)? Then, beyond acknowledging “wide scope,” organize what Ulmer calls “*puncts*: sets of the fragments collected on the basis of a single shared feature” (*Teletheory* 245).

Prior to embarking for Edinburgh in the summer of 2004, I had read only *Internet Invention*; before a year had passed (but not before composing *Word and Tone*) I would read *Teletheory*. I was not yet, in other words, a full-fledged, self-conscious mystorian. I knew merely that several things were bothering me: my reaction to the *Capriccio* performance in Edinburgh, on the eve of my fifty-fourth birthday; and the nomination of George W. Bush to a second term. And in the deep background, some other things (arising from my classroom teaching) had been puzzling me for a long time: notably the relationship between “noumenal”

music in opera and background music in Hollywood films, which I had never fully articulated (to myself, much less my students). Back in Chicago, I immediately set to work writing a video essay, as a way (if I may borrow a phrase from the syllabus to one of John Bresland's Northwestern courses) to see what I thought about something.

Back at home, I began to assemble my personal archive of fragments by pulling books, videotapes, and DVDs from my shelves. In the event, I would use no resource that I did not already have in my physical library. I began to gather quotes from various pencil-scribbled, spine-broken books, and to capture video clips onto my computer from my DVDs of operas, fiction films, and documentaries. Patterns began to emerge.

Wide images: two emerged quickly. One was the narrative counterpoint of noumenal (non-diegetic) and phenomenal (diegetic) sound in both grand opera and classical Hollywood. I followed Gerald Mast's belief that—as in opera—the medium for dialogue between characters in the fictional world of Hawks's *To Have and Have Not* was a kind of singing. My assembly of clips and subsequent addition of voice-over narration helped me to discover what I thought (and still think) about all this.

The other was politically motivated emigration. Bertolt Brecht, Stefan Zweig, and several important composers associated with Hollywood's golden age were compelled to leave Europe. Walter Benjamin committed suicide during his own unhappy attempt. Richard Strauss preferred “inner emigration,” as biographer Boyden qualifies that phrase. And here I was, newly returned to a nation in which a majority of the voters was about to re-embrace the war cabinet of Bush 43—and wondering about what it takes, how bad things need to get, to make someone realize that it might be time to pack the bags and go.

Personal discourse: the things I keep in our house are my closest approach to keeping a diary. My treasured possessions include ear-marked copies of books that I've read, LPs and CDs I've listened to, VHS tapes I've recorded from AMC and TCM and OTA, and DVDs I've bought—alongside family albums, stuffed animals, collections of letters, and drives filled with dated digital files. Like Proust's madeleine, many of these objects are charged, and trigger involuntary memories: partial, of course, and often false, but capable of reminding me when the content of those objects first came into my life. My wife is mystified by my pack-rat habit of storing tax returns going back to the late 1970s—but I can happily retrace whole days of my life by going through my itemized deductions. Inconspicuous consumption: these annals would be meaningless to any other reader. When they clean out the house after my death, and my tax returns go to the dumpster along with the LPs and VHS tapes, the story of my life goes with them.

Popular discourse: the place of grand opera and, differently, Hollywood film in the history of popular culture charts the dynamic interaction of creation and

reception as complex, socially situated acts. One startling discovery of mystery composition was the close proximity of two premieres: Strauss's last opera and the Warner Bros. film *Now, Voyager*. Strauss and Max Steiner, of course, lead us directly back to Mahler, but the coincidences do not stop there. Each work talks about the war obliquely, by *not* talking about it. Neither *Now, Voyager* nor its 1941 source novel (by Olive Higgins Prouty, author of *Stella Dallas*) seems especially aware of events on the world stage; a first-time viewer in 2016 would probably need a decoder ring to understand why the cruise from North America to the Mediterranean would need to be changed, in the film adaptation, to a cruise to South America. But to an American audience in 1942, filled with couples about to be torn apart for years by Roosevelt's draft and the American war mobilization, the drama concerns a woman and a man yearning to live together, who must nonetheless discipline themselves (for the sake of a greater good) to live apart. Very soon Warner Bros. would explicitly shift this theme into a fantasy version of current events (see for example Harmetz 102-15, 266-83). Actors Claude Rains and Paul Henreid would move on from *Now, Voyager* to their assignments in *Casablanca*. Strauss's unhappiness about the war is far more heavily disguised; it leaks out, I would argue, in his setting of the opera's final lines, when the Countess wonders aloud if life affords us "an ending that is not trivial." He completed the short score of *Metamorphosen*, an adagio for strings, a month after the fire-bombing of his beloved Dresden in February 1945, and biographers have argued that the work more directly (if still ambiguously) reflects his despair (see Ashley 197-98; Boyden 352-56). The disguising of feelings about the war—in two works that were not *ostensibly* about current events or political awareness—further relates the opera with the Hollywood film at this exact moment. Insofar as you share my feeling that the backward-looking *Capriccio* seems (for a while at least) like the last opera, you might share as well my feeling that the arrival of both works during the same week in history signals a kind of baton-passing: what opera was for popular audiences in the mid-nineteenth century, the studio film has become for the mid-twentieth.

Expert (disciplinary) discourse: each section of my annotations reflects my engagement with a long list of "works cited": many of these are books published by academic presses, and others are "critical editions" of films in DVD transfers or music scores in CD transfers. Not very much formal quotation of books and essays reaches the surface of the video essays, but an engagement with a sizeable bibliography preceded the composition process. *Word and Tone*, as I say, drew upon works with which I was already familiar, and required no additional "research" as such. Insofar as the fragments of "expert" discourse already resided in my personal archive, along with the discourses of popular culture and personal association, *Word and Tone* might best exemplify my engagement with mystery technique, as I was still in the process of learning about it.

Et alii

The version of Strauss's *Metamorphosen* used at the end of *Word and Tone* is the 1967 recording by Sir John Barbirolli and the New Philharmonia Orchestra. Various clips of World War II footage document such things as: book-burnings in Nazi Germany; Joseph Goebbels promoting the cultural ideal of "motherhood" through such state-endorsed art as Gustav Ucicky's *Mutterliebe* (1939); Hitler vacationing in the Bavarian Alps; air raids on German cities; and the bombing of Dresden in 1945. The source of all quotations of motion footage (not including stills of Hitler and Strauss, Goebbels and Strauss, the gateways of concentration camps, and so forth) is the DVD release of the documentary series *The World at War*. The ecstatic, twirling first appearance of Julie Andrews in *The Sound of Music* (1965) was shot on a mountain near Marktschellenberg in Bavaria, just across the Austrian border and about halfway between Salzburg and Berchtesgaden.

Things I should fix, but never will: first, as I do elsewhere in these video essays, I grab "representative" footage, in this case of Allied air raids on various German cities. The narrative of *Word and Tone* suggests that these are clips of the bombing of Munich, which began with calculated intensity just after the premiere of *Capriccio*. But in fact I used whatever I could find from the DVD set of *The World at War*, which had entered my home library just before my 2004 trip to Edinburgh. Second, when discussing Goebbels's dream of a genuinely "German" opera, which would one day be free of the music of a "decadent neurotic" like Strauss (qtd. in Ashley 164), I flash images (as edited in the source) of German audiences passing beneath a marquee for *Mutterliebe*. This gives the impression that *Mutterliebe* was a stage musical, whereas it was a melodramatic 1939 film about a woman's passage through the trying but *kinderreich* ("child-rich") stages of motherhood (see Fox, esp. 25-29). Small as this potentially misleading detail is, it now bothers me.

Something large that bothers me: the 2004 video did not transfer well to HD, and I do not know why. Edited in interlaced SD for burning to DVD, the original video received some repairs prior to its screening at my Northwestern faculty lecture in 2010: I cleaned up the soundtrack, and replaced the grubby VHS captures of some quoted footage (the Pabst *Threepenny Opera* clip, the *Sound of Music* clip) with vidcaps from commercial DVD remasterings issued between 2004 and 2009. This repaired version was the "master" I attempted to transfer to HD. But I had less success with this than with other aging SD footage. Despite my earnest attempts to learn the best ways to do this, I was unable to eliminate the interlace artifacts that ghost this version. The problem annoys me greatly, although viewers of the transfer who do not watch such things very critically have not seemed to notice. The way to fix this would be to start from scratch with the technology I now use, but I suspect I won't do this before my

submission deadline, or for that matter before my upcoming retirement, or for that matter subsequently.

Envoi

In my research on the multi-media artist William Pope.L, I encountered the following quote, which ends his conversation with Hamza Walker about his recent video work. I offer this thoughtful commentary as an Ulmer-ish *punctum* for the last line of Strauss's *Capriccio*:

HW: There is always a funny link in your work between allegory and duration.

WP: In one way or another. I'm always thinking about duration, whether I'm working with onions or ketchup or video or chickens. And it's mighty hard to think about duration without thinking about ending. We need endings, but they don't exist, so we manufacture them. When I end a crawl, for example, I'm still crawling inside, even after I've physically stopped. It's like a seven-second song by the Dead Kennedys. An ending is not the last word or action: the silence is. Or the expectations built up in the passage of the work through the ether. I'm jumping a bit here, but that's where the end of an artwork is—it's in a story about the end, even though stories functionally are about reproduction, not ending. I was raised on story, the same way most of us were, but then we get older and wiser and sophisticated and ashamed of being held by an event. And then we die and the story exceeds us anyway. When we are children, we need "The End." There's something about being given that limit, that fantasy, that allows adults to go beyond conclusions, or at least pretend we do. But it's always there—the need to conclude, the need for teleology. People say the middle of a story is where the action is, but I think the end is more interesting. (150)

Rest in peace, Richard Strauss and Stefan Zweig and Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Max Reinhardt. Rest in peace, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf and Lotte Lenya and Käthe Dorsch and Bette Davis and Olive Higgins Prouty. Rest in peace, Howard Hawks and Lauren Bacall and Humphrey Bogart. Rest in peace, Elisabeth Hauptmann and Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill and Walter Benjamin. Rest in peace, Max Steiner and Erich Wolfgang Korngold and Franz Waxman and Miklós Rózsa and Arnold Schoenberg. Rest in peace, Gerald Mast and Roland Barthes and Craig Owens. The "ending" (in scare quotes) is trivial. Your stories exceed you anyway.

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5. Up The River: A Video Mystory In Three Parts (1 hour, 6 minutes)

“Anyone of my generation who says he hasn’t ‘done Brando’ is lying.”
—James Caan (2004)

The sections of *Up the River* identified as Part Two and Part Three were completed in the spring and summer of 2011. They were prepared for presentation at the Performance Studies Division panel, “Riding Streetcars, Voicing Desire: Performing Digital Adaptation,” at the National Communication Association annual convention in New Orleans, Louisiana, on Friday, November 18, 2011.

As I explain in Part One: the mash-up parody of several films starring Marlon Brando that is featured in Part Three, entitled “Up the River: A Counterfactual,” was the first of the three parts to be completed. The resulting video essay was nearly thirty minutes long, and far exceeded the twelve-minute time slot I had been given on the crowded panel. Realizing this, as various deadlines began to loom, I shot and edited Part Two, a thirteen-minute “Apology from Paul Edwards to the National Communication Association,” to appear at the panel in place of the longer piece.

Years went by. I continued to present either Part Three by itself, or Parts Two and Three together, in various places—most often in undergraduate classes or graduate seminars. And, to my ongoing chagrin, the Brando films that I remembered so vividly were unfamiliar to the majority of people who viewed these essays.

The principal shared detail or “punctum” (as Gregory Ulmer would call it) in Part Three’s mash-up “counterfactual” is the juxtaposition of two images. In Brando’s “lifest” film, the 1951 screen adaptation of *A Streetcar Named Desire* (in which Brando revisits the role he had played on Broadway), one of our last sightings of Blanche DuBois presents her upside-down in the frame. At the beginning of *Apocalypse Now*—in which Brando’s wayward performance has been assembled almost entirely in the editing room out of wildly disconnected clips—one of our first sightings of Captain Willard, the nemesis and would-be “terminator” of Brando’s character, shows him upside-down in the frame. The comparison between Blanche DuBois and Captain Willard began here. But for that joke to land, one would need to remember a specific moment from each film, as well as the general plot of both. I discovered quickly that I could not count on

such memories among the people for whom I screened the “counterfactual” in the early summer of 2011.

Part Two, the thirteen-minute “Apology” that I ultimately sent to the panel, is in large part a review of the problem of reference in the parody videos I had done. In the “Apology,” I offered elaborate video “footnotes” to the “Up the River” video, and then gave the conference attendees the URL of a password-protected site where they could view all twenty-nine minutes and change of the unshown “counterfactual.” Eyewitnesses reassured me that the video was facetious enough to entertain the audience at the panel. But over the years, when presenting the two essays to unprepared audiences (especially younger members of those audiences), I discovered that the problem of reference remained. Not many people seemed to recognize much of what I was mashing up.

I set to work on Part One, “Marlon Brando and Me,” in the winter of 2016. Here I quoted elaborately from several of my important sources, including not only *Apocalypse Now* but *Last Tango in Paris*, from which the final speech of Blanche DuBois in “Up the River” has been quoted. But as I assembled my “personal archive” for Part One, I confronted the fact that I was indeed making a mystery, which I had realized only dimly in the summer of 2011. The surprising new knowledge that arose while completing Part One, from the intersection of personal, popular, and expert discourses, was a feeling of bemusement sometimes bordering on dismissive disgust. I faced the fact that I couldn’t stand the way in which the American actor Marlon Brando had squandered his enormous gifts by haphazardly pursuing a career that was more incomprehensible than any I had ever followed.

Con man

“If I hadn’t been an actor, I’ve often thought I’d have become a con man and wound up in jail. Or I might have gone crazy. ... I think I’d have made a good con man; I’m good at telling lies smoothly ... and making people think I’m sincere. A good con man can fool anybody, but the first person he fools is himself.”

—Marlon Brando (1994)

In December 1947, Brando went from being virtually unknown to enjoying overnight celebrity. Biographer Stefan Kanfer writes:

thanks to Marlon, *Streetcar* became “the triumph of Stanley Kowalski with the collusion of the audience, which is no longer on the side of the angels.” ... The others received applause; Marlon got ovations. He was the one audiences had come to see. ...

What everyone missed ... was Marlon’s deep-seated ambivalence toward fame, and much more significant, toward acting itself. Was it an art? A craft?

Or was it just another ego trip, a part of the big American publicity machine?
(77; Harold Clurman, qtd.)

This ambivalence emerged repeatedly in Brando's Stanley. Over the weeks and months, Stanley became

an ever-changing character who bore the weight of Marlon's sentiments on that particular afternoon or evening. [Co-star Jessica] Tandy shook her head when she thought about those times. "When he was tired, as he often was, he played the role tired. When he was bored, and he was often bored, he played the role bored." But Marlon also played the other parts of his own personality—the conflicted soul, the pained artist, the turned-on satyr, the grownup child, the wiseguy, the misfit. The effect could be dazzling, but it always unbalanced the play. (76-77)

In Part Two I speak about the "liveness" of Brando's performance in the 1951 *Streetcar* film: unlike most of his later films, this one features work based on a "stage performance burned in over the course of many months." By "burned in," I did not mean to suggest that Brando's performance onstage was consistent (as Kanfer reminds us it was not), or that the film somehow reproduced the stage performance. My point was much simpler: Brando, at least, had memorized his lines in rehearsals, and repeated them over the course of a long run, and did not approach the film performance with the kind of careless indifference that characterized the worst of his later film work.

Brando's performance in *Superman* (1978) represents for me a limit case of an attitude toward acting that had been growing for years. In return for nearly four million dollars in salary and a percentage of the domestic and international gross, Brando demanded: that his work be shot as quickly as possible (in less than two weeks, in the event); that he not be required to read the script; and that he could read his lines from cue cards. Kanfer is uncommonly generous in praising the "biblical resonance"—"the timbre and demeanor of a mythic deity"—that Brando brought to his role of Jor-El, Superman's father (272-73). I must respect Kanfer's opinion without sharing it.

For by this stage of his career, Brando appeared to be acting in films only to sustain his eccentric lifestyle. After falling in love with Tahiti while shooting *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1962) Brando discovered that a nearby coral atoll called Tetiaroa "was for sale at a bargain price" (Kanfer 195). Brando entered into negotiations to buy it, which he completed in 1966. When *Time* correspondent Leo Janos tracked down Brando in 1976 "in his isolated tropical paradise," where he was now spending "half the year" in seclusion, Brando offered this assessment of his career choice:

"Acting," he says, "is an empty and useless profession. I do it for the money because for me there is no pleasure. The fact is, there are no contemporary writers of importance. Not one. O'Neill and Tennessee Williams had moments, but I don't regard them as great classical writers. Movies? Forget it. I'm

convinced that the larger the gross, the worse the picture. Bergman and Buñuel are visionaries, wonderful artists and craftsmen. How many people in the world have ever seen one of their films or ever heard of them? How can you take movies seriously? You go on the set with the script in your back pocket. You take it out and read: 'Let's see ... in this one Brando plays an Indian who attacks the stagecoach.' O.K., let's roll 'em. Commercialized glop, not worth thinking about." (Janos)

Right around the corner from this interview is his performance in *Superman*—and even more notoriously, his performance in *Apocalypse Now*.

Francis Ford Coppola's celebrated film, which updates Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* into a tale about the "secret wars" waged by the United States against North Vietnam, was a nightmare to make. The surprisingly overweight Brando's arrival on the set nearly brought the film's unsteady progress to a halt.

Ill prepared, unrehearsed, Marlon ... proceeded through pure intuition to create Conrad's fanatical recluse. ... Marlon disliked the pages handed to him on the set and ad-libbed almost all of his speeches. Some were barely coherent. Others seemed Conradian in the best sense of the word—incantatory, mysterious, threatening. (Kanfer 276)

In the editing room, Coppola rescued the potential greatness of Brando's performance from his chaotic behavior before the cameras. Roger Ebert, reviewing the film for the Chicago *Sun-Times*, accurately identifies how the ending, "with Brando's fuzzy, brooding monologues and the final violence, feels more satisfactory than any conventional ending possibly could" (qtd. in Kanfer 278).

Two valuable records of the film's troubled production, both of which I draw upon, are Peter Cowie's *The Apocalypse Now Book*, and the documentary film by Fax Bahr, George Hickenlooper, and Eleanor Coppola entitled *Hearts of Darkness*. Brando's reflections on the process are also required reading for anyone interested in *Apocalypse Now*:

I was good at bullshitting Francis and persuading him to think my way, and he bought it, but what I'd really wanted from the beginning was to find a way to make my part smaller so that I wouldn't have to work as hard. (Brando and Lindsey 431; see 428-31)

Coppola's brilliance as a director was never more evident to me than after Brando's words set my blood boiling.

What emerges finally in my Part One, which I composed in a hurry after five years of desultory meditations on the previous work, exemplifies what I understand Ulmer to mean by "wide image." I had been a much more ardent moviegoer up to age thirty than I have been subsequently. In the rep houses and campus film societies that emerged in the late 1960s, I caught up with the evidence of Brando's enormous power and promise, in the films from *The Men*

(his 1950 debut) to *On the Waterfront* (1954). Even with those projects in which he might have moved outside his effective range (*Viva Zapata*, *Julius Caesar*) the actor's willingness to experiment and stretch was fascinating—and four of these six films produced performances (including the “beat” biker in the now hilariously dated *The Wild One*) that I am moved to call iconic.

Then begin the lean years, and they last all the way from 1954 (Napoleon in *Désirée*) to 1968 (the dreamwork chauffeur in *The Night of the Following Day*). The interesting, sometimes troubling work (*The Fugitive Kind*, *The Ugly American*, *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, and—I would argue—*One-Eyed Jacks*, perhaps even *The Chase* and *Moriturus*) alternates with some of the most inexplicable career choices imaginable. Brando hits bottom with Sakini, the caricature of an Okinawa “local” in *Teahouse of the August Moon*. Equally hard to watch are his “romantic comedy” turns in *Bedroom Story* and (sadly) Chaplin's “swansong” *A Countess from Hong Kong*. His Sky Masterson and Fletcher Christian are best enjoyed under the influence of mind-altering substances; because of my late-career changes in lifestyle, I doubt if I'll be delighting in these performances again. And then, of course, there is his star turn in the 1968 screen adaptation of Terry Southern's *Candy*. Only in America.

I saw *Candy* in a movie theater, and would soon begin to watch Brando in first release rather than in rep houses or on television. Following the odd, interesting *Burn!* (1969) and *The Nightcomers* (1971) Brando would make his short-lived comeback with *The Godfather* (1972) and Bertolucci's art-house “dirty movie” *Last Tango in Paris* (1972). Brando then disappoints high expectations with the self-indulgently perverse performance of Lee in Arthur Penn's underrated film *The Missouri Breaks* (1976). But in the wake of rather cartoonish performances (Jor-El in *Superman* and, for television, American Nazi Party founder George Lincoln Rockwell in *Roots: The Next Generation*) Brando next gives us Kurtz in *Apocalypse Now*.

It was the editorial genius of Francis Ford Coppola to construct a mysterious, compelling performance out of the scraps and fragments of Brando's filmed improvisations and meanderings. To cast that achievement in Gregory Ulmer's terms: Brando's performance in the finished film, assembled creatively from the fragments in an archive of raw footage, was Coppola's mystery.

My wide image: after I had begun to lose interest in Brando's once-brilliant career, he came back. After I thought he had gone away again, he came back again, and then he went away again and came back again. In seven consecutive films, between 1969 and 1979, his character dies: *Burn!*, *The Nightcomers*, *The Godfather*, *Last Tango in Paris*, *The Missouri Breaks*, *Superman*, and *Apocalypse Now*. (I am bracketing the television appearances, in the star turn as Rockwell, and in his redux performance in *The Godfather: A Novel for Television*.) I was happy to see him return, and—even when his performance inspired my admiration—happy then to see him go again. In his less impressive work, I was happy to see his

freak show pull into town, and to watch him perform his latest party piece—and then to see him go again. Thirty years before his death, he had already become a specter—what Derrida calls “a *revenant*”:

A question of repetition: a specter is always a revenant. One cannot control its comings and goings because it *begins by coming back*. (11)

Brando’s filmography becomes what Derrida, punning on “ontology,” terms “a *hauntology*”:

This logic of haunting would not be merely larger and more powerful than an ontology or a thinking of Being (of the “to be,” assuming that it is a matter of Being in the “to be or not to be,” but nothing is less certain). ... *Hamlet* already began with the expected return of the dead King. After the end of history, the spirit comes by *coming back* [revenant], it figures *both* a dead man who comes back and a ghost whose expected return repeats itself, again and again. (10)

Let us call Brando’s career a *hauntology*. The career keeps dying. But then he keeps coming back. The end of history: Brando’s move to Tetiaroa, Janos reports in 1976,

was based on the grimmest of calculations: “I’m convinced the world is doomed. The end is near. I wanted a place where my family and I could be self-sufficient and survive.” (Janos; see Brando and Lindsey 462-64)

Hunker down on the warm sands of French Polynesia. Tend your children, as best you can, for as long as you can. Tend your bird sanctuary. Trap lobsters. Go snorkeling, and punch a shark in the snout. Walk the beach naked at night. But don’t—*don’t*—fire your agent. Several million dollars and a percentage of gross might be on the other end of the line. Tell them: I don’t read the script anymore. Tell them: I don’t memorize lines anymore. Tell them: I’m out of there in three weeks, tops. Tell them: Adieu, adieu: remember me. “At bottom, the specter is the future, it is always to come, it presents itself only as that which could come or come back” (Derrida 39). *Ghost exits. Enter Ghost*. Do not forget.

The problem with thinking you’ve finished with something, but then finding that it’s still following you around, is that it will dog you all the way into your approaching retirement. I would like to say that Brando came back to haunt me, but that’s not true: as in any *hauntology*, he *began* by coming back, at the rep houses and campus film societies and in the television reruns.

Brando has become for me the worst kind of mirror. Against his major flawed career, I measure my minor flawed one: my movie-mad childhood, my incomprehensibly poor career decisions, the triviality of my final accomplishments. In Brando’s case, these were a campy appearance in a Michael Jackson music video, and a voice-over for a *Godfather* video game, which James Caan justified doing on the basis of enabling his kids to “play with me after I die” (qtd. in Kanfer 305).

This, in any case, helps me to define the wide image of my five-year mystory. Since Part Three was written first, I will annotate it first, move on to Part Two, and conclude with Part One.

Part Three, “Up the River: A Counterfactual,’ as Not Shown in New Orleans in November 2011”

The performance of Leroy Anderson’s “The Syncopated Clock” by Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops accompanies the slide for a television broadcast, “Picture for a Sunday Afternoon.” For as long as I can remember, when I would frequently visit my grandparents in northeastern Pennsylvania and thrill to television broadcasts from New York City, “The Syncopated Clock” was used as bumper music for “The Late Show” and, I believe, “The Early Show,” both at the time (mid-to-late 1950s) old-movie showcase programs. After the mid-1950s, as memory serves, “Picture for a Sunday Afternoon” used Leonard Rosenman’s deceptively lilting main theme for the film *East of Eden* as its bumper music. I glued together several memories of television watching into a pointlessly deliberate lie (“The Syncopated Clock” behind “Picture for a Sunday Afternoon”) in order to set up an even greater lie: Vivien Leigh (1913-1967) could not have starred with Marlon Brando (1924-2004) in his last movie, which necessarily would have been released after *The Score* in 2001. This confusion, I think, helpfully sets the tone for what’s to follow.

The music accompanying the approach to Blanche’s latest “mansion,” the “Abita Springs Rest Home for the Fictionally Insane,” is an accordion rendition of the traditional polka “The Varsouviana” that haunts the memory of Williams’s Blanche. Such was the haste in which I was working, in the summer of 2011, that after finding this rendition on the internet—with its gallant little introduction and ideal tread—I neglected to make a note of the performer and source. When I went looking online again, in the spring of 2016, I could not find it. In the unlikely event that the excellent performer sees and hears this, I will be happy to post a credit: <edwdoyle@northwestern.edu>.

The script’s principal targets of mash-up are: Tennessee Williams’s play *A Streetcar Named Desire*; the script (as transcribed from the film) of Francis Ford Coppola’s *Apocalypse Now*; the script (as transcribed from the film) of Bernardo Bertolucci’s *Last Tango in Paris*; and the script (as transcribed from the film) of Johnny Depp’s *The Brave*. As an example of how two film scripts were collaged, consider an early voice-over narration by Captain Willard, Martin Sheen’s character in *Apocalypse Now*:

WILLARD: Saigon. Shit. I’m still only in Saigon. Every time I think I’m gonna wake up back in the jungle. ... Everyone gets everything he wants. I wanted a mission, and for my sins they gave me one.

This turns into Blanche DuBois's first soliloquy, as she wakes up from a recurring nightmare while still detained (after many decades) in the "Abita Springs Rest Home":

BLANCHE: Here. I'm still here. Every time I think I'm going to wake up back in Belle Reve. I wanted a mansion, and for my sins they gave me one. ...

The dialogue that ensues in New Orleans is a derivative parody of the meeting between Captain Willard and the briefing group at ComSec [Communications Security] Intelligence in Nha Trang, at the beginning of *Apocalypse Now*.

When Blanche arrives at the office of the South Central Screen Actors Guild at 632 Elysian Fields in New Orleans, the "Suit" and the "Commander" show her a videotape of clips that trace the screen career of Marlon Brando.

- The Marlon Brando screen test for *Rebel Without a Cause* dates from 1947, just after Warner Bros. bought the rights to Robert Lindner's source novel, but years before the film with James Dean went into production. It appears as a "special feature" extra on the "Two-Disc Special Edition" of *A Streetcar Named Desire* compiled by Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. in 2006 and released by Warner Home Video.
- *The Men* (1950) is the kind of "message movie" that became producer Stanley Kramer's trademark. It concerns a paraplegic war veteran trying to return successfully to peacetime society. In his first film role, Brando appears here with Mercury Theatre veteran Everett Sloane.
- *On the Waterfront* (1954) earned Brando his first Oscar. The cab scene between Terry Malloy and his brother Charley (Rod Steiger) gives rise to the second-most popular text used by Brando impersonators, the most popular of course being Brando's cries of "Stella" in the film of *Streetcar*.
- *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951) becomes one of the chief mash-up targets in "Up the River."
- In *The Wild One* (1953), a young woman named Mildred (the former "Miss Atlantic City" Peggy Maley) dances with members of the "Black Rebels Motorcycle Club." She asks Brando's character, "Hey, Johnny, what are you rebelling against?" Brando famously replies, "Whaddaya got?" Among the inheritors of Brando's "bad boy" image in this film was Elvis Presley, whose rockabilly career would begin in earnest a year later.
- *Viva Zapata!* (1952), in which Brando plays the Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata (d. 1919), was his second feature with Elia Kazan. Anthony Quinn won the Best Supporting Actor Oscar for playing Zapata's brother.

- *The Teahouse of the August Moon* (1956) adapts John Patrick's Pulitzer-Prize-winning Broadway hit from 1953. Brando inherits the role of the Okinawan Sakini from Tony Award winner David Wayne. "It was a horrible picture," Brando says simply, "and I was miscast" (Brando and Lindsey 236).

- In Joseph L. Mankiewicz's *Julius Caesar* (1953), Brando in the role of Mark Antony was coached by co-star John Gielgud—not only on his interpretation, but on getting rid of his trademark mush-mouth. "When I mumbled my lines in some parts, it puzzled theater critics," the actor recalls in *Brando: Songs My Mother Taught Me*:

I played many roles in which I didn't mumble a single syllable, but in others I did it because it is the way people speak in ordinary life. ... You cannot mumble in Shakespeare. You cannot improvise, and you are required to adhere strictly to the text. ... Kenneth Branagh's production of *Henry V* ... was an extraordinary accomplishment of melding the realities of human behavior with the poetry of language. ... In America we are unable to approach such refinements, and of course we have no taste for it. If given the choice between Branagh's production of *Henry V* or Arnold Schwarzenegger's *The Terminator*, there's hardly a question of where most television dials would be turned. (Brando and Lindsey 202-04)

In considering the lessons of his various acting teachers, Brando sadly concludes: "clearly the majority of us are addicted to trash" (205).

- Biographer Kanfer reports that Brando felt trapped by Darryl Zanuck into playing Napoleon in *Désirée* (1954).

His way of fighting back was the same one he used in military school: insurrection. The director ... was Henry Koster. ... Marlon distrusted the man on sight, and proceeded to follow his own first law of cinema: "Never give a stupid, egotistical, insensitive or inept director an even break." He made a policy of forgetting lines or reciting them with a nasal pseudo-British intonation and creating havoc between takes. ... (134-35)

Time magazine was equally unkind to Brando's performance with a cover headline, "Too big for his blue jeans?" (qtd. in Kanfer 136).



- Of playing Sky Masterson in *Guy and Dolls* (1955) Brando remarks on his inability to sing:

I couldn't hit a note in the dubbing room with a baseball bat; some notes I missed by extraordinary margins. But the engineers kept telling me to do them over again, and they would stitch together a word here, a note there, until they had a recording that sounded like I'd sung the bars consecutively. They sewed my words together on one song so tightly that when I mouthed it in front of the camera, I nearly asphyxiated myself ... while trying to synchronize my lips. (Brando and Lindsey 215)

This is not the last time that Brando's artistry would be constructed in "post" from fragments and scraps.

- For his latest "sexy" comedy *Bedtime Story* (1964) producer Stanley Shapiro had wanted the unavailable Cary Grant and Rock Hudson (co-star with Doris Day of his 1959 mega-hit *Pillow Talk*). For whatever reasons, Brando was intrigued by the Rock Hudson role, and remained "on his best behavior" with co-stars David Niven and Shirley Jones: "Save for ... a tendency to take the comic pacing *a lento* instead of

con brio, he was the consummate screen actor” (Kanfer 189-90). At the time Brando was struggling to repair his career from poor box-office draw and a growing reputation for bad behavior on the set. “I’ve never been a comic actor and am not very good at it,” Brando admits, but *Bedtime Story* “was the only one I ever made that made me happy to get up in the morning and go to work” (Brando and Lindsey 305). When I watch it, I have to admit that Brando, at least, seems to be having fun.

- Charlie Chaplin’s last film, *A Countess from Hong Kong* (1967), presents a far sadder story. Kanfer diagnoses the 1938 script’s hopeless datedness, as well as director Chaplin’s adherence to “static camera work and big stars making grand entrances. ... Nothing had changed since the palmy days of the 1920s” (210-11). To assess the film’s belatedness, consider nothing more than a short list of other 1967 releases: Mike Nichols’s *The Graduate*, Arthur Penn’s *Bonnie and Clyde*, and Jean-Luc Godard’s *Weekend*. Approaching the project with high hopes, Brando ultimately labeled the aging Chaplin a “sadistic” and “fearsomely cruel man,” and the film “a disaster” (Brando and Lindsey 316).

- According to Brando: Stanley Kubrick, Sidney Lumet, and Elia Kazan all took a pass on the opportunity to direct the script for *One-Eyed Jacks* (1961). The progression of writers had begun with Rod Serling and later included Sam Peckinpah. By the time Brando agreed to direct, he was on writer number four, and the improvised rewrites continued throughout principal photography (Brando and Lindsey 256-57). Just about any film—including *A Countess from Hong Kong*—has its admirers. I’ve always admired Brando’s one attempt to direct a film, if only for the pleasure of hearing Brando call Ben Johnson a “scum-suckin’ pig” before throwing a table across the floor. In line with Kanfer’s complaint about Brando’s comic pace, I find his pace with westerns to be “*a lento* instead of *con brio*” (compare merely the pace of an equally long western, Peckinpah’s 1969 demolition derby *The Wild Bunch*). But Brando regards it as “one of my favorite pictures,” and I share his opinion (Brando and Lindsey 256).

- *The Young Lions* (1958), an adaptation of Irwin Shaw’s 1948 novel about Germans and Americans serving in World War II, continues to interest me for two reasons. First, Brando has rarely spoken more forcefully about the politics guiding his artistic decisions than he does in describing his desire to rewrite Shaw’s character of the German soldier Christian Diestl:

... I thought about the script and decided to exercise the right in my contract to change it.

The original script closely followed the book, in which Shaw painted all Germans as evil caricatures. ... Like many Germans, Christian had been misled by Hitler's propaganda and believed he would bring a lasting peace to Europe by conquering it. ... I thought the story should demonstrate that there are no inherently "bad" people in the world, but that they can easily be misled. ... In *The Young Lions* I wanted to show that there were positive aspects to Germans, as there are to all people. (Brando and Lindsey 249-50)

The startling commentary surrounding this reflection is an indictment of "Nazi" figures in recent American politics, from Joe McCarthy to the Vietnam-era Lyndon Johnson and Robert McNamara, who did as bad as Hitler, "Heydrich or Himmler": "people can be conditioned to do anything," he laments (Brando and Lindsey 251). Second, Brando reveals "a trick I stumbled on while I was making *The Young Lions*":

When I first made movies, I memorized my lines from the script like the other actors, or if the script was weak I'd improvise dialogue but still memorize it.

On *The Young Lions* ... I had to rewrite a lot of the dialogue as we went along, and one day I didn't have time to memorize my new lines for one scene, so I wrote them on a piece of paper, pinned the paper to the uniform of one of the other actors and read the lines. The camera shot over my shoulder, showing my face in despair while I read. There was a practical advantage to what I had done because it saved a lot of time. You can easily spend three or four hours trying to memorize lines for a scene, and in order to prepare, some actors go around all day muttering them at the edge of the set. There are other things I would much rather use my time for than memorizing lines, so after *The Young Lions* I started reading dialogue from notes in every picture. (Brando and Lindsey 414)

Brando attests to doing so not only in mercenary outings like *Superman*, but even on the set of *The Godfather*: "I had signs and cue cards everywhere—on my shirtsleeves, on a watermelon and glued to the scenery. ... I ... discovered that not memorizing increased the illusion of reality and spontaneity" (Brando and Lindsey 415). And, helpfully tracing his career back to the 1951 *Streetcar* film, he explains why.

- *Morituri* (1965) concerns an anti-Nazi German engineer drawn back into the war by the Allies, to work as a double-agent. He poses as a Nazi on a German cargo ship. "Moral ambiguity" on board the ship, Kanfer observes, "is the theme of the day" (197). The cumbersome script drags down the efforts of a very talented cast.

- In February 1979, ABC television broadcast *Roots: The Next Generations*. In part because of his dedication to civil rights protests, beginning in the 1960s, Brando accepted a mere \$25,000 for his performance as George Lincoln Rockwell, “the smallest fee he had collected in years.” For a sarcastic and snarky performance as a “cold-eyed fascist who would be assassinated by a onetime follower,” Brando received “his first and only Emmy” (Kanfer 273). Clearly others liked this performance better than I did.

- Sidney Lumet’s *The Fugitive Kind* (1960) adapts Tennessee Williams’s 1957 play *Orpheus Descending*. “I’ve always thought of Tennessee as one of the greatest American writers,” Brando notes, “but I didn’t think much of this play or the movie”; moreover, he thought Magnani “miscalc” (Brando and Lindsey 260). On the set, Williams had equally negative views of “Brando’s offbeat timing and his slurred pronunciation,” as well as his egotistical disengagement with the other actors (qtd. in Kanfer 167). While Kanfer admires moments when the drama is able to “seize the imagination”—notably the “defining speech” of Brando’s drifter about “this kind of bird that don’t have no legs, so it can’t light on nothing”—he acknowledges that “the rest of the film had nothing comparable to offer.” Then and since, reviewers in general have been “unhappy with the results” (167).

- Bernardo Bertolucci’s *Last Tango in Paris* (1972), on the heels of *The Godfather* (1972), continued Brando’s brief, surprising comeback. Bertolucci “wanted me to play myself,” Brando remembers, “to improvise completely and portray [the character] as if he were an autobiographical mirror of me” (Brando and Lindsey 424). Not only does Brando confess to never knowing what *Last Tango* “was about,” but he suspects that Bertolucci didn’t know either. He remembers most how “depleted and exhausted” he felt after it was finished:

Thereafter I decided to make my living in a way that was less devastating emotionally. In subsequent pictures I stopped trying to experience the emotions of my characters as I had always done before, and simply to act the part in a technical way. It is less painful and the audience doesn’t know the difference. If a story is well written and your technique is right, ... the audience does most of the acting for you.” (Brando and Lindsey 426-28)

For admirers of *Last Tango*, Bosworth’s detailed commentary on the film is worth examining (181-97). In “Up the River,” as noted, Blanche speaks a version of Maria Schneider’s final monologue in *Last Tango*.

- Johnny Depp’s *The Brave* (1997), after premiering at Cannes “to a mix of loud boos and polite applause,” was never picked up by a distributor in the United States (Kanfer 300). Director and co-writer

Depp also plays the “alienated, alcoholic Cherokee” who, hoping to assist his impoverished family, makes a deal with the bizarre, weepily death-obsessed McCarthy (Brando) to appear as the victim in a “snuff” movie. The film follows Depp’s character, newly enriched by \$50,000, through what appears to be the last week of his life. Brando’s speech to Depp about death, at the beginning of the film, becomes another target in the mash-up script of “Up the River.”

- As Kanfer reminds us, Francis Ford Coppola’s *The Godfather*, on first release, did not meet “with unanimous raves.” John Simon, “notoriously hard to please,” complained about Brando’s “poor ear for accents” and his “unrivaled capacity for hamming things up by sheer underacting—in particular by unconsciously drawn-out pauses.” Stanley Kauffmann concurred: “They have put pudding in Brando’s cheeks and dirtied his teeth, he speaks hoarsely and moves stiffly, and these combined mechanics are hailed as great acting” (257; Simon and Kauffmann, qtd.). Brando, who shared some of these criticisms of his own “mechanics,” nevertheless had “one of the most pleasurable experiences in his career” working on the film (Kanfer 248).

- Above, I discuss my feeling that his involvement with *Superman: The Movie* (1978) took Brando to a kind of cynical limit of “doing it for money” rather than “for art.” To that I will merely add Kanfer’s observations (offered four years after Brando’s death) about the “Superman curse”:

Superman carried doom wherever he flew. Everyone said so. ... The men who played the role had met with unhappy ends. ... In April 1963 John F. Kennedy’s staff approved a Superman story promoting the president’s physical-fitness program. It was canceled after the president was assassinated in November.

Perhaps Marlon should have paid attention to the warnings. ... (272)

In this ominous comment, Kanfer looks forward to the rapidly accumulating deaths of family members and friends, as well as rivals and adversaries (see 307-08).

- The absurd self-indulgence of Brando’s performance in *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1996), completed by replacement director John Frankenheimer, might relate to Brando’s confusion and grief over the suicide of his daughter Cheyenne in 1995, just after filming began. The responsibility for the chaos of this production extends far beyond Brando. Not even dignified as one of the film’s major actors, Brando received a “Worst Supporting Actor” award from the 17th Golden Raspberry Awards (“Razzies”).

- But Brando has not yet hit bottom. In his next-to-last film, *Free Money* (1998), he plays Sven “The Swede” Sorenson, a twisted prison warden who enjoys torturing his captives with an electric cattle prod. Kanfer laments:

The other actors ... seemed uncomfortable, and Marlon’s portrait of the Swede ... was cringe-making. Almost all his moves are prat-falls, culminating in a scene where he faints, plunging head-first into a toilet bowl. ... The film went directly to the video market, where it was mercifully ignored. (300)

Brando’s swansong as a film actor, a crime caper called *The Score* (1991), did little to redeem the actor’s reputation at the end. Despite the presence of Robert De Niro, Angela Bassett, and Edward Norton, Brando’s relationship with his director quickly turned hostile. A *New York Times* reviewer offered this “perverse view” of the film: “There is always a morbid fascination, and a degree of pleasure, to be found in watching first-rate actors trundle through expensive pieces of Hollywood hackwork.” Other critics were more generous to the distance Brando had travelled back from the creative abyss of *Free Money* (Kanfer 302; A. O. Scott, qtd.).

- As the SCSAG “Suit” and “Commander” finish their presentation, and prepare to offer Blanche her mission, they play some documentary footage. Among the political and humanitarian causes that Brando adopted over his long career was support of the United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), founded in 1946 to assist the youngest victims of World War II. On the page “Special Exhibits from UNICEF Archives” of *UNICEF Records and Archives* is a feature, “Marlon Brando at UNICEF”:

Marlon Brando took up the cause of UNICEF in 1966-1967, participating in Gala Fund Raisers in Europe and traveling to India, Pakistan, Lebanon and Egypt. ... At the instigation of Jacqueline Kennedy and Danny Kaye in the early 1960’s, Brando had been interested in the work of UNICEF and [the] United Nations for some time. On the occasion of the UNICEF’s 20th Anniversary, French Radio and TV organized ... a Gala Evening in Paris on 25 November 1966 that ... was seen by 250,000,000 viewers. The event raised over \$3,000,000. (“Special”)

At this fundraiser, late in the year in which Brando completed his purchase of Tetiaroa, the actor Louis Jordan brought Brando to the stage to deliver a few remarks, first in halting French and then in English (see “Marlon Brando [42 ans]”). The following year, at the December fundraiser, Brando outdid himself: after being introduced by Jean-Pierre Aumont, he filled the stage with Tahitian singers and

dancers, who performed with Brando some traditional music (see “Marlon Brando au gala”). Footage of both events has been posted to the archival website of France’s Institut national de l’audiovisuel (INA.FR), and the 1967 performance can be found at several places on *YouTube*. I use footage from the 1967 event, which (as Blanche watches) morphs into distorted footage from the 1951 *Streetcar* film.

- During his long involvement with protests for Native American rights, Brando was nominated for a second “Best Actor” Academy Award, for his role in *The Godfather*. He sent his friend, the activist Sacheen Little Feather, to refuse the award in the event that he received it:

When I was nominated for The Godfather, it seemed absurd to go to the Awards ceremonies. Celebrating an industry that had systematically misrepresented and maligned American Indians for six decades, while at that moment two hundred Indians were under siege at Wounded Knee, was ludicrous. Still, if I did win an Oscar, I realized it could provide the first opportunity in history for an American Indian to speak to sixty million people—a little payback. . . .

I don’t know what happened to that Oscar. The Motion Picture Academy may have sent it to me, but if it did I don’t know where it is now. (Brando and Lindsey 404; see “Marlon Brando’s Oscar”)

The montage of three elements—the UNICEF performance, Sacheen Little Feather’s appearance at the Academy Awards in March 1973, and Blanche’s semi-hallucinated memory of appearing in the *Streetcar* film with Brando—concludes the videotaped presentation by the SCSAG “Suit” and “Commander.”

Once Blanche’s mission begins, I composite the actor’s moving image onto motion footage and still backgrounds appropriated from *Apocalypse Now*, as well as a few generic “ringers” of riverbanks. The Doors’ “The End” accompanies Blanche’s arrival at my mythical Tetiaroa. Dennis Hopper meets her, and describes Brando with the language that Hopper’s character uses to describe Kurtz in *Apocalypse Now*. As she approaches Brando’s residence, the tinkly music that accompanies her is Alex North’s cover of the “Varsouviana,” from track five, “Blanche and Mitch,” of the *Streetcar* soundtrack recording.

As Blanche regains consciousness, her image has been composited into the cell that briefly holds Willard in *Apocalypse Now*. When Brando (celebrity voice impersonated) arrives, he reads from Leo Janos’s 1976 *Time* interview, “The Private World of Marlon Brando.”

When Blanche returns to Brando’s residence, the two engage in a pastiche dialogue drawn principally from Williams’s *Streetcar*, *Apocalypse Now*, and

Brando's speech to Johnny Depp in *The Brave*. Brando, greeting Blanche, nearly begins by uttering the climactic line in Williams's scene ten: "We've had this date with each other from the beginning!" (162). There follows a version of the dialogue between Blanche and Stanley from scene two:

BLANCHE: Oh, in my youth I excited some admiration. But look at me now!
[She smiles at him radiantly] Would you think it possible that I was
once considered to be—attractive?

STANLEY: Your looks are okay.

BLANCHE: I was fishing for a compliment, Stanley.

STANLEY: I don't go in for that stuff.

BLANCHE: What—stuff?

STANLEY: Compliments to women about their looks. I never met a woman
that didn't know if she was good-looking or not without being told,
and some of them give themselves credit for more than they've got. I
once went out with a doll who said to me, "I am the glamorous type, I
am the glamorous type!" I said, "So what?" (38)

But in "Up the River," the roles are reversed:

BRANDO: . . . But I guess you and me, we've had this date with each other
from the beginning. Would you think it possible that I was once
considered to be—attractive?

BLANCHE: I don't mind you being older than what I thought.

BRANDO: I was fishing for a compliment, Blanche.

BLANCHE: I don't go in for that stuff.

BRANDO: What—stuff?

BLANCHE: I never met an actor that didn't know if he was good-looking or
not without being told. Don't play so dumb.

Later in "Up the River," two brief Stanley quotations from scene two (39-40) crash into his more violent language from the end of scene ten (162)—but then Brando continues the thought with a quotation from his character Paul, late in *Last Tango*:

BRANDO: All right. Cards on the table. Let's cut the re-bop. What are you
here for? You want some roughhouse, Blanche? Want a little
roughhouse? I've got a prostate like an Idaho potato, but I'm still a
good stick man.

The freedom with which the adaptation moved around in a given source, or from source to source, seemed appropriate for a dialogue between a fictional character (identified initially by her Dewey Decimal System call number) and an actor notorious for his inability to learn his lines. After shooting with cue cards for take after take, "I might know the lines by the end of the day," Brando admits (Brando and Lindsey 415)—but on the last day of his life, what remains

in his memory is a free-association among uncontextualized scraps, and this becomes the basis of his speech and thought.

Part of the method here is a page torn from the playbook of Charles Marowitz, sometime associate of Peter Brook during the 1960s, who later embarked on a project of “theatrical collage”: “Restructuring, juxtaposing, interlarding, collating one work with another; modern vernacular mixed with classical idiom; . . . laser imagery and computer technology freely commingling Star Wars and the Wars of the Roses” (*Recycling* 32, 16; see 16-35, 141-71). His volume *The Marowitz Shakespeare* contains collage adaptations of Shakespeare plays that move around sections and scenes into a new story logic, and freely reassign speeches from character to character. The cut-ups even tolerate the arrival of matter from other sources—as when Isabella in his *Measure for Measure* adaptation abruptly segues into part of a speech by the Jailer’s Daughter from *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (see Marowitz 214; *TNK* 3.2.29-38). Marowitz acknowledges in such work what I have called the problem of reference:

In Shakespeare, collage techniques are more or less restricted to known quantities, that is, plays that have become generally familiar through frequent repetition. In those cases, there is a certain dramatic plus in the act of re-ordering the material. Because of altered sequence, it becomes possible to posit certain insights or transmit certain ideas which, in the flow of the original narrative, tend to get lost in the shuffle of predictable continuity. (*Recycling* 33)

Cut-up adaptations work best, as both critical commentary and entertainment, with material that is familiar. Over the years, the most appreciative viewers of “Up the River” have brought reasonably comprehensive memories of *Streetcar* and *Apocalypse Now*.

That said, the section of “Up the River” to which I return with the most pleasure, despite the density of its references, is Brando’s meditation on death. As he approaches his grand summation on how to “fix the problem” of Hollywood, he begins to murmur lines spoken by Blanche in *Streetcar*. I do not mean to suggest that my Brando character is consciously quoting Blanche to herself; rather, her lines (which he would have heard six nights a week plus matinees for many months) just seem to have stuck in his head, from a source he might no longer clearly remember.

He has already quoted Blanche’s statements to Mitch from scene nine about her fondness for the dark: “The dark is comforting to me. . . . I don’t want realism” (143, 145). Here he appropriates part of Blanche’s musing in front of Stella in scene eleven, just before the Doctor and Matron arrive (170). Then he backtracks to scene nine, where Mitch listens as Blanche, on the subject of “death” and “desire,” enters into counterpoint with the Mexican Woman (148-49). The coda to all this is a brief quotation from Brando’s more recent role in *The Brave*.

BRANDO: [After a pause.] I can smell the sea air. When I die, I'm going to die on the sea. And I'll be buried at sea sewn up in a clean white sack and dropped overboard—at noon—in the blaze of summer. ... Death. I used to sit here, and death used to sit over there, and death was as close as you are. ...

BLANCHE: [Seeming to remember her words.] Death. ...

BRANDO: The opposite is desire. Tell me. Are you afraid to die?

BLANCHE: Are you?

BRANDO: No. Not now. I'm not afraid to die. I regard death as ... well, it's a kind of refinement. It seems to me now ... that the closer one can come to death ... in life ... makes the passage into death ... all the more easy. ...

Then Brando turns to a passage that I developed from a description in Kanfer's biography, which I discuss above.

BRANDO: Do you know the last job I took? A voice-over for a video game based on *The Godfather*. It was an offer I couldn't refuse ... but I wasn't sure if I could go through with it. But here was Jimmy Caan and Bobby Duvall, and *they* were doing it, and Jimmy Caan said, "No, I love it." He said, "This way ... my kids can play with me after I die."

In what follows, Brando in "Up the River" becomes a character much stranger and more Kurtz-like than what we know of Brando in real life. Despite his reputation, to the end of his career, "as one of the grandest, most disorderly personalities of our time" (Bosworth 220), and one of the most cynical about his own profession, he did not turn into the utter recluse who appears at the end of "Up the River." Nor did he stop seeing movies during the last several decades of his life; we know this elaborately from his own autobiography.

But the Brando character in "Up the River"—as General Corman suggests to Willard about Kurtz, at the early briefing scene in *Apocalypse Now*—has reached his "breaking point" and "gone insane." This Brando reminisces about being back in California in the summer of 2003, prior to Kazan's death in September, and going to see movies once again after "maybe twenty or thirty years." (That I was working in a parallel, counterfactual reality—already apparent from my reading about Brando—was brought home to me when a Los Angelino who saw this early on wondered whether the Pacific 16 Theatres were even open in the summer of 2003, because of extensive mall renovation work at Sherman Oaks.) Brando's reminiscence about working early on with "Gadg" (Kazan's nickname—short for "Gadget") leads him to the muted passion of his conviction that he knows how to "fix the problem." At this point he realizes that he has "swallowed a bug"—a line spoken by Brando on the set of *Apocalypse Now* that figures, hilariously, into the documentary *Hearts of Darkness*—and

apparently chokes to death (or, as Blanche prefers to believe, talks himself to death).

As Blanche sails away, the music that accompanies her final speech (appropriated from *Last Tango*) is “Analyst,” composed by André Previn for his score to Ranald MacDougall’s 1960 film *The Subterraneans*. The music over the credits is the beginning of track three, “Belle Reve Reflections,” from North’s *Streetcar* score.

Part Two, “Apology from Paul Edwards to the National Communication Association,’ as Shown in New Orleans in November 2011”

The “Apology” begins by acknowledging the work by the group assembled at the NCA in New Orleans: the November 15, 2010, panel entitled “Bridging *Vertigo*: Performing Digital Adaptation” at the NCA Annual Convention in San Francisco, and the “Riding Streetcars” panel in New Orleans in November 2011. The track “Belle Reve Reflections” from North’s *Streetcar* score plays over clips from the credit sequences to Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* (1958) and the 1951 *Streetcar* film. I discuss my contribution to the 2010 *Vertigo* panel: a counterfactual version of Ibsen’s career tracing his involvement in the production of a film of *The Master Builder*. The facetious video essay, “Classics in Context: Ibsen’s *The Master Builder*,” mashed up a variety of sources, clips from which I show. The first (to which I later return) is a BBC production featuring Leo McKern and Miranda Richardson, originally broadcast on May 15, 1988; here Solness attempts to impress Hilda with his resolve to overcome his fear of heights. The second is the model, and target of parody, for my puppet work in the video essay: the episode “Mr. Bill Goes to New York” from *Saturday Night Live*, in which Walter Williams’s character Mr. Bill suffers his own fear of heights when he visits the Empire State Building. The third, from my own “Classics in Context” essay, incorporates memorable shots from *Vertigo*.

In the conversation I perform between Michael S. Bowman and me, the background footage is from the Kaiju film by Ishiro Honda released in 1957 in the U.S. as *Rodan*. I then show clips from some silent movies that Ibsen lived long enough to see: Edwin S. Porter’s *The Great Train Robbery* (1903) and Georges Méliès’s *A Trip to the Moon* (1902). Playing under these is “On to the Show” from the original *Little Rascals Music*, as performed by the Beau Hunks. There follows a clip from the silent film *Queen Elizabeth* (1912), in which Sarah Bernhardt’s Elizabeth visits the body of Essex; the musical accompaniment on the source tape is unidentified. A brief glimpse of actress Renée Jeanne Falconetti in the restored version of Dreyer’s *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928) leads to the filming of stage plays in the early sound era: here, John Barrymore as the drunken has-been Larry Renault mouths off to the producer Jo Stengel in the 1933 screen adaptation of Kaufman and Ferber’s *Dinner at Eight*. More video

clips from *Vertigo* accompany my tale of circulating the “Classics in Context” video to the 2010 NCA panel.

In describing my horrified realization, in late July 2011, that “Up the River” was far too long to present at NCA, I composite clips of myself over the following: news footage of Speaker of the House John Boehner expressing his frustration over negotiations with President Obama concerning the raising of the U.S. debt ceiling; the beheading of Macbeth, from Roman Polanski’s 1971 film of Shakespeare’s play; Glenda Jackson as Charlotte Corday in Peter Brook’s 1967 film of *Marat/Sade*; documentary footage of the Korean War; Brando in *The Men*; Brando in the 2001 Michael Jackson music video “You Rock My World”; and clips from “Up the River.” As I describe the content of “Up the River,” I employ clips from the 1951 *Streetcar* film and *Apocalypse Now*, as well as much briefer clips from *The Godfather* and *Last Tango in Paris*.

Footage of Laotian soldiers trained and armed by the United States, for service in the “secret war” against North Vietnam, appears in volume nine, “Cambodia and Laos,” of *Vietnam: A Television History* (1983). Anthony Poshepny, a.k.a. “Tony Poe”—his “nom de guerre” among both Laotians and Americans (Waldman)—was a possible influence, even a likely one, on the creation of Colonel Kurtz in *Apocalypse Now*. Poe was a teenage Marine at Iwo Jima who received two Purple Hearts, and was honorably discharged. After joining the CIA as a paramilitary in 1951, he took part in such dubious schemes as the CIA’s disastrous failure to engineer a coup in Indonesia in 1958. Poe went into Laos in 1961 and remained there, training and leading the Laotian “secret army.” In *Legacy of Ashes*, based entirely on sources such as firsthand accounts and declassified CIA documents, Tim Weiner recounts:

With a bottle of Scotch or Hmong rice whisky his constant companion, Tony Poe was the field commander of the secret war, walking point ... with his Hmong and Thai troops. He had gone completely native and more than a little crazy. (292)

He worked first with the Hmong, and subsequently with the Yao (Mien) tribe in the north. Finally he was transferred out in 1970—due in part to his “loss of effectiveness from drinking” (Warner 303). Continually resentful about being barred from going back to Laos, and sinking into alcoholism, Poe upset his CIA bosses once too often. In early 1973, as Communist troops advanced into the Laotian highlands, the CIA command center at Udorn Royal Thai Air Force Base in Thailand dispatched an air strike on the training base Poe had created at Nam Yu in Laos—the center of the “Poshepny empire” (Waldman)—thereby ending his dreams of returning to action. “Tony Poe’s long war was over” (Warner 328).

In the course of that long war, however, Poe gained a reputation for both reckless courage and extraordinary brutality. In his study of the CIA’s secret

war in Laos, Roger Warner offers Poe's own account of his mutilation of Pathet Lao and Viet Cong victims:

"I used to collect ears, you know," Poe admitted cheerfully. "I had a big, green, reinforced cellophane bag as you walked up my steps. I'd tell my people to put 'em in and then I'd staple 'em to this five-thousand kip notice that this was paid for already and put 'em in the bag and send them to [the CIA station at the U.S. Embassy in] Vientiane with the report.

"Sent 'em only once or twice. ... Some guy in the office, he told me, 'Jeez, don't ever do that again. These goddamn women [in the office] don't know anything about this shit, and they throw up all over the place.'" (251-52)

In a 1999 feature on Poe's postwar life back in San Francisco, Matt Isaacs writes that Francis Ford Coppola

denies that he and screenwriter John Milius had Poshepny in mind when they wrote the script [for *Apocalypse Now*]. In a recent interview, Coppola said Brando's character was based loosely on Col. Robert Rheault, the commanding officer of all Green Berets in Vietnam, who in 1969 was court-martialed by the U.S. Army after some of his men were accused of killing a Vietnamese guide whom they believed was a double agent. The charges were later dropped, but only after Rheault's military career was ruined.

The case was widely publicized in *The New York Times*. ...

In his preparation for the role, Brando apparently "had tried to reach former officer Colonel Rheault for this thoughts on the Green Berets," but was greeted with understandably "cold treatment" from Rheault's family (Cowie 74). Isaacs continues:

But the parallels between Col. Rheault and Kurtz stop there. Unlike Kurtz, Rheault had a reputation as a straight arrow; he never went "bamboo," or rebelled against the U.S. government.

Poshepny, by contrast, was "an underground legend," even a "mythic" figure, known to insiders "as the Central Intelligence Agency's super-fighting machine":

Like Kurtz in *Apocalypse Now*, Poshepny, who spent more than a decade in the jungle, adopted the ways of the native people. Like Kurtz, he gathered a loyal following in a remote outpost in Southeast Asia, where, according to Poshepny, he was revered like a god. Like Kurtz, he had a taste for the macabre. ... And like Kurtz, Poshepny ultimately became a liability for the United States government.

Whether Coppola and Milius genuinely knew nothing about Tony Poe, or merely wanted to sidestep the problem of acknowledging his controversial, shrouded, semi-legendary existence, is hard to say. Poe, however, presents parallels to Kurtz far closer than those presented by Rheault. "Some of those who knew Poshepny during the war and have since seen *Apocalypse Now* say

Tony Poe was the real Col. Kurtz,” writes Isaacs. “And if he wasn’t, they say, he should have been. Because Poshepny’s story is far stranger than anything Coppola could have made up.” Because Poe, in his own storytelling, was fond of exaggerating his own heroics, sorting out the truth has been difficult. But diverse commentators agree with Isaacs that Poe is the likeliest model for Kurtz, down to the details of his defiant resistance to being removed from Nam Yu, and the dénouement: “The CIA called in the B-52s and bombed the base off the map” (Waldman).

Concerning time limits at NCA panels: the Association has nothing so draconian in place. In my long experience, program chairs typically respond to long-winded panelists with passive-aggressive hand signals, and get timidly vocal only as a cosmic last resort. For the video, I had considered sending in the B-52s to bomb flat the room in my house where I edit video, but happily I thought better of it.

Part One, “Marlon Brando and Me: A Short History of America in the Late Twentieth Century”

Once again, I begin with the track “Belle Reve Reflections” from North’s *Streetcar* score. In considering the composition of a mystory, I turn to Colin MacCabe’s valuable biography of Jean-Luc Godard. Especially helpful are his reflections on Godard’s legal problems in releasing his decade-long project *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. Underscoring stills taken with Godard and The Rolling Stones, at the time of Godard’s film *Sympathy for the Devil* (1968), is a bit of the recording of the 1965 Stones release, “(I Can’t Get No) Satisfaction,” which MacCabe discusses.

There follows a clip from Brando’s *The Men*, released in the year of my birth, 1950. This is followed by a series of stills: of the 1968 riots in Washington D.C. and Chicago in the wake of the Martin Luther King assassination; the Fred Hampton assassination in Chicago in 1969; the Nixon invasion of Cambodia in the spring of 1970; and the Northwestern University strike in the wake of the Kent State shootings in 1970. The music underscoring much of this is John Coltrane’s “Living Space,” discussed above in relation to the video essay *The Winter Barrel*. The stills of the fifteen years separating the fall of Saigon and Reagan’s first inaugural address are from various sources.

In the mid-1970s, between my MA program and my PhD program, I worked as a “public information specialist” for the National Flood Insurance Program: then a part of the Federal Insurance Administration of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and now a part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. There follow clips from *Apocalypse Now* and *Last Tango in Paris* that are relevant to the adaptation of “Up the River.” We see

also clips from films that are relevant to Brando's career in the 1970s: *The Missouri Breaks* and *Superman*.

"Therefore moments": in the mid-1980s, Michael Bowman introduced me to some engaging short documentaries by Errol Morris, whose subsequent work— notably *The Fog of War* (2003) and *The Unknown Known* (2013)—has had a powerful impact on me. Midway through *Vernon, Florida* (1982) we hear a young preacher address his congregation about a revelation he had while reading Romans: "this word therefore, which is the first word in our scripture this morning, began to pop out at me." His etymological encounter with the word leads to a "therefore experience," a free-associative meditation on nothing less than the basis of belief (see 36-40 m.). Since Bowman first insisted that I watch the film, we have jokingly referred to having "therefore experiences" or "therefore moments," and over the decades these expressions have entered our vocabularies as superior to "epiphany," "divine revelation," "the descent of grace," and other more spiritual alternatives. Lately, in working with mystories, I've come to prefer "therefore moment" to the discovery of a "puncture," "wide image," or any other of Ulmer's neologisms. It's the moment when, after sifting around in the personal archive for days, weeks, months, the whole project just suddenly comes together. Discovering Blanche DuBois and Captain Willard upside-down in the frame was a "therefore moment" of uncommonly generative force.

The consolations of awful

All the untidy activity continues,
awful but cheerful.

—Elizabeth Bishop, "The Bight"

Energized as I was by the high-speed, often improvisatory work on researching and scripting "Up the River: A Counterfactual" and its companion "Apology," I can take very little pride in the technical quality of the work. Let me take this opportunity to thank my long-suffering actors—Mary Agnes Doyle (Blanche), Linda Gates (Matron at the Abita Springs Rest Home), and Jerome Bloom (SCSAG "Suit"), along with the late Dennis Hopper and the late Marlon Brando (whose celebrity voice I impersonated)—for suffering through many long, hot hours in my garage, where I had set up a homemade green screen. The garage space is extremely constrained, and it was impossible to achieve really adequate camera distance from the green screen to bring the foreground figures into superior spill-free lighting and focus. (A life lesson: swallow the extra expense and shoot in a better space.)

What makes the composites here look even grubbier than they do in my other videos, however, is a fundamental mistake I made in editing. I had just made the move up from shooting in interlaced SD to shooting in HD. But since

I was relying on so much interlaced 4x3 SD for my background footage, I had to make a tough decision: do I prep and crop older video to fill a 16x9 frame? Or do I crunch down and crop the HD greenscreen footage to SD, in order to facilitate DVD distribution (which I was still doing then)? In my haste, I made the wrong decision, and the results were as awful as anything I've ever done. I threw a bunch of blur and digital "film noise" onto both pieces, and sent them off. Not only do interlacing artifacts and other distortion mar the version I prepared for DVD burning in 2011: the transfer back to HD in 2016, into the affectation of a "television screen" frame, merely compounded every problem. Over the years I've thought of going back to the original HD footage and doing it all over from scratch, but I suspect this will never happen.

Since that time, I've taught myself to edit in HD, and some of this work shows marked improvement: the "Report of the Task Force on Heritage" (segment four of *The Video Essay*, 2014); Part One, "Marlon Brando and Me," of *Up the River* (2016); and the *Footnote: Julian Beck, near the End of His Life, Takes a Role on a Cop Show* (2016). But I doubt if I will ever reach the point in my desktop-video life at which I will make anything that looks truly "professional" from a technical standpoint. And realizing this has caused me to do some soul-searching over the years. Do I even *want* this work to look and sound "professional"? (A part of me does, but that's the same part of me that imagines winning tomorrow night's Mega Millions drawing.) Or is there an advantage—a thematic or content-driven one—to remaining at the level of what some of my students call a "trash aesthetic"?

One of the consolations of awful is reminding myself that I'm writing essays, not making movies. I'm not a professional film- or videomaker. I'm an academic essayist, and years ago I chose a medium that could accommodate quotations from the widest range of research materials that interest me. A comparison suggests itself: I wrote a five-hundred-page doctoral dissertation as the age of the typewriter drew to a close. I owned a succession of Smith-Corona portable electrics with cloth ribbons that constantly needed to be replaced, as the print grew faint, and the history of the ribbon's condition could regularly be traced in my typescripts. And I kept a non-electric manual with variable strike, which I'd found in an Austin pawn shop, for those Texas nights on which a storm would knock out the power and I'd have to finish my term paper by candlelight. This was the age of pencil corrections and white-out and scissors and rubber cement.

My drafts of ten look Ed
 like Ransom notes, And
 sometimes read like them

Compare this crudeness to the IBM Selectric copies of my dissertation chapters that came back from the typist I paid, or the ultra-smooth look of a Microsoft Word draft from a laser printer, or the typesetting of a published article.

My point? The ideas are the same, regardless of the degree of visual polish achieved by the delivery system. An actual filmmaker no doubt would argue that, in a visual medium, the very “idea” exists *in* the quality of the image, and of course I agree—or at least a side of me does. I want the finished product to look as good as possible, and with my lottery winnings I might begin to hire the services of professionals at a local production house.

But in the meantime, the other side of me will continue to believe in the value of the smooth rough draft. And that side will keep trying to get better at using the resources available on my desktop, so that whenever the idea begins to arrive, I can just sit down and start to *write*. Several years ago, I came across a helpful and encouraging book by Anthony Q. Artis called *The Shut Up and Shoot Documentary Guide*. The introductory section on teaching resources concludes as follows:

Doing

It doesn't matter whether you study all or none of the previous resources first, at some point you are going to have to actually make like Nike and *just do it*. This is the hands-down most effective way to learn. Don't worry that you don't know everything (you never will). Don't worry that you're not as good as that other kid (you will be later). Don't wait until you can afford a better camera (it's just a tool). Don't worry that it's gonna suck (it probably will). Stop BS-ing yourself and everyone around you and just shut up and do it! The real learning process begins the moment you commit to a project and hit the record button. I've had one simple goal on every project I've shot, and that is to make it suck *less* than the last project. ... Straight up. Guerrilla. (5)

So, as I turn the corner into my retirement years, I will no doubt continue to write video essays. I will continue to study and improve my technique, on the various fronts of production and post. But I will also continue to *just do it*, and to figure out how to do what I don't (yet) know how to do, as I run into the next wall. I am not trying to make Hollywood movies, or documentaries for cable, or automobile commercials. To borrow once again the words of John Bresland's Northwestern syllabus: I am attempting, in essay after essay, to see what I think about something. If you want to see what I figured out, here it is.

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Footnote: Julian Beck, Near The End Of His Life, Takes A Role On A Cop Show (52 minutes)

Most of the sources, including the old Mystic Fire videos created by Sheldon Rochlin and company, have been documented above, in the long sub-section entitled "Oppositional performance: the example of The Living Theater," at the beginning of the notes to *The Video Essay*, "Section 4, 'Report of the Task Force on Heritage.'" As the *Footnote* considers Julian Beck's brief, late career in film and television, it quotes from three sources. The first is Francis Ford Coppola's *The Cotton Club* (1984). The second is *Poltergeist II* (1986). The third is "The Prodigal Son," the first episode of season two of the television series *Miami Vice* (1985).

The music at the beginning of the *Footnote*, and under the later section concerning rehearsals of *The Maids* in Paris, is from the last five minutes of Alan Hovhaness's Symphony No. 19, "Vishnu" (1966), as performed by the Sevan Philharmonic conducted by the composer. Concerning Hovhaness's relationship with Malina and Beck, see for example Tytell's *The Living Theatre* (80, 103-20, 126-29) and frequent references throughout *The Diaries of Judith Malina, 1947-1957*.

Under Beck's discussion of Picasso and Schoenberg is the beginning of the fourth movement of Schoenberg's String Quartet no. 2, op. 10 (and not, as one of the slides suggests, from his earlier, late-romantic *Verklärte Nacht*). Janis Joplin, addressing the audience at the Woodstock Festival on August 16, 1969, is followed by the cover of Joni Mitchell's anthem "Woodstock" by Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young, from their 1970 album *Déjà Vu*. Later, the beginning of part two, "The Sacrifice," of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* accompanies images of celebrities who visited the Kennedy White House.

Near the end of the *Footnote*, I take an imagistic text that Beck composed in 1971, while in prison in Brazil, and set my reading of it to a progression of visual images. While inspired by Beck's verbal images, the specific pictures were not indicated by Beck, but chosen by me. Pictures of street protests and prison violence in Brazil, posted to news services in the past five years, testify to the continuation of stories that the Becks began to tell forty-five years ago. Their stories exceed their "endings."

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Paul Edwards will retire from Northwestern's School of Communication in the summer of 2019, God willing, after forty years of teaching there. For original adaptations of narrative fiction produced on Chicago stages, he is a three-time winner of the Joseph Jefferson Award, and a winner of the After Dark "John W. Schmid" Award. The NCA Performance Studies Division has recognized his work with two lifetime achievement awards: the Lilla Heston Award for Distinguished Research, and the Leslie Irene Coger Award for Distinguished Performance. Major teaching awards include: appointment as Charles Deering McCormick Professor of Teaching Excellence (2007-10); the Clarence Simon Award for Outstanding Teaching and Mentoring (2016); the Northwestern Alumni Association Excellence in Teaching Award (2001); the Fletcher Undergraduate Research Grant Prize (with Alex Benjamin, 2014); and a number of Faculty Recognition Awards, based on student nominations, from Northwestern's Associated Student Government. Publications include: "Into the Abyss: Adapting *Madame Bovary*" (*TriQuarterly* 2009); "The Mechanical Bride of Yonville-l'Abbaye (Batteries Not Included)" (*Opening Acts* 2006); "Drift: Performing the Relics of Intention" (*Theatre Annual* 2003); "Neuschwanstein, or, The Sorrows of Priapus" (*TPQ* 1999); *Unstoried* (*Theatre Annual* 1999); "'Lost Children': Shostakovich and *Lady Macbeth*" (*TPQ* 1998); and "*Libra* at Steppenwolf" (*TPQ* 1995).



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