



Essays & Fictions

Volume II

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A Note from the Editors

Essays & Fictions can be characterized by two points, E & F:

E) Essays & Fictions is an online journal of literature and criticism. Established in Midsummer 2007, the co-founding editors set out to exploit the web as a means to distribute their book file, which was carefully crafted by The Landscape Press. Opting to reject the crude language of web design as a series of reductive assaults on the eye and the intellect, and declining to define itself by rigid, murky notions of genre and fixed knowable truth (to which many contemporary literary journals are enslaved, having been conceived, born and delivered in dichotomous form), Essays & Fictions emerged, seeking and publishing exceptional prose that is either essay or fiction, or both, or neither.

F) Essays & Fictions is an online literary journal, and not a depository for corpses. A corpse, a physical entity, must be deposited in a place equally as physical; also, the depository must allow as much, if not more, space than occupied by the corpse(s) in question. If Essays & Fictions were a physical space, as opposed to a virtual one, it would still be large enough for only one corpse hand, or two smallish kidneys; in short, the journal would be no larger than a book. Essays & Fictions must not work against, but aside from the physical. Constituted by the nature of its literary existence, the editors believe in corpses inasmuch as the evidence offered us by images and memories of voices and actions. Secure in our virtual space, we, the editors, have no choice but to deny any quality of the observable and recordable that manifests in the sacred realm of the physical.

~~~ *The Editors*



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## *Twins:*

*Mirage, Lacuna, and The Sea*

Danielle Winterton

*\* For maximum retention, the editors suggest reading  
"Twins: Mirage, et al" twice: beginning / end, beginning / end.*

There are all kinds of ways out of the body; it's only a matter of finding the proper wormhole to wriggle through. We secretly want out, baffled by the strange physical sensations of continuously balancing between two poles that are never fixed and can never be defined,

from being pulled in two directions, first plunging, then snapping back, exhaustion at the center, so finally, one begins to test the surface of reality, tapping here, knocking there, massaging the bubble with her fingertips to find loose spots, trap doors, trick spots where the membrane will give.

Once we find the soft spot, we pierce the mirage, and discover behind it a lacuna, into which we are carelessly dropped into freefall. Some wormholes deposit us into the blissful midst of hypnosis, trance, euphoria, or a profound sense of stillness and peace, leading to a literal or figurative out-of-body experience. Winterton has called this phenomenon a “transcendental fix,” and notes that it can be induced by any form of overwhelming, transformative pleasure—drugs, sports, art, sex, fast cars, wild horses, ritual, exercise, intellectual study, creative expression, meditation, prayer. When the individual becomes infused and consumed with the messages being delivered by the senses, she may become temporarily unaware of the thread connecting

consciousness to flesh, and experience the sense of existing separate from a mass of cells and tissue. These experiences are often dubbed epiphanies, and great value is placed on them; here stories are created and meaning assigned, and the resulting ideas have direct, and sometimes dramatic, effect on subsequent behavior patterns and life choices.

But it is the more dangerous lacunae that are of primary concern to us here, because they affect people so profoundly, and because they are so little understood. We have names for these dramatic exits from the body; we call them Anxiety, Depression, Rage, Guilt, Shame, and so on, and we perceive them as deviant states, often without the slightest breath of understanding regarding how we ended sitting in a pile of our own excrement, and not only that, but why we feel compelled to spread that shit around and force others to eat it with us.

Before we can proceed with our inquiry into the nature of lacunae, we must first make the careful distinction between Trauma and Abuse. An isolated

episode of trauma in an otherwise peaceful life can be put in perspective if the individual realizes it as being Other (deviant) than the norm. The source of the trauma then becomes its Inconsistency with everything the individual previously knew. The severity and breadth of the trauma help to direct the timetable on which the individual readapts to her new reality in light of the new information gathered from the traumatic experience, but a single incident of trauma can often be overcome, as the conflicting information is reabsorbed and shapeshifts into circumstances acceptable for continuing existence.

In the case of ongoing abuse, such as dysfunctional relationships and war environments, there is no outside perspective, no wider context in which to place the recurring horrific experiences, and the body must develop carefully trained physiological responses to endure and combat the experience of invasion and suffering. Blocks are deposited into the psychic bloodstream like calcium chunks or quartz crystals,

forcing energy to bend around them, or diffuse while trying to pass through them. These patterns, which become hard-wired into the brain, cut deep grooves that become increasingly rigid during times of addiction and obsession, and they replay themselves relentlessly through the body, which has itself become hooked on spikes, crests, and falls of adrenaline. Like quicksand, the deeper in you go, the faster you sink. Eventually the being seems to either succumb or gain the awareness that it will be up to his Conscious Will to retrain his mind out of these patterns.

Lately I am stuck in a terrible rut of fit followed by guilt. Daniel, my twin, and I had a bitter argument tonight, but thankfully I was able to retreat before the situation inflated to unreasonable proportions. He wanted me to apologize, but I wasn't sure for what, and I wasn't about to offer vague sentiments to pacify him if I couldn't vouch for my sincerity out of lack of clarity. He was angry. I remained detached, which seemed to make him

more furious, until he started to fall asleep, at which point I wept furious tears that he dared verbally assault me and then disappear. He sank his teeth into my shoulder for a moment, then turned his back. Darling, don't. Don't turn into the monster. My chest heaved as if to collapse and the shrill ringing in my temples quickly amplified to hit a high pitch of crescendo.

When the mirage of a stable landscape dissolves and an internal lacuna opens up, there is the overpowering sensation of the downward pull of the earth on the extremities, a weight on the psychic mass, the sense of being swallowed. Boundaries created by normally functioning sensory perceptions dissolve. This becomes the time period in which it is crucial to remain aware of the shifts in bodily experience, to stay afloat, and to look for a way out, a branch to grab onto, something to take your attention off of or away from the perplexing Object-Obsession.

A lacuna can be likened to a black hole, the opening of a cave, an air bubble, an ocean swell; walking high on

sand dunes under cloudy sky, a large, deep body of water, a knot in a tree trunk, a tricky current that opens up into a funnel-shaped whirlpool, the deep of the forest at night. One may also think of it as a gap through which the individual plummets, such as Lewis Carroll's Rabbit Hole. Unless suicide is utilized as an escape route, the body physically wears itself out before the bottom is found. So no one knows if there is a bottom at all. Still, some claim they have found bottom, and God wasn't there.

Daniel is my constant companion. He weaves dandelions into my hair and indulges my foibles. He thinks I am smart, but I am certain he is my intellectual superior. Still, I trump him with my intuitive gifts, my ability to visualize the future as it will occur, to read the motives and quips of his evil little brain. Twins, split at birth, connected by cellular memory. Two raw embryos, liquid and bloodied, pressed up against each other, heartbeats pulsing and lungs swelling, then sinking, in unison. I like to think of it when he's far from me—how, suspended in

the sea, our tiny digits formed at a compromising pace. Our sex organs developed in the third week—did we masturbate each other in the womb? It seems likely, though we have never discussed it.

Daniel wins through detachment. When he turns his back to me, or closes his eyes, or hangs up the phone, the lacuna opens up, and suddenly I exceed my surroundings. It mystifies me—how the landscape appears completely intact, but in a heartbeat, something wavers, blurs, then shifts on a downward slope of distorted perspective. I may feel dizzy, gasp with fright, or twitch with rage. He may pull the blanket over his head, or turn the phone off, or find any other number of ways to shut me out. Daniel! We share a body, how can you ignore me? He doesn't move, doesn't respond. I can't breathe, as though Daniel controls my lungs with his intent, which he has focused elsewhere. I know I am not All, and reel in this recognition. Anywhere I go—mostly, into the bathroom to lay down on the cold black and white tiled floor—he isn't there. I try to imagine a

mother bear holding me in a snuggli pack to feel secure, but it's Daniel's flat chest that I need. To work on self-sufficiency, I might envision a larger version of myself cradling a smaller version of myself. It doesn't serve to calm me down; instead I hang onto the roots of my hair and sob from the hollows of my belly and lungs, and let the shudders pass through my muscular ligature. A disc has slipped in my brain, the walls are down, order has dissolved. I am nothing but a feeding tube with a mouth on one end and a rectum on the other, offering nothing to the world but waste. Sometimes people feed me, and when they don't, I quiver in the terror of death. Daniel says I am Godless. As far to the bottom as I go? I don't know. But my God doesn't follow me down—my God hovers like a mist over a mountain range or a sunburst through a cloud cover. When I go, I go alone, and when I finally deplete myself in the fit of yearning, the only reason I pick myself up off the floor is simply because it has become absurd to remain there any longer. The solid properties of the cold black and white tile, or hard

slat-wood floor, no longer provide me with comfort. To follow the natural trajectory of the fit, the only thing left to do would be to slice open my skin, and I know what a mess that would make. I also know it wouldn't make me feel better—that nothing can in Daniel's absence. By this point, I have accepted this absence, and move forward into a period of numbness that will linger on for a few hours or days—I soften, but still cannot lighten. At this point, Daniel resumes quiet communication with me, but I say little. We move with perceptible caution and compassion for each other.

The only way out is in. If you cannot find it in you to face up to, navigate, and eventually manipulate the forces affecting the moment of your being, you must make more space within the container of your flesh, but to do so, something must be severed; there's a visceral tearing to be heard in the moment of alienation, when the self splits off from the consciousness in the face of that which it cannot process or accept.

To say so is no radical proposition, but merely to repose the question asked so eloquently by Mr. Hughes: What does happen to a dream deferred? What are the physiological repercussions of oppression induced from any source, exterior or interior? First, oppression must be distinguished from repression; the latter to hold back by an act of will or volition, and the former to keep down by "severe and unjust use of force or authority." By these definitions, one represses one's self, and is oppressed by another. In the language of Freudian psychology, we may say "Daniel is sexually repressed," and may look to overbearing mothers, American puritanical roots, or guilt induced by religious indoctrination to explain what instinct deems an unnatural phenomenon. If the church, the patriarch, the white man, or any aggressive individual with whom one is in intimate relations may be seen as oppressors, why is Daniel labeled repressed? Did he hold back of his own free will? Did he ask to be forced onto his knees each week in chapel, to confess to erotic thought as a sin, to be chastised and ridiculed

after our mother rifled through his belongings and found his pornographic magazines? Did I, likewise, invite admonishments to cover up my figure with a beach towel at Christian Camp, to have makeup scrubbed off my face after a trip to the mall with friends, to be told to cross my legs under my desk in class?

Furthermore, there is no mention of injustice in the definition or usage of repression, as though we imagine that repression happens as a natural counter-current to a certain set of events which may be deemed unjust in the *act* (oppression) but no longer unjust in the *result* (repression). Repression, to Freud, involved the individual act of excluding information, such as taboo desires or unacceptable memories, from the consciousness. But here there is no assumption of a conscious choice to exclude the information, no mention of volition of will, although an act of will, or several sustained acts of will, can retrieve the misfiled information and return the being to a state closer to Consistency. That the individual bears ultimate

responsibility over her own unconscious must be assumed, or else we would say Daniel was oppressed rather than repressed. Rather, Daniel must reach a point in his development in which he must undo what was done in order to deliver himself from a state of Oppression into a state of Awareness, after which, strangely enough, he learns to repair his life, relationships, and spirit through Conscious Repression.

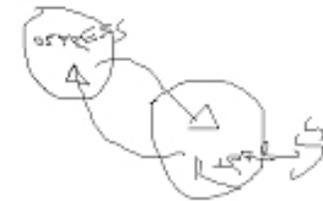
This is to say that the individual is more than fully equipped to oppress himself. Another definition of the verb form (to oppress) is “to overwhelm or crush.” Why sugarcoat it? Someone taught Daniel how to divy up and exile parts of his psyche, or at least, he adapted in the face of certain circumstances and influences. Lets say Daniel had an alcoholic father who forced Daniel to his knees and burned his ears with a lighter after one too many tallboys. Now, Daniel becomes uncomfortable in the presence of tallboys, even in an otherwise safe social situation with friends. His breath quickens, his heart slightly accelerates, his ears start to twitch and burn.

Daniel is repressed; he cannot enjoy a drink with friends because of an association with a previous oppressor who is no longer present, but his body, susceptible and adaptive to programmed code, has learned all it needs to know to keep sending out false signals.

So Daniel was oppressed and is now repressed. Who cares? Is this a matter of semantics? We must call him repressed, because in the lack of a physical oppressor, he must take responsibility and assume the willful choice of his actions, be they conscious or unconscious. To choose to call him oppressed is to do away with the idea of an act of will, which is perilous to our concept of individual identity. Or is it? We assume that unconscious actions are still willed, in a sense, because Daniel has choices as to how he acts. But does he? *Or has his body itself turned against him?*

Yes, Daniel's own body has become his oppressor, having assumed the physiological responses necessary to keep Daniel cut up in little pieces that are unaware of each other.

It's like this:



then



this:



Where is this analysis going? Toward an emphasis on the loosening of the conviction of individual Will, certainly, but actually, it's more like turning against the notion of a single will – to suggest that a psyche that has undergone the force of oppression can no longer be considered an individual at all, but has become a physical multiplicity of beings engaged in battle with each other. The oppressor has become internalized at the cellular level and acts in accordance to another,

second Will, often inconsistent with the “truer” desires of the spiritual essence. A single body, comprised as it is of cellular bonds, its consciousness of sense, impulse and memory, and its identity dependent on skillful integration and gradient of relationship, need no longer be perceived as a single entity with a unified Will. We can refer here to Mr. Whitman, who understood himself quite well, and expressed it so beautifully when he wrote the oft-quoted words, “I am large, I contain multitudes.”

The Surrealists got it right when they chose to focus in on dreams as the most common, routine and popular exit from the body. Why not consider the dream life in proper proportion to the waking life, Breton asked? After all, we spend 8 hours a day, a third or more, asleep and engaged in an alternate realm of perception, free of intoxicating substances, yet we often disregard those visions in the morning light. In my dreams, Daniel and I are Siamese twins who live as sea creatures in the ocean. We share lungs and intestines and move limply

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through the depths of the murk like two jellyfish stuck on each other. By day, our eyes are never far averted from the other's, and at night we lie on our sides on the sandy floor, and nestle our chins into each other's shoulders and necks when it's time to settle down to sleep. Our genitals rest up against other; Daniel's flaccid penis and heavy testicles quietly throb alongside my warm, hairy vulva. I would prefer it this way.





*Maxville and Back:  
A Reparation Story*

David Pollock

It was our evening walk to Portersmith Dock when Sebastian, my owner, first expressed unhappiness with the reparation. He was drunk on cheap lemon bubbly. He beat his hand with his pole then jabbed me once for no reason.

Why? I asked him.

Because I'm fed up.

The path from Pebbleton House was covered in

slush. The dark landscape, patterned by streetlight, stretched in all directions, a vast winter swamp. Sebastian saw that I was shivering and reached into the wartime canvas sack he used as a pageboy in the war and gave me a heavy gray scouts' blanket to wear over my shoulders.

At the dock he ordered me to sit, so I took the blanket from my back and threw it down onto the slush and stared upward into the black heavens. I felt small, like a slave. Sebastian kicked me once, lightly, and said that he didn't come here to watch me stare into space. Then he pulled from the bubbly and told me that he changed his mind. He wanted me to stand. I grabbed the heavy blanket from the ground so I could put it back over my shoulders and he told me to drop it. So I stood without the blanket and stuffed my fingers into the dainty pockets of my Tunisian trousers.

You're a lucky man for not needing a wife, he said. Not needing a job. You've got all those cushy rooms. All you have to worry about is that Tunisian glass, or

whatever. Did you know there was a time when a slave had nothing? You worked for me and didn't expect to get paid. That's the way it should be.

What you're talking about is the classical school. Now we call it exploitative labor.

He snorted. You're born with money, so nothing's important anymore. He took the disciplinary pole off his belt and waved it around, kicking and hollering like a child playing martial arts. This went on for some time.

I could push you into this ice water, he said.

Why would you say that?

Because it's true. He clicked the pole back on his belt loop. And I don't care. My life's falling apart. There's this slave of mine who should be saving me money like they used to. Reparation doesn't do a damned thing. You can't help me save five cents.

Sebastian took a breather and a pull of bubbly. Some guys I know from the plant have been talking about a guy who wants to make things change. They've been

talking about a fellow named Chris Bru.

So if you pushed me into the water. Drowned me, I suppose. How does that help?

That would break up the pattern. He was satisfied and watched me for a reaction. When he saw there was not one he ordered me to get moving back. Our slave/owner excursion was over. Our dark and quiet homes awaited us.

When Sebastian returned to Pebbleton House for our next session he was so drunk that instead of looking at me when he spoke he talked to my collection of glass. A light snow fell outside and the shoulders of his flannel were powdered. I was frightened, so I jumped to my feet and asked if he needed a drink. Tea. Mint or peppermint. Chai. Vestuvian blend. Milk. Pebbleton House never kept lemon bubbly on the premises.

No. Get your coat on. We're going up to Maxville for a bit. I'll drive. All you have to do is sit. Sit and have your thoughts. Except now you'll be in my car and you won't have your Tunisian glass, or whatever.

I can't go to Maxville, I said.

Maxville was not pleasant. A city populated by factory workers, like Sebastian, and their warehouses of poorly made necessities. During the war my companions and I used to venture to Maxville for paper and soap. Now it was a wasteland of near-poverty.

Pehari, yes, and even Lipschitz. But Maxville is outside of the effective radius. As well, you're drunk.

Sebastian stared. He flexed his arms as if he might lift, say, my dining table, carved from sturdy winter solid. I bowed my head to him. Sebastian owned me until we reached Lipschitz.

As I put on my lily-white Perturkin shirt he slapped his disciplinary pole against his palm and whistled, pulled from his bottle, said that tonight we were going to see a little something about reparation.

Sebastian's junker was parked outside, next to the smoking pavilion. A Burnt Rod 68 with foreign wheels. I opened the passenger door for myself, and he called me son of a bitch. I should have opened his door first.

I pretended to have forgotten. My acting didn't thrill him. He didn't want to pretend anymore and turned his head and spat.

On the road Sebastian didn't talk, so I looked out the window. The red rock formations on the sides of the highway appeared to burn beneath the snow. The illusion was due to movement. Exhaust from the cars in front lifted and vanished into the winter air. Sebastian's old junker bumped and rattled. We moved at a speed faster than legal, though not obscene. I entertained my own thoughts about slavery, how unsatisfying the modern form could be for someone who desired money and objects. And I wondered how far we would go before he came to his senses and turned back.

After half an hour Sebastian pulled into the parking lot of Breakpoint Diner and told me to get out. I had never eaten in a 'diner' and found the experience blasé. He led me to a booth by the window. The waitress came, he ordered first. We decided on the same meal, a coincidence. The best of working-class fare: flaky

burgers dressed in lemon tang, served with hardened taters and Pam's Gravy for dipping.

Sebastian rubbed his face. I stared more out the window. The red rock, at rest and distant, appeared as itself, the Marsian ribcage of the east. The scattered red bones of giants, I thought.

Sebastian took the straw out of his lemon bubbly and drank straight from the glass. This fellow, Chris Bru, has some interesting ideas about slavery. You remember from before? The work that's done for free? They call it exploitation.

Is that something you'll be doing tonight? Exploiting me?

Damn, he said, followed by mumbling. He flicked a cocky from his nostril then looked up to see if I noticed.

When the food came he folded his hands to pray. I did not, though I waited until he finished before taking a bite. He stuffed his face and wiped gravy from his mouth with a cloth he kept in his back pocket.

I haven't been to Maxville since the war, I said. There must be a lot of slave-owners in that part. I shouldn't be asking these questions. But are you familiar, Sebastian, with all of the regulations?

He nodded because the food tasted good. We go to Maxville. We take care of some business. You don't worry about the regulations.

There's a federal bureau. If you break a law I'll have to report it. The regulations were added for good reason.

No is what Chris Bru says. If I can break a law by treating you a certain way then you're not a real slave. How do you expect me exploit you if you go running to the bureau?

When our waitress came with the check Sebastian ordered me to get my wallet out.

A funny thing you don't think about is how a slave has more money than you and me, he said to her. It used to not be that way. A slave used to not have a thing. Now he's more like a pet.

The waitress was a round woman with gray hair in

buns over either ear. Her nose twitched. She looked over her shoulder to a cook with a mustache who leaned on the counter, watching. Others, in the booths, they paused and turned. Sebastian was being loud. I offered our waitress a wide smile as I placed the wad of bills in her hand.

Tip this woman well. She's a real slave here. If anyone gets money it should be her. Or me. Or any one of these people. I bet they all have slaves that aren't doing a damned thing.

The waitress hurried off, swinging her arm like the money burned.

That's a sensitive subject, I whispered. If you make jokes people will react in a bad way. You are not happy with the reparation, but this doesn't mean that others don't hold it as being, say, a war monument. In a sense.

Sebastian tried his best not to listen. He yawned, looked out the window. His junker, beneath a streetlight, resembled the carcass of an extinct automobile on

exhibit. When the waitress returned with change he stood and ordered me up by motioning with his arm.

The car bumped and rattled, the red rock burned. Sebastian's eyes fell closed now and again. After the flaky burgers and taters and all of the lemon bubbly he was finally getting sleepy.

You've been stringing me along, I said, and this is no way to treat a slave or anyone else. You have to talk now. Lipschitz is getting closer, after that you no longer own me.

We're going to Maxville. We're taking care of some business.

Passing headlights swam across Sebastian's hardened face. How many people in Maxville must own slaves, I thought. We were entering a slave-owner community. A hum beneath my skin made it difficult to sit still.

You're being a little enigmatic. I'm not afraid to say that I'm worried.

At first I thought he hadn't heard. Then: There's a point I'm trying to make. I don't know if you've been

listening.

I was listening. Still, he was being enigmatic.

A small gesture. Perhaps he fixed the rearview, checked his blind spot. I don't know what that word means. Enigmatic.

It means you're a mystery. (I wanted to flatter him.) You're behaving in a mysterious way.

There is no mystery. It's all clear to me.

What's 'it'?

We need to achieve slavery. We can't get ripped off anymore. If we're given slaves then they should be slaves.

Where are we going, Sebastian? What are we doing in Maxville?

If I started telling you everything that we were doing then I wouldn't be treating you as my slave. That's what Chris Bru says. That damned machine that stamps your glass –

The Divin.

That machine doesn't know how to live. Only knows how to stamp the Tunisian glass, or whatever.

You want to treat me as a slave, I said. Good. You're not doing it well. For one, I shouldn't be sitting up here beside you in the front seat. Also, why do you even entertain my questions, Sebastian? Probably the most important point is that I should be doing work and not getting paid. My incentive would be -- I don't know -- you wouldn't beat me or get me with your pole.

Sebastian rolled down his window and a chill entered the car. He put his arm out and slapped the roof. Then he whistled.

The streetlights of Maxville glowed sickly orange and the streets were lined with parked cars, but there wasn't traffic. We turned left here and right there, waited at several stoplights. We drove beneath an overpass that served as a walkway between two of the larger shopping centers. The Thrift Horse's Mouth and Budgetarium.

Sebastian was all but gone. I asked if Chris Bru would be attending wherever we were going.

He'll be there. And some other fellows.

If you don't mind me asking, and I don't want to

suggest anything horrible.

Okay.

You're not going to do anything bad tonight, master. I only say that because I don't know what goes through your mind. You see? You're an enigma.

His fingers tightened on the steering wheel and he made a face like he was about to sneeze. He formulated an answer that sounded like this: We're not doing anything bad. What we're doing is what we should be. It's about justice, if you know what that means.

He pulled into a lot of overwhelming size where only twenty or so automobiles were parked. Sebastian didn't order me to get out of the car, but he opened his door and stood, slammed the door and walked away at a pace so steady, so calm, it appeared for a moment he had sobered up. I remained, frightened, and watched Sebastian vanish into darkness then into light and back into darkness.

Two figures came from where Sebastian had vanished. They were large men. In my memory they were ghosts.

One to Sebastian's door, the other to mine. Laughter. A few words of conversation. One fellow talked about a kennel. The other was enthusiastic. The man at my door must have had a nice-sized piece of wood from a winter solid that he used to bash against my skull.

I came to with a headache in an L-shaped room that smelled like a library. Another slave in fine Tunisian trousers was spread against the long vertical wall. He wasn't conscious. His chest lifted and fell. When his eyes opened and he recognized my lily-white Perturkin, his face turned as pink as summer fruit. Then he whimpered, and I understood that the fellow was not right. The hand at his side, fingers splayed, showed he had chewed his nails down far enough that dry blood encrusted the tips.

After some time I worried that his sobs were affecting me and I asked for his name. Had his slave-owner brought him? Was he beaten with a heavy piece of wood?

The man rolled onto his side and whimpered. Now

and then a name escaped from his mouth: Vanessa. Vanessa, my child. That bouquet does not look like it's for your mother. Now who? Now who do you suppose those flowers go to? What's that? To me? Why yes they do indeed.

An indeterminate period of time passed. The door opened. A fellow larger than Sebastian, though similarly dressed in flannel, came inside, followed by the smell of wet animal. The crazed fellow across the room was on his back and appeared to be licking an invisible teat that hung above his face.

Get up, the man said to him. Knock that off, slave. Reparation time is here. Reparation time has come.

The fellow remained on his back and emitted a *hiss* from his throat. A twig, I thought, stuck in his windpipe.

Come on, said the big man. Your time has come. All you have to do is stand.

He kicked the crazed fellow in the ribs. The latter rolled onto his side. *Hiss* and moan. He kicked his

tailbone. The twig in his windpipe turned into a pebble. The big man lifted him and lugged him over his shoulder, opened the door with one hand and slipped away. The knob turned as he locked the door from the outside.

My period alone in the room lasted a long time. The notion that I might be pushed into ice water. My Tunisian glass. I never willed it to my nephew abroad in Saint Luc de Boufface. It would go on the market, strangers would purchase the collection. What penalties existed for owners who damaged their slaves? Two times I urinated in my trousers.

When the big fellow in the flannel returned I kneeled before him with my hands folded. In my thoughts I begged him for mercy, but I was too frightened to speak.

You going to get up or are you going to play dead? Reparation time. The reparation's come.

I was up and ready, terrified he might kick me. Then down a narrow hallway, lit by kidney-shaped bulbs that

flickered with different intensities, warping the space. On the sides were doors to rooms where other slaves were probably waiting. I shivered and hoped the big man might provide me with a blanket.

The hallway took us onto a stage. My impulse was to turn away, he gripped the back of my neck. The audience beneath was made up of twenty or more men, all like Sebastian. These were his people in flannels. Poles hung from their belt loops. Some were on folding chairs, others leaned against the wall. Most drank frothy lemon bubbly from plastic cups. They looked at me in a curious way.

The big man ordered me to undress. When I didn't move he ordered me to undress again. A bare arm extended from the velvet curtain behind. In its hand was an elaborately colored disciplinary pole. The audience applauded: Whoop-whoop. Here comes the reparation, whoop-whoop. The big man retrieved the pole and swung it like a mallet into the small of my back. The holler that erupted from my mouth belonged

to somebody else.

When I was naked, and my trousers and Perturkin were piled at my feet, Sebastian came running on stage as if he were accepting an award. He waved around the disciplinary pole then whacked me in the back of the legs. Not as hard as the first, though my knees buckled. The audience whooped. I was on the floor. He clubbed my spine. I begged him to be nice to me. I'm not goddamned enigmatic, he said. He got my teeth with his boot and spit in my hair then brought the pole down hard on my tailbone.

After the 'auction block,' which is what these big men called this activity, Sebastian and another carried me out into the lot and laid me in the back of the junker. Whenever I ran into sleep I was confronted by large colored shapes that spun so quickly and at such an angle I was nauseous. Within seconds of seeing the shapes I was more exhausted than I had ever been, a wave. And I vanished.

When I came to we were bumping and rattling down

the road and Sebastian was screaming at me from the front seat. My heart raced. Yes, I thought, he will begin hitting me again, and I'll have to cower. I thought of the Parkshire mole which, when brought out of the darkness, curls into the fetus position. The Parkshire is a frightening little animal, a pale hairless mole with oil drops for eyes.

Hey, he said. You need to wake up for a bit. That's it. You have to sit up and stay awake.

I did as he said. There were unknown pains developing in the lower region of my body.

The men said I should let you sleep for a bit then wake you up. Make sure you weren't suffering a confession from your head being hit.

There was time with no talk. I brought myself to look out the window now and again, but all I saw was black. Sebastian caught me yawning in the rearview and warned that he would come back there and give me some more of the reparation if I dozed off. He pulled from the lemon bubbly. Then he beat his hand

against the steering wheel and sang one of the popular songs by Kris Montobonto or Lilly Hurtzwinkle and her Moonshiners. The lyrics were about going to your woman with a flower in your hand then kissing her on the cheek. Then telling her that she's the girl you love and how she makes you weak.

Next Thursday, he said. we're going to do this auction block Chris Bru devised. Basically, we take some belongings from all of our slaves and we auction them off. The word Chris Bru uses is redistribution.

So you're going to be redistributing, I said. And what do you have in mind?

I figure you can suffer a little. So I told the fellow I would have a whole collection of Tunisian glass. What do you think about that?

Sebastian was laughing at me, though I wasn't sure. My nose bled. A drop hit my tongue and I caught myself savoring the salty quality and believed it was miraculous that such a treat could fall from nowhere. I thought, This is my blood. And I realized that I was not right.

So basically we'll be auctioning off your collection, piece by piece. By the way, were you the slave who was in the room with the lunatic?

He caught me dozing off, turned around and threw an empty bubbly at my face. I was asking you a question. Did you hear it?

No.

I asked if you were staying in the room with the lunatic.

I was.

Because it was the funniest thing. We brought him out on the stage just like we did to you, and when Chris Bru hit him with the pole he started hollering about Victoria this, Victoria that. And Chris Bru told him, We've got your Victoria right here, behind this curtain. And when the slave went to look behind the curtain Chris Bru gave him a whack in the ass.

Sebastian took both his hands from the steering wheel and applauded himself. Whoop. Here comes the reparation, whoop. The car swerved and we nearly went

into oncoming traffic in the next lane. Sebastian took hold of the steering wheel and turned around and said to me that he wasn't going to get us killed tonight. Then he pulled from his bubbly to show me how confident he was. This is when we swerved in the other direction, away from the traffic, rolled over a short barrier and hit a mammoth rock.

Sebastian's head was bloody. He cursed and got out of the car and threw some small rocks, pebbles, against the large red rock we crashed into. When he saw this did no good he cursed some more. Then he turned to the junker.

I wanted to sleep, not concerned with how badly I was hurt. Sebastian called me son of a bitch then pulled me out of the car, and I believe he punched me. I can remember little else, for reasons I understand. Only that he told me he hardly cared I didn't have to work, that didn't matter anymore. Truth was he never would have hit the rock had I not been in the car.

He pointed to the rock and asked me if I saw it.

I couldn't bring myself to answer so he asked again, shook me by the collar of my Perturkin and threatened to shatter my tail bone. I said that I could see the rock. Good. He used one hand to grab the hair on the back of my head, the other to grab my trousers. Then he tossed me into it.



## *Present Whereabouts Unknown*

Justin Marks

Bulbous, then jack-knifed, the past dots its i's. Just sit back and enjoy the sun, the old man used to say. He rarely meant it. The sound of his voice made animals cry. You will suffer a magnificent failure, a college girl reading my tarot told me when I was just a freshman.

Now I'm grown. The feast has commenced. Driftwood just misses the large catfish in the corner of the hundred-or-so gallon tank. Four pelicans in formation skim the surf's surface. Everywhere I turn people with hearty names are quaintly smoking.

Elsewhere in America, raccoons tip over garbage cans. Motion detectors make lights come on. Business men and women in meetings fall asleep over their marketing stories. Inspiration's sloppiness. Invention after reinvention. My vagina is a mixed metaphor. I'm hung like Everest. When you say talking, you seem to mean complaining. And all I can say is, *Where have I been my whole life?*



## *American Hoverfly*

Greg Sanders

Armine is remembering his last afternoon with Billi. He was under their favorite apple tree, lying on his back, looking up past the blossoms, past the honey bees that fed on their nectar, at a window of sky being bisected by a contrail. The jet was drawing its chalk-line through the center of the only patch of sky visible through all those branches. Billi stood over him and shook the branches so that apple petals rained down. She moved

up and down on the balls of her bare feet. Her calves, which faced him, compressed and then elongated. She was laughing up there, her head hidden from view in the dense leaves of the bottom branches. She might have been laughing at him or she might have been thrilled with the whole damn scene.

“The bees are going to be very unhappy with you,” he said.

“The bees can eat me,” she said.

“They might do that.”

Billi had taken to calling the tree Babushka. Shaped like an old lady who’d had a tough time, it grew out of a hillock and was bent in an arc of about fifteen degrees. The soil around its base was eroded, roots sticking out like bony elbows and shins.

On that afternoon other things were happening: goldenrod, globethistle, fiddlehead ferns were beginning to push up out of the meadow that surrounded the tree. And down below in the valley, in the couple’s weekend bungalow, all those ladybugs had finished

overwintering. The survivors were finally lifting their spotted elytra and unfurling their membranous wings and flying into walls like tiny, drunken biplanes. They had to be guided out, either through the porch door or an opened window. He and Billi had found the weightless corpses of the unsuccessful lodgers during the course of the winter—rolled up in the shades, under the dish-drying rack, in the light fixtures, dead on every window sill. And they’d seen the live ones crawling under the Mr. Coffee, lethargically moving up patches of sunlit wall, seeking any semblance of heat. He and Billi deposited the colorful, pill-like bodies of the dead ones in a jar they kept on the kitchen windowsill. From a distance it looked like a jar of candy. In drunken moments they planned an elaborate funeral pyre in the fireplace.

They’d shared a big mug of black tea with maple syrup and milk. Wild leeks they’d picked from the hillside and rinsed in the creek were drying on a dish towel in the

shade. That was it—that was precisely the setting. Under Babushka, the earth was cool and bare in spots. They'd done it here before, braced securely between sections of thick root, only this time Billi wasn't on the pill.

They liked to talk dirty—filthy, really—to each other while screwing. Usually. But the idea of going about their routine seemed like it would foul up the kid somehow—if she were to get pregnant this go around. Make it a pervert or malcontent. Sex under the banner of procreation is not at all the same beast as the porn-influenced screwing they'd grown accustomed to. So they were quiet now, and the sex seemed weirdly quaint, and Armine thought he ought to think tender thoughts to influence the outcome of the kid. But all he could think about was what a dirty fucking couple they'd become. That they were asking a lot of themselves. How could they be expected to switch gears so suddenly and create something tender, with tiny organs and limbs, and a cerebrum the size of a plum?

Armine kept his thoughts to himself and felt her

bucking, and heard the animal slapping of their bodies against each other, and felt her short nails pinching his nipples. He looked at her fine body, honed by years of gentle exertion—yoga, rollerblading, swimming, sex, ultimate Frisbee. And the insects were making a racket, as if stimulated by the action, as if acting in inter-species concert, their feral shrilling rising up from the valley and descending from the tree tops, coming at them from every direction.

When he was about to come—and it had taken longer than usual—she grabbed his shoulders and began pushing him off. She looked terrified.

“Pull out,” she whispered under her exertion.

“What?”

“Armine, pull *out*.”

“I lost my nerve,” she said afterward. “Something felt wrong. I don't know—*are* we ready?”

He turned toward her and cleared her bangs away from her eyes.

“We’re not wed to this,” he said. “I could’ve used a condom. Or, you know, we could have done other things.”

His semen was settling into the stringy grass next to her and had pulled along loose grains of earth and a struggling katydid. She stood up, bent over, and kissed his forehead. He watched her get dressed.

“I’ll want to hear about those other things in detail,” she said, “but now I just need to get out of here. Maybe go for a walk or something.”

Get out of where? he wanted to ask. Get out of the outdoors?

“Well then I’m gonna be a guy,” he said, and began to doze off theatrically. She piled his clothing on top of him and disappeared over the ridge and down the wooded incline. A few minutes later, half asleep, he turned to see that an army of ants had surrounded his semen and were carrying off tiny globules of it.

When he came down to the house he saw her note on

the fridge: “Went for swim, sleepy boy.” It was late spring and not yet quite hot enough for most people to swim in a pond, but that was her style. She liked the invigoration, the shock of the water on her body, the bracing air, and it meant she’d probably have the pond to herself. It was a ten minute walk. She’d take her usual quick dip, he figured. And, knowing her and her moods, she’d probably do it in the raw. He wasn’t sure when she’d left, but he figured he had about an hour to kill.

He started to mow the lawn with the old two-stroke walk-behind that came with the cottage. It put out a huge cloud of oily smoke when he started it. Something about that he enjoyed. So much the opposite of how he’d been raised, with his parents getting the first electric mower on the block. Those old two-strokes, the pattering of the camshaftless engine, all the chrome-plating—he was pushing around nostalgia on wheels. A half hour passed before he came around to the stunted, shaded section of “lawn” behind the house under the firs. It was really just weeds, bedded pine needles and

forget-me-nots. That part of the yard gradually sloped down to the edge of the creek where things became weedier still and where frogs often hung out on chic pieces of “uncut bluestone,” for which city people were now paying through the nose.

He turned the mower off and took a look at the hill, and above, at the glowing fringe of the meadow in all its Universal Studios garishness. He could see the apple tree’s crown of blossoms peeking over the ridge a little past that fringe. The sun was still high but it struck the young things growing up there—the saplings and tender grasses—at an oblique angle and lit them up with a green that seemed, paradoxically, unnatural. And the hill wept where springs broke through the rocky facade, marking their paths with algae and throwing tiny clouds of silt into the clear creek, like smoke. The late afternoon bugs were coming out, chirping, whirring, seeking mates.

Suddenly a small insect hovered in front of Armine’s face, fixed in space as if frozen in time. The American hoverfly. He’d looked it up in *The Gardener’s Guide*

to *Bugs and Grubs* the previous summer. It had been rated with a “B” in a circle, for Beneficial to Gardeners. Its larvae eat aphids. That previous summer he’d also discovered a trick. When you saw one hanging in the air close by—and it seemed that’s exactly what they liked to do—you held your finger out as if you were pointing at it, and you sternly moved that finger close to it until you found that the American hoverfly was drawn irresistibly to your fingertip, like iron filings to a magnet. So that’s what Armine did, lifting his finger, moving it toward the insect until the insect was locked into position. Under exactly what environmental pressures the insect had evolved this talent for hovering sarcastically so close to an object he could not imagine, but it surely had to do with eating or screwing.

As he wagged the finger, and then spelled his wife’s name in the air with it, the hoverfly followed the motions precisely, as if attached by an invisible rod. It kept a fixed distance from his fingertip. Not 1.5 inches or 3 inches but, Armine felt certain, a precise number of

*insect* units-of-measure. Then, as if it had had enough of the game, it moved to hover beside his left ear. He could hear the zuzzing of its tiny wings. Was it trying to tell him something? And then it shot off into the torrent of the spring air like the world's smallest projectile.

He turned to see Billi standing in the front yard, among the tire tracks that crisscrossed the lawn. She'd been watching him. She held a fern in her hand. She'd probably dug it up from along the path to the pond. Its roots were heavy with soil, its fronds collapsed. She always found some shady spot on the property and replanted them. About half survived. He felt some affection in her now, from the way she looked at him as he walked toward her. The tilt of her head, the way she stood with one knee behind the other—girl-like and vulnerable; observant without being judgmental; Edie Brickell in that first video she did.

She wore loosely laced hiking boots on her sockless feet. He drew in a quick, shallow breath as if something were about to go wrong. As he got closer he could see

she'd braided an aquatic plant or a cast of algae around her wrist like a bracelet. Her face shone with the sun she'd picked up these weekends in the country; it shone with the exertion of her swim and walk; it shone with everything that differentiated the two of them. She looked as if she wanted to say something to him. Something waiting in those dark irises of hers.

He heard a rumbling that got steadily louder until a Ford dualie flatbed laden with quarried bluestone worked slowly past the house, trailed by a cloud of rock dust and diesel exhaust. The driver downshifted as the truck hit the turn in the road past the house. It was on its way to the mill in East Branch, about ten miles farther on. When the quarrymen returned from their deliveries, the unladen trucks would speed past the house in the opposite direction, their leaf springs bowed and rigid, the trucks, celebratory, hopping over the smallest of bumps and sometimes shooting pebbles into the yard like BBs.

Billi used to cover her ears when they passed, more

because she was offended at the quiet being shattered than to protect her hearing. He could see her think about it now, but he had told her a while ago that he thought it was offensive to the drivers, who were just trying to earn a living. So as the truck passed she kept her hands at her side and rolled her eyes instead.

Finally, silence fell on them again.

“I was hoping you’d come to the pond,” she said. “You won’t believe this. I was about to dive in when I heard this *snoring*. I looked across the pond and this man was on his back on that little muddy beach on the other side. His feet were in the water and his head was on the shore. I could barely make him out, but it was definitely a man and he was making quite a noise.”

That little beach—Armine knew it well. An ancient water slide whose fiberglass tongue had delaminated long ago was sunk into the silt not ten feet from the shore. It looked like the kind of thing that would kill you if you tried to use it. They had no idea who owned that little beach and it always seemed draped in shadows

and cloudy with gnats.

“He was really pale and I thought maybe he was dead. Except he was snoring of course. I feel like we’ve seen him around.”

“Where have we seen him?” Armine said.

“I don’t know. It’s just a feeling, like I said. But I don’t have anything to back it up. Anyway, he must have been dead drunk. So, here’s the thing. He was stark naked, not a stitch. I just stood there knee-deep in the pond watching him snore.”

“I’ll bet,” Armine said.

“Should we see if he’s still there? We should make sure he’s okay. He could have, what do you call it, inhaled his own vomit or something since I saw him.”

“This is absurd,” Armine said.

“What is?”

“Talking about our naked neighbor. Can you think of another topic. Anything more pressing?”

She was silent for a few seconds and shook her head as she watched any hope of levity vanish before her

eyes. It was a beautiful day. Why did she always have to talk to him about so much *stuff*? It wasn't that she couldn't be completely open with him, it was that she was tired of *having* to be open with him at the drop of a hat. He'd always known that was a bad habit of his—the need for humorless meditation on any recent mishaps in their relationship. And her frontline weapon in these instances was sarcasm.

“Of course, honey. Let's talk about *us*,” she said. “Is that what you're getting at? You want to know why I asked you not to come inside me, don't you?”

“Now that you bring it up, you *commanded* me not to come inside of you.”

“Like I said, I don't *know* why. Maybe nerves. Anyway, I don't want to talk about it now.”

“That's pretty damn obvious. Did you come at least?”

“No,” she said. “I did not come. Why do I have to come every time? And you should have asked me then.”

“Did you want me to go down on you?”

“Enough already,” she said.

He'd done it yet again, pointed out some petty violation of hers, brought it to a head, and then diffused it by changing the subject to something cute, as if the whole thing wasn't really worth worrying about in the first place. How she could have stood for it was a mystery to him.

“Please let's go to the pond and make sure that guy's not dead or something,” she said.

They parked the Jeep in front of the path that led to the pond. Billi got out and lifted her foot onto the bumper to tighten her boot laces, then the other foot. She never tightened the laces on one boot without doing the same on the other. It was always a matter of symmetry and evenhandedness with her, even when it came to inanimate objects.

Armine was already in the woods, on the path, watching her and waiting for her to finish with the laces,

noticing, perhaps, the smooth musculature around her Achilles tendon where it emerged from the boot. As he likes to imagine it, he was about to tell her something—it's fine, let's not worry about kids or no kids and let's never again get into the nitty gritty of procreation.

But a truck, headed back to the quarry, empty of its load, celebratory, etc., came down the dirt road at full throttle. She never even finished tying her other boot.

\* \* \*

The path is overgrown, barely passable, and splits a quarter mile from the road, one branch heading straight to the edge of the pond, the other, forking left, ending in a mossy clearing where a disused rowboat is chained to a hemlock. That's where Armine is now, hidden from view by a storm-felled honey locust, waiting for the ghost of his Billi. He'd heard from a neighbor that she'd been spotted here before, but couldn't get up the nerve to make a visit. But with the help of some Jack Daniels

and on the anniversary of her death, he's managed to give it a go. The only action on the pond so far involves dragonflies, which seem to be spending all their time mating in flight, tandem style.

But sure enough, after having perched for forty minutes in the shadows and drinking from a flask all that while, he sees her. She is not, as he'd both feared and hoped, naked. She wears that old orange bikini, its elastic frayed and its color bleached out from swims in chlorinated pools. She stands motionless a few feet from the shore. She is about twenty yards from him.

Oh god, he wants to shout her name, to hear her name echo through the valley. He also wants to know, should he have an erection? Because he does have one.

No wake spreads behind her as she moves forward. No concentric circles dissipate around her. Nothing. The surface of the water is so still that it's difficult to see where her body meets its reflection. The freckled cleft of her lower back is doubled below her and fades into the water.

From what he can tell at this distance, her gaze is fixed on a point across the pond. Then she turns to look around her. When her face sweeps his way, Armine's heart begins to beat so hard he can feel his mitral valve clicking. Prolapsing, the cardiologist calls it. He may be in actual danger if it doesn't subside. She turns her gaze back to the opposite shore and Armine follows it. He imagines the man she saw passed out there. Eugene Daigle—pink, cirrhotic, snoring.

The sight of that physique of hers: how he loved to lose himself in her. Why is there no fear in him? It is broad daylight. Might his neighbors—the Bosches, the Quinns, the Goulds—also be out here for the sighting, squinting through binoculars as he squats so idiotically under cover?

She immerses herself and sidestrokes toward the little beach with the old water slide. Then she stands in the water ten feet from the beach on which Eugene Daigle was once sprawled. Armine moves along the water's edge to get a better look at her. He enters a

private yard—whose, he doesn't know—where he hears muffled news channel voices coming out of the woods. The United States is contemplating bombing Syria. He moves past the yard and into some brambles until he sees her clearly again. Her hair, flat and black against her shoulder blades, sheds no water.

“Hey,” she says to the empty beach, not loudly. “Hey there, sir?”

It seems, he can't be sure, but it seems like she might be touching herself through her bathing suit.

She looks around again. She must have been considering whether or not to get out of the water and wake up Eugene Daigle. It would have been a hell of a vision for him to awaken to, her standing over him, dripping wet, and it would have saved her, too. But instead she swims back across the pond toward the path, getting smaller and smaller. She rises out of the water and fades into the woods at an altitude of about twenty feet. On ascending from the water, she seems not to exist below the knees.

Armine stares at the vacant beach, imagining Eugene Daigle waking up and meandering unevenly into the water up to his thighs, peeing and letting out a grand fart that he finds amusing (it makes a small ripple in the water). Then getting out, dressing, and leaving by a narrow path.

He had parked his flatbed a quarter mile away on an old logging road. According to his testimony, he passed out again in the cab and then, the sun getting low, tore ass to the quarry to pick up one last load of bluestone. That had been his intent, anyway.

\* \* \*

Toward the end of that first summer after Billi died, Armine had regained his bearings and went back up to the meadow for the first time since her death. It had been a dry August and the creek was low—a trickle. He climbed the hill and pushed his way through the tall, brittle grass to the old apple tree. Beneath it, between

its roots, he believed he could still see evidence of having been there with Billi even though a few months had passed. Something about the way the ground was compressed and how the grass growing there looked different. And when he took a look at another spot a little farther away, a strange little plant was unfurling itself, neither fern nor reed nor sapling. Something dark-hued with an iridescent tint to its single curled leaf. He hadn't suspected it was anything special, just something new.



## *False Teeth*

Justin Marks

\*

I love my teeth—they are really, really white—and fear losing them.

\*

I asked my shrink about this when I was in high school. He said, *People who don't look perfect are the sexiest*, but also knew I was a really paranoid and neurotic kid and probably figured that if I found out my fear was legitimate, well, I wouldn't handle it too well.

\*

When I was a young tot, I remember brushing my teeth. I was so friggin' happy, and the changes were amazing.

*E&F VII*

\*

As I grew and developed, so did my fascination with teeth and my love for biting. My own teeth were unusual from the beginning. I had too many. My parents were always on my case. Regardless, I loved my round head.

\*

I was Mommy's little girl, and I adored my Daddy. The woman on television said I should just learn to love my teeth for how they were.

\*

My grown up teeth are crooked and my two canine teeth are impacted. I could gnash them and get all frustrated, but that doesn't solve my problem of loving my job but never smiling.

*Marks 74*

*False Teeth*

\*

Whether I'm brushing my teeth or washing my face or sitting on the big potty, I draw flowers. My teeth feel naked and I have to resist the urge to burn them.

\*

The fact that I have no pain because I have no real teeth and there are no root canals expected makes me smile with all of my soul. My love is strong and will float atop my chest forevermore.

*Marks 75*



## THE NEW-YORK GHOST



A weekly publication of exceeding haste

Vol. I, No. 1/Composed in toto on September 26, 2006

*"Don't Tell Me You Haven't Read It Yet!"*

*A chaotic four-page stepister to the New York Whip*

The problem was, there was so much to read; and at the same time, it seemed, there was nothing worth reading at all.

Deluged with daily papers, alternative newsweeklies, listings collations, and blogs (short for *world-wide-web-logarithms*) galore, people gradually grew grim about the mouth before weeping openly in the streets. ¶ Variety

was an illusion! Only the typeface and the paper quality differed. It was all celebrity profiles, followed by the tearing down of the celebrity, followed by five paragraphs about what was the best shampoo.

¶ Someone thought it would be a good idea to start something new.

¶ We are going to do it all by ourselves now. ¶ Book 'em: Poet Michael Friedman's slim debut

novel, *Martian Dawn* (Turtle Point Press) is a treat. The main characters, “Julia” and “Richard,” have lives suspiciously like those of Julia Roberts and Richard Gere’s *Pretty Woman* characters. Then there are parts that take place on Mars. A whale is also involved. If the premise doesn’t hook you, don’t worry—it’s so short you can read it in an hour or two, and then you can tell people you’ve just finished a book—how rare is that? ¶ New publishing trend: Hit men! Max Allan Collins’s *The Last Quarry* and Lawrence Block’s *Hit Parade*. What does it mean? ¶ On DVD: *Brick*. ¶ In the theaters: Michel Gondry’s *The Science of*

*Sleep*. ¶ Korean soap operas are a hit all over Asia and in (for? among?) the diaspora—may we suggest *Dae Jang Geum*, set in the royal Korean court of the 16<sup>th</sup> century? As we like to tell folks: Think Harry Potter crossed with *Iron Chef*! ¶ Have you read *A Public Space*, the new journal edited by former *Paris Review* maven Brigid Hughes? Pick up a copy of issue #2 (featuring Ander Monson, David Mitchell, and much more) before the stores sell out, before you are driven to paying exorbitant prices on eBay and whatnot. ¶ Brooklyn: We go there once a week these days. Everyone lives there. *Everyone*. ¶ WHAT IS

THAT ALL ABOUT? asks Grampa Ghost. *When did Brooklyn become the center of the universe? How come all freelance writers and editors now live in Brooklyn? What happened to Manhattan? [Fades away.]* ¶ Show of Hands Dept.: How many people listen to audiobooks? Oh yeah? Which ones are good? How do you navigate them on your iPod? First 20 respondents to [thenyghost@gmail.com](mailto:thenyghost@gmail.com) will receive a free, personalized e-mail, suitable for framing. ¶ Come Again Dept.: What’s that? What did we think of *The Science of Sleep* (see page 1)? Honestly, it is one of the

**delights** of the **season**, a serious contender for picture of the year. Critics who say it is all bells and whistles, no heart, should (a) jump in a lake and (b) ponder this photograph:



Though not actually a scene from *The Science of Sleep*, it has a hypnotic quality, people blurring into one another, dreams floating into reality and vice versa, that reminds us

of the film. ¶ Best thing that happened the other day: We were walking by a school playground, during recess. Kids were running around, screaming, laughing. In one corner, a teacher gave a command to a group of girls: “Robots!” Then they all started acting like robots, arms moving rigidly, etc. One word review: **Hilarious**. Seriously, this made our day—our week—our year. ¶ Our *life*. ¶ That’s going too far. ¶ Who’s on First: Who here likes the Who? (*Show of hands: Three.*) For us they were always “The Who”—as classic a classic rock band as you could find, with a foot in British invasiondom,

another in Mod-dom, a third (a penis?!) in somewhat bloated but not completely awful ’70s cockrockery. Then, right before *The Who Live at the Isle of Wight Festival* was released a year or so ago, we became suddenly, unaccountably, violently anti-Who (stunning a friend who had suggested we go catch the flick over the week-end). Wha’ happened?! It’s possible we heard a Who song in a store or on TV and concentrated a little too hard on, say, the lyrics. Suddenly they seemed like the most overvalued band in the pantheon; no, we would *not* go to see *The Who Live at The Isle of Wight Festival*, thank

you very much! ¶ Time passed, and the film popped up on DVD, which we borrowed in a fit of curiosity/boredom from a friend. ¶ Then we kept it at home, in the basket with all the other DVDs, for about a year. ¶ Then the other day we plopped it in and... ¶ The Who is *still* kind of bad, in a lot of ways—Roger Daltrey’s fringed vest, for one—but... *Keith Moon!* ¶ Of course, as developing rock listeners years ago, we knew about Keith Moon, legendary deceased drummer. But we had never seen him in action. ¶ Keith Moon! ¶ Moon’s a revelation! Even when he’s not drumming, he’s filling

up the space, making silly faces...twirling the sticks...tossing them...sipping water from a cup and then spitting it straight up and catching it in the cup.... ¶ But then of course mostly he *is* drumming, and it’s like watching a hurricane take human form. ¶ He must have been the original of the Muppets’ Animal. ¶ Even the doofiest, borderline annoying bits (the “Shake It Up”/“Summertime Blues”/etc. medley, e.g.) are electrified by his frenetic...oh this is insane. ¶ Writing about the Who. ¶ I mean seriously, “*Who* cares?” ¶ This is the longest “article” in the *New-York Ghost!* What a load of crap! ¶ *Ghost of Keith Moon*. No, no, it’s not crap—it’s

great. I mean I think  
 people will really like— ¶  
*The editors:* Uh...heh heh...  
 NO. ¶ *G.O.K.M.:* Well,  
 you've made your decision,  
 and I have to respect that.  
 [*Fades away.*] ¶ It is now  
 time for a closing poem,  
 by Aimee Kelley, editor of  
*Crowd* magazine:

Seasons

What I wanted was to be a little  
 girl swan and hold hands with  
 other little girl swans,  
 move serenely in a flock, a  
 wedge,  
 a ring, collapsing together  
 nightly  
 by the shore  
 of an abandoned lake.

\*

Jangle of my brightest  
 self, a bell, a radiant tone,  
 a high insistence uncaptured.

\*

Oh noble animal:  
 in the shy tongue, teeth, limbs  
 never so much summer  
 as today.

\*

I am still Beatrice.  
 I am a parade of one.

\*

No longer wolfish, poised to  
 spring, merely  
 sullen, waiting immobile  
 at the window: a muscle  
 memory.

\*

Do not repent or tithes; it is a  
 fantastic thing to ask  
 for what one wants. It is a wonder  
 to move  
 without hesitating  
 across any landscape presented.  
 It is a glory to break open  
 as I have done  
 in front of you.

\*

To move along the coast of  
 suffering requires  
 a repetition: offering, refusal,  
 offering again.

\*

In the end, they walked out,  
 and once more saw the stars.

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That is all the space we  
 have for this issue. Please  
 send letters, submissions,  
 and/or art to  
[thenyghost@gmail.com](mailto:thenyghost@gmail.com).

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The 'Ghost' is a free newsletter  
 delivered by e-mail nearly every week  
 to over 500 affluent and mystified  
 'insiders.' It is a space free of  
 advertising, designed to be printed  
 out by each reader, thus solving the  
 vexing 'distribution problem.' How  
 many readers actually print it out is  
 unknown, but several 'Ghost' readers  
 claim to print it out and then leave  
 it in public places at work, as an  
 anonymous gift to their coworkers.  
 Contributors include Aimee Kelley

(poetry) and Adrian Kinloch  
 (photography). Other writers have  
 included Scott Bradfield, Sasha Frere-  
 Jones, Sarah Manguso, Ben Greenman,  
 Samantha Hunt, Mairead Case, and  
 Ken Sorkin, who chronicles the doings  
 of his group, the Twenty % Tippers.





## *The Surreal Life:*

*Art and Artifice in Eyes Wide Shut*

Joshua Land

In one of my favorite episodes of *The Simpsons*, 10-year-old Bart, following a mishap at the Department of Motor Vehicles, gets his hands on a driver's license. In keeping with good cartoon logic, no one questions the document's validity, enabling Bart and his friends to partake in several forbidden activities, including an R-rated movie. After unwittingly stumbling into David Cronenberg's *Naked Lunch*, the boys emerge two hours

later with bewildered looks on their faces. Following a pause, one says, “I can think of at least two things wrong with that title.”

Something similar was in evidence in critical reviews of Stanley Kubrick’s final film, *Eyes Wide Shut*. An *Entertainment Weekly* cover story had breathlessly anticipated “The Sexiest Movie Ever,” and after months of pre-release hype, mostly centered on the film’s supposed *sexiness* and on its at-the-time-married stars Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman, the film’s arrival was greeted with disappointment by many reviewers. Predictably, the most common complaint among both critics and audiences was that the film wasn’t *sexy*. For some of the more respectable reviewers, this complaint took the form of a critique of the supposed lack of realism in the film’s portrayal of sex, a criticism voiced by Michiko Kakutani in the *New York Times*, who wrote that the film’s infamous orgy scene “feels more ludicrous than provocative, more voyeuristic than scary ... deliberate and contrived.”

Such criticisms were based on the implicit assumption that *Eyes Wide Shut* should be discussed as a work of realism. Given the increasingly formalist, stylized nature of Kubrick’s late work, this was a dubious assumption at best. Indeed, I would contend that the value of *Eyes Wide Shut* lies precisely in the film’s deviations from realism, and particularly in its embrace of theatrical artifice. While most discussion of the film has dealt with issues of sex and psychology, there is also a powerful sociological dimension to the film, despite the repeated assertions that Kubrick was too “out of touch” with American life in the 1990s to be able to say anything meaningful about it. *Eyes Wide Shut* is particularly concerned with the sociology of representation and with the capacity of contemporary art, especially movie art, to productively engage with contemporary life. The result is not only a forceful critique of the rigidity of class and gender roles in society, but a meditation on the capacity of art to grasp that society and meaningfully intervene in it, a capacity linked in *Eyes*

*Wide Shut* to the preservation of an essential, authentic self uncolonized by the behemoth of mass culture. This meditation is intimately related to two key aspects of *Eyes Wide Shut* that many reviewers found particularly objectionable: its portrayal of contemporary New York and Tom Cruise's performance.

\* \* \*

*Eyes Wide Shut*, an adaptation of Arthur Schnitzler's 1926 novel *Traumnovelle*, is the story of three days in the life of an affluent Manhattan couple, physician Bill Harford (Cruise) and his wife Alice (Kidman), an unemployed art gallery manager. In the film's opening scene, they leave their seven-year-old daughter Helena with a babysitter to attend a lavish Christmas party thrown by a patient of Bill's named Victor Ziegler (Sydney Pollack). At the party, a debonair stranger attempts to seduce Alice, while two beautiful models flirt with Bill, before he is summoned to Ziegler's bedroom to attend

to a prostitute who has overdosed. That night Bill and Alice make love. The next night the couple gets into a stoned argument about the events of the party. When Bill smugly laughs off the idea that Alice would ever be unfaithful to him, she tells him of her lust for a naval officer who had stayed in the same hotel as the Harfords the previous summer. She says her feelings were so intense that she was, at least for a moment, willing to leave Bill and Helena to be with him. For the remainder of the evening Bill wanders into a series of situations fraught with sexual possibilities, none of which come to fruition, all the while fantasizing about Alice with the naval officer. His adventures eventually lead to the Sonata Café, where he obtains a password from an old musician friend named Nick Nightengale that gains him illicit entrance to a costume party/masked orgy somewhere on Long Island. Exposed as an intruder, he is saved from punishment by the intervention of a mysterious woman who offers to "sacrifice" herself to save him. Bill returns home to Alice and she tells him

about a dream she has had that parallels some of Bill's adventures. Bill then spends most of the film's duration retracing his steps in an attempt to learn the fate of the mysterious woman, a path that eventually leads to a climactic billiard room conversation with Ziegler. After Bill apparently confesses his adventures to Alice, the couple takes Helena out Christmas shopping in the movie's final scene.

Criticisms of *Eyes Wide Shut* were particularly vociferous among New York reviewers, many of whom observed that the city presented in the film bears only a passing resemblance to the real New York of 1999. While that much is indisputable, what is curious is the nearly uniform assumption by reviewers that Kubrick was in fact attempting to mount a realistic portrayal of contemporary New York and failed in the attempt because he was so "isolated" and "out of touch" with contemporary reality, arguments that seemed more informed by received wisdom about Kubrick than anything in the film. What was largely excluded by this

approach was the idea that Kubrick might have been using anachronism as a textual strategy. One of the few critics to pick up on this element of the film was Jonathan Rosenbaum in the *Chicago Reader* who, in naming *Eyes Wide Shut* the best film of 1999, praised the film for "its distance from its own period." The strong sense of spatial and temporal displacement that pervades *Eyes Wide Shut* is crucial to the dreamlike feel of the film. Persistent conflation of different geographical locations and historical periods creates a strong sense of the film's taking place less in any definite physical setting than in a more ambiguous psychological dreamscape.

The most significant source of the odd (dare I say *uncanny*) quality of temporal displacement in *Eyes Wide Shut* is the Schnitzler novel itself. In some respects the film's setting can be seen as an amalgamation of late 1990s New York and the pre-World War I Vienna of Schnitzler's book. The film's version of Manhattan is heavily informed by the material's European source. Aside from the two Japanese men at a costume shop

and an African American orderly in a late morgue scene, nearly everyone in the film is of white European descent. This pronounced European presence in *Eyes Wide Shut* functions as a form of temporal, as well as spatial, displacement, suggesting an earlier, more European version of New York, far removed from the racial and ethnic diversity of the city today. Kubrick reinforces this feeling of temporal displacement with a number of other anachronisms. Rosenbaum notes that the type of jazz Nick Nightingale plays at the Sonata Café “seems a good two or three decades off, and the nightclub itself seems like an improbable throwback to the ’50s.” Even the amount of visible graffiti on the Greenwich Village street signs suggests an earlier period in the neighborhood’s history.

The ambivalent and uneasy relationship to contemporary reality in *Eyes Wide Shut* can also be seen in the film’s foregrounding of theatrical artifice. Aside from a handful of second-unit shots of New York streets, the version of the city in *Eyes Wide Shut* was

filmed entirely on a sound stage in London. The Village sets through which Bill walks are dominated by the same blues and reds as the film’s interior scenes, the highly stylized lighting and décor linking exteriors to interiors, and drawing attention to the carefully controlled nature of both types of space in *Eyes Wide Shut*. This emphasis on artifice lends the film a theatrical quality, making it clear to attentive viewers that we are seeing actors on sets, not people on real city streets. This is particularly evident in one scene late in the film in which Bill is being followed by a mysterious man. As he pauses at a newspaper stand to ponder his next move, Kubrick cuts back and forth between Bill and his “stalker” and for a moment the street becomes virtually bereft of pedestrians, reducing the scene to its essence: Bill’s paranoia at the realization that he is being followed. It’s abundantly clear that the scene has been *staged*, even as a prominently placed *Village Voice* stand offers a dubious guarantee of verisimilitude.

If this scene, and others, hint at the theatrical artifice

underlying the film's representation of Manhattan, there is at least one moment that leaves no doubt about it. This moment, perhaps the most crucial in the entire film for a critical reading of *Eyes Wide Shut*, was not mentioned in any contemporary review of the film that I've read. Following the scene at the Sonata Café in which Bill obtains the password to the secret party, there is a cut to Bill arriving at the Rainbow Fashions costume shop in a taxi. After Milich, the proprietor, comes to answer the door, there is a cut to a reverse shot of Bill framed against the backdrop of the other side of the street. A glance at this backdrop reveals a neon sign reading DINER with an arrow pointing at the awning of a place called Gillespie's, unremarkable except that the front of Gillespie's has already been seen in the film, immediately adjacent to the Sonata Café. In other words, the facade behind Bill is *exactly the same as that of the street he has just left*. Since Bill is shown getting out of a cab, it is clear that he hasn't merely crossed the street to reach the costume shop. What we have here is an impossible geography.

This crucial moment, which Kubrick wittily marks with a neon arrow directing the viewer's gaze to the relevant part of the frame, not only reveals conclusively that the scene, and presumably the other "street scenes" in *Eyes Wide Shut*, were shot on sets and not on real streets, but links this theatrical quality to the antirealist, dreamlike structure of the entire film.

This link is initially established in the film's first major scene, at Ziegler's Christmas party. The line readings in this scene (and others in the film) are unnaturally drawn out ("This ... is what you get ... for making house calls"), creating a hypnotic effect enhanced by the long, slow dissolves Kubrick uses to mark the passage of time within the sequence. These exaggerated line readings not only enhance the mood of the scene and foreground the issue of performance that will be central to *Eyes Wide Shut*, but also provide a crucial link between the Christmas party and its satanic double, the black mass orgy sequence, a scene in which line readings will be even more stilted and unnatural. These two sequences

are also linked by both visual style—long tracking shots and slow dissolves—and, as we learn at the end of the film, by the presence of Ziegler. The literal orgy scene is thus equated to the orgy of consumption on display at Ziegler’s party, and the chants and costumes of the black mass sequence are revealed as the flipside of the omnipresent Christmas Trees that dominate the rest of the film’s interiors, suggesting, as Tim Kreider notes in *Film Quarterly*, how completely the Christian ethic “has been co-opted and undermined by the culture of commerce” in late-twentieth-century America.

\* \* \*

Much of the substantial criticism leveled at *Eyes Wide Shut* centered on Cruise’s performance. His work was roundly panned, most memorably by David Edelstein in *Slate*, who wrote, “[W]hen he tries to simulate brain activity he looks like a Neanderthal contemplating his Cro-Magnon neighbor’s presentation of fire.” While

most reviewers were somewhat kinder, there was a general consensus that Cruise simply lacked the acting skills required for the role, rendering his performance shallow and flat. Reconsidering Cruise’s performance in the context of theatricality in the film, this flatness seems more like a virtue than a fault. One of the major preoccupations of *Eyes Wide Shut* is the notion of social interaction itself as a form of performance, a theme developed primarily through Tom Cruise’s portrayal of Bill Harford as a man who seemingly never stops performing.

The studied shallowness of Cruise’s performance calls attention to this idea of social *acting*. The use of certain stock expressions and tones of voice to register widely divergent emotions underscores his character’s concern with keeping up appearances. (Looked at this way, Cruise doesn’t give a shallow performance at all, but merely an accurate portrayal of a shallow man.) The effect is clearest when Bill changes registers in mid-scene, as happens during his second visit to the apartment of

the prostitute Domino, when her roommate Sally tells him the news about Domino's HIV test. Bill quickly shifts from would-be client of a prostitute back to his professional persona—concerned and sympathetic, but ultimately reserved and inaccessible. After drawing back in his chair slightly, as if to absorb the news, Bill purses his lips slightly and speaks slowly but firmly, pausing between his words, “Well ... I am very ... very ... sorry to hear that,” a slight nod of the head on each syllable underscoring his words. Despite, or perhaps because of, Bill's obvious efforts to project sincerity here, his words come across (to the spectator, if not to Sally) with about the same conviction as his earlier reassurance to another woman that “Michigan is a beautiful state.” And even as he expresses his condolences to Sally, the hint of a grin never leaves his face, suggesting Bill's self-satisfaction at both his secret knowledge that he never slept with Domino and the air of steely reserve with which he is taking the news. The expression is similar to the superior smile with which he will later invoke his

profession in lying to the waitress at Gillespie's when inquiring about Nick Nightingale: “Frankly ... it's a medical matter.”

Bill's self-conscious role-playing is the natural mode of a man convinced that the privilege accompanying his social and professional status can get him anywhere he wishes to go, a conviction expressed most frequently by his habit, a running joke throughout *Eyes Wide Shut*, of showing strangers his medical credentials in utterly inappropriate situations. And he seems to be correct about his privileged status right up until the orgy scene, when his performance breaks down badly. As it turns out, his failure is not the result of a lack of performing skill (his face is hidden behind a mask in any case), but of inadequate preparation for the role. He remembers his lines (the password, “Fidelio”) and steps into the ritualized sequence of events without a hitch, but is found out because, as Ziegler explains later, he shows up at the house in a taxi and leaves the receipt for the costume rental in his coat pocket, not to mention the

fact that his mask is clearly of a different color and style than any other at the party. His lack of preparation for this attempt to take on an unfamiliar role leads to his exposure as a fraud in front of the entire house, a psychological exposure that the film links to the fear of physical exposure when Bill is told to “get undressed” by the red-cloaked master of ceremonies. The moment skillfully merges socioeconomic and sexual anxieties, turning Bill’s professional status on its head; instead of gazing dispassionately at the bodies of others from behind the veneer of professionalism, he is now the target of an invasive gaze from faces hidden behind literal masks. Bill’s obvious embarrassment during his later confrontation with Ziegler is similarly ambiguous; we don’t know if he’s more embarrassed by having been exposed as a would-be usurper of upper class privilege or by having been exposed as a voyeur, chastened like a thirteen year-old boy caught trying to steal a porn magazine.

Much criticized by many reviewers of the film—the *New Yorker*’s David Denby referred to the scene as “the

most pompous orgy in the history of the movies,”—the masked orgy scene distills the thematic of social performance present throughout *Eyes Wide Shut*. The movements of the participants are carefully regimented, with each nude woman waiting her turn to be paired off with a masked man to the accompaniment of ritual chants and music in a demonic parody of contemporary courtship practices. The rigidity of gender roles, a theme throughout the film, here reaches a hyperbolic extreme, with the women reduced entirely to sexual objects and the men to faceless consumers. The two groups are stratified not only by gender, but by class as well. Ziegler intimates to Bill later that the men possess great wealth and power (“I’m not gonna tell you their names, but if I did, I don’t think you’d sleep so well”), while the women are all presumably prostitutes. With their faces hidden behind masks, the women are defined entirely by their sexual characteristics; they appear as indistinguishable masses of smooth white skin, firm breasts, and carefully trimmed pubic hair, differentiated from each other

only by their headdresses, themselves a form of sexual display. As many a disappointed reviewer of *Eyes Wide Shut* pointed out, the effect is not *sexy* in the least—the dominant impression is one of cold commodification.

The theatrical quality of this scene becomes even more pronounced when, after Bill has been ordered to undress, a woman who had previously warned him that he was in danger interrupts with a shout of “Stop!” demanding, “Let him go. Take me. I am ready to redeem him.” Kubrick marks her reappearance with a quick zoom from an extreme long, low angle-shot of the woman from Bill’s point of view to a standard medium shot. It’s the only occurrence of such an awkward camera movement in *Eyes Wide Shut*, and in conjunction with the woman’s stilted, declamatory delivery of her lines, marks her entrance as a moment of excessive theatricality. This quality not only suggests that the woman’s appearance and the dialogue that follows between her and the red-cloaked man, in which she agrees to “sacrifice” herself in exchange for Bill’s

release from the house, is a scripted “charade” (as Ziegler calls it later) put on for Bill’s benefit, but expresses in formal terms the overdetermined quality of all the other “negotiation” scenes in the film, including Bill’s “talk about money” with Domino, his bargaining with Milich at the costume shop and with the cab driver whom he talks into waiting for him outside the gates of the orgy site, as well as the chilling “arrangement” Milich alludes to regarding his daughter and the two Japanese men during Bill’s second visit to the costume shop.

The concern with the performative nature of social interaction that dominates *Eyes Wide Shut* can be found in a number of other Kubrick films, chiefly his 1975 period drama *Barry Lyndon*. As in *Eyes Wide Shut*, the theme of performance is linked to class issues, and is articulated through a nearly opaque lead performance, this time from Ryan O’Neal. Like Cruise’s Bill Harford, O’Neal’s Redmond Barry is a man who attempts to pose as a member of a class higher than that into which he was born, a change in social status signified by the new name

of Barry Lyndon. Barry's life is largely shaped by social structures of which he has little understanding and even less control over, and O'Neal delivers an appropriately superficial performance, largely denying the viewer any insight into his character's inner psychological states. This denial of interiority flew in the face of 1970s standards of good screen acting—the compressed psychological intensity of Marlon Brando in *Last Tango in Paris* or Robert de Niro in *Taxi Driver*, to single out two of the era's archetypal performances. As a result, the effect of O'Neal's performance, in combination with the film's self-consciously opulent sets and costumes, is alienating, compelling the spectator to view its events as distant spectacle, a distance literalized by Kubrick's pervasive use of the backward zoom.

While there are crucial differences between the presentations of Redmond Barry and Bill Harford, not the least being that the spectator *does* get a glimpse of Bill's interior psychology in the form of his repeated fantasies about Alice with the naval officer,

the obstinate inexpressiveness of Cruise's performance has some of the same alienating function. Bill appears in every scene of *Eyes Wide Shut* and, with one curious exception near the end of the film, learns narrative information at the same time as the viewer. Under these circumstances, Bill would seem to be a character with whom the spectator can identify unproblematically, except that the peculiar nature of Cruise's performance works against such identification. This tension between narrative form and acting style continues unresolved throughout *Eyes Wide Shut*, leaving the viewer in an uncertain relationship with "Dr. Bill," experiencing his "dreams" alongside him, but at enough of a distance to question his interpretations of them.

\* \* \*

While *Eyes Wide Shut* is a reasonably faithful adaptation of *Traumnovelle*, Kubrick does make significant changes beyond merely moving the story to contemporary New

York. The most crucial of these is the addition of both the Ziegler character, the only unambiguously evil figure in the movie, and the long “explanation” scene between Bill and Ziegler near the end of the film. Several critics have linked the character of Ziegler to the movie business, with Rosenbaum describing him as “a composite portrait of every Hollywood executive Kubrick ever had to contend with.” Ziegler is clearly a very powerful man and there are hints that he may be orchestrating some of its events for Bill’s benefit much as a filmmaker might. The staggering impact of the nearly thirteen-minute dialogue between Bill and Ziegler comes in large part from the realization that neither Bill nor the spectator has any way of knowing whether he is telling the truth. Ziegler is in a position of total knowledge and power, while both Bill and the viewer are completely shut out.

Ziegler’s status as a symbol of the movie business at its worst feeds into the film’s bitter critique of Hollywood. Defiantly distancing the film from its

own era, Kubrick retreats into the formal language of cinema’s past, once again using anachronism as a textual strategy. In the film’s final scene, Alice looks at a toy carriage that has attracted Helena’s attention, telling her, “It’s old-fashioned.” Much the same can be said of *Eyes Wide Shut* itself, a defiant throwback to the modernist art movies that thrived during Kubrick’s commercial heyday, and a film that bears little resemblance to anything else produced in Hollywood over the past twenty years. Several shots of Cruise walking the streets employ the dated technique of rear projection, proudly displaying the movie’s “old-fashioned” quality, while simultaneously featuring the larger-than-life presence of contemporary Hollywood’s biggest movie star. Kubrick’s brilliant casting of Cruise in a role like no other in his career, yet at some level still consistent with the cocky all-American can-do persona he had cultivated in so many other movies, also works as a form of critique. If Bill Harford can be seen as an older, more complacent version of the actor’s usual

persona, he finds himself in a profoundly different world than that of any other Cruise character, a world in which a charming smile and breezy self-confidence—bordering-on-arrogance aren't always enough to get out of a tough situation. This difference becomes clearest in the extraordinary marital argument scene. After Bill tells Alice he knows she'll never be unfaithful to him, she asks him, "You are very, very, sure of yourself, aren't you?" When in response Bill tosses his head back slightly, leans forward, and says in his most sincere voice, "No, I'm sure of you," one can well imagine the moment working to resolve a romantic tiff in almost any other Cruise film. Here, Alice greets the line with a laughing fit so convulsive that it leaves her doubled over on the floor. *Eyes Wide Shut* cuts through the pretensions of such phony Hollywood moments, along with the essentialist nonsense Bill has been spouting about what men and women "are like," the fodder of countless airheaded Hollywood romantic comedies.

*Eyes Wide Shut* seeks to go beyond such banal

material to grapple with contemporary life in a more meaningful sense. That the film does so by incorporating elements from previous eras is indicative of the difficulty of finding artistic forms capable of dealing with contemporary reality. In a brilliant essay on *The Shining*, Frederic Jameson, commenting on what he saw as dull stretches in that film and others of the contemporary horror genre, makes the following observation:

And clearly enough, this very triviality of life in late capitalism is itself the desperate situation against which all the formal solutions, the strategies and subterfuges, of high culture as well as of mass culture, emerge: how to protect the illusion that things still happen, that events exist, that there are still stories to tell, in a situation in which the uniqueness and the irrevocability of private destinies and of individuality itself seem to have evaporated?

Jameson sees this cultural situation as having produced the "impossibility of realism, and more generally, the impossibility of a living culture which might speak to

a unified public about shared experience,” going on to argue that Kubrick deals with this issue in *The Shining* by appropriating the horror genre to construct what he terms a “false or imitation narrative,” defined as “the illusionistic transformation into a seemingly unified and linear narrative surface of what is in reality a collage of heterogeneous materials and fragments.” One of the ways this idea manifests itself in *The Shining*, according to Jameson’s argument, is in Kubrick’s distillation of “the past,” an incoherent Babel of voices from different eras in Stephen King’s novel, into a single historical period, that of the 1920s.

By the time of Kubrick’s last two films, even such an “imitation narrative” was no longer a solution to the problem of contemporary reality. Just as the illusion of a unified and linear narrative breaks down after the opening 45 minutes of Kubrick’s 1987 Vietnam film *Full Metal Jacket*, the incoherent Babel of history returns with a vengeance in *Eyes Wide Shut*. In light of Jameson’s linkage between the difficulties

of representing contemporary life and the social realities of late capitalism, the dizzying amalgamation of different historical periods in *Eyes Wide Shut* can be seen as the formal equivalent of the critique of late capitalist decadence Kubrick grafts onto Schintzler’s novel through the addition of the Ziegler character. The film’s embrace of fragmentation extends to its approach to genre, something that distinguishes *Eyes Wide Shut* from Kubrick’s other late-period films. While *2001: A Space Odyssey* (science fiction), *Barry Lyndon* (costume drama), *The Shining* (horror), and *Full Metal Jacket* (war movie) all basically fit within a single genre, their individual idiosyncrasies notwithstanding, *Eyes Wide Shut* fails to meet the expectations of the erotic thriller genre (another reason for the film’s lack of critical and popular favor), morphing halfway through its running time into a fractured detective story, as Bill seeks to learn what happened to the mysterious woman at the orgy. The film ultimately doesn’t meet the expectations of the detective genre either; this

thread of the film's narrative ends with a parody of the triumphant "explanation" scene in the form of Ziegler's dubious, but ultimately unverifiable account of events.

In the context of the awesome power of the forces of commerce, and particularly that of the culture industry represented by Hollywood, even our dreams are not safe from outside influence. *Eyes Wide Shut* traces the postmodern evaporation of individuality noted by Jameson back to the corrosive influence of mass culture. Clichéd pop cultural versions of sexual fantasies abound throughout *Eyes Wide Shut*, like the parodic older European gentleman who talks to Alice at the party, or the two models who simultaneously hit on Bill. Even the two prostitutes Bill encounters are pure fantasy, both seemingly too attractive and too educated to be walking the streets of New York. Sometimes fantasies take on grotesque or perverse forms, as in the clinical shots of two women kissing during the orgy scene or the insinuations of child prostitution during the second scene at the costume shop. The problematic nature of

all these fantasies lies not in Kubrick's alleged fear of sex or sexuality as many critics have argued, but in their clichéd, homogenized quality and in the commensurate difficulty of dreaming one's own dreams, finding a space for thought or feeling not already overdetermined by the prepackaged forms of mass culture. One has only to compare the potent eroticism of Bill's recurring fantasies about Alice with the naval officer to the cold detachment of the nominally more explicit orgy scene to appreciate the importance of retaining the capacity to produce one's own images in *Eyes Wide Shut*. The difficulty in doing so in the context of a media-saturated postmodern world parallels the difficulties faced by the artist in trying to find an adequate form to engage with that world.

It is in the moving, complex, and ultimately ambiguous scene at the department store, the final scene both of *Eyes Wide Shut* and of its director's career, that the film's concern with the fate of the individual in that postmodern world is made explicit. In forgiving

Bill for his adventures, Alice expresses skepticism “that the reality of one night, let alone that of a whole lifetime, can ever be the whole truth.” She appeals here to the notion of an authentic, essential self, a self that is something more than the sum of one’s actions, or even one’s thoughts. Whether this notion is merely a myth, necessary both for day-to-day living and the production of a “personal” piece of art like *Eyes Wide Shut*, or a truth that remain tenable even after the film’s nearly three-hour dissection of social performances and equally overdetermined “private” fantasies, is ultimately for the viewer to decide. Alice tells Bill, “We’re awake now,” and whether we see this scene as the most generous ending in all of Kubrick, or as final confirmation that Bill and Alice are, to appropriate the film’s closing line, “fucked” in more ways than one, depends largely on whether we agree with her. The telltale dreamlike pauses in the delivery of dialogue, and Bill’s naïve insistence that they will be together “forever” suggest that the Harfords may not have their eyes wide open after all, but the calm

lucidity of Alice’s words and tone, like Private Joker’s grim but firm, “I am alive, and I am not afraid” at the end of *Full Metal Jacket*, closes the film on a profoundly unresolved note.



## *Another Year of My Life with Me*

Justin Marks

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Necessity is the mother of my loins. Rarely satisfying. Language, like manners, is inherently depraved. A tingle in the tongue as the earnest multi-instrumentalists double-team the grand piano. I like the way the music makes me move.

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When I was a child, my father was a goddess. Gender switching was common. Now my boobs keep falling out of my shirt, which really sucks, but if I were into dudes, I'd totally be into you.

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We can't all be winners, the losers say. My semblables. I tell you, the idea of Hell as an eternity of screaming children is real. Knowing this, what else is there to do but take solace in the secrets rotting beneath the floorboards?



*Apocalyptic Jesus  
in Cold War Literature:  
Hal Lindsey and Jerry Falwell's Construction*

Jessamyn Lee

The 1970s and 80s was a transitional time in American culture. The Cold War held strong in both decades, with the détente relieving some apocalyptic anxieties in the seventies, while it picked up again in the eighties with Reagan's presidency. Over the course of the two decades, thousands of active protesters called for nuclear disarmament. The turn of the decade in 1970 saw a continuation of countercultural movements among the

nation's youth, while Civil Rights movements forged on in the wake of Martin Luther King's assassination in 1968. In 1973, Supreme Court case *Roe v. Wade* granted women the right to an abortion based on the constitutional right to privacy. Concurrently, second-wave feminists published and spoke out on issues of women's freedom to choose and freedom from patriarchy. The Stonewall riots broke out in 1969, fueling an already-present gay rights movement. During the same time, but in another part of the world, the 1967 Six-Day War afforded Israel land rights to the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, the Sinai Peninsula, and Golan Heights. This seemingly unrelated set of events gives insight into the motivational factors of prophesy belief, resurging in the 1970s, and only increasing in the 1980s and beyond.

Hal Lindsey's *Late Great Planet Earth* (1970)<sup>1</sup> marks a turning-point in the genre of prophesy lit. His pop-culture version of dispensationalism reflects not only the widespread anxieties and expectations of the time,

but also spurred a series of literary and theatrical works that would influence popular conceptions of the end-times. In a similar genre, but without nearly the same kind of pop-culture appeal, is Jerry Falwell's *Nuclear War and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ* (1983).<sup>2</sup> Falwell's piece illustrates well the continuing cold-war anxieties and fears of counterculture during the Reagan era, while it gives insight into the conservative Christian political movements that would only gain clout in the following years. Both Falwell and Lindsey fed from the collective anxieties of the times to draw people to Jesus. Their version of Jesus assuages fears revolving around the nuclear bomb and dramatic social and political change, while he punishes those unbelievers and the wicked, thus providing a framework for action in a time of moral relativism. This paper examines the version of Jesus that appears in this dispensationalist literature during the 1970s and 80s, while considering how social and political factors helped form this version. At its creation in the nineteenth century, dispensationalism

spread as a compelling end-times story that drew people to Jesus; this theology worked in an equally powerful way in the 1970s and 80s, as it offered an idea of Jesus as the only answer to the political unrest and social change of the time.

### **Finding a Cold War Jesus**

This project draws from scholarly examinations of dispensationalism in the US,<sup>3</sup> while it seeks to flesh out the version of Jesus that is created in late-twentieth-century apocalypticism. Even a cursory glance at academic publications on dispensationalism, the rapture, Armageddon, or end-times in general, reveals that Jesus is just not given much attention. Ironically, while these aforementioned topics deal explicitly with the second coming of Christ, he plays an almost silent role, at least according to the attention that many scholars pay him. Indeed, at the beginning of this project, a few efforts at finding significant listings of Jesus in chapter titles or even index headings proved futile,

while the Antichrist and Satan both enjoyed a much more generous treatment. Of course, the Antichrist and Satan emerge graphically into the dispensationalist story, while Jesus is vaguer, yet still powerful. Much of the current scholarship on dispensationalism and other prophetic belief in the US gives the Antichrist such primacy because this figure fits so compellingly into international politics, as is discussed in the following sections. But while this sort of focus causes Jesus to be relatively shortchanged in the scholarly publications, the primary sources often place Jesus prominently in their imaginings of the end-times. Both Hal Lindsey and Jerry Falwell use the figure of Jesus as the foundation for their expositions on the end-times. They accomplish this through no small amount of intellectual labor to show exactly how Jesus fulfills the prophecies of the Old Testament, while his prophetic words as recorded in the Gospels are enacted in exactitude today. All of this points toward the future, while ancient prophecy collides with current world events in the culmination

of the current dispensation and the beginning of the next. While Jesus doesn't exactly appear graphically in much of the apocalyptic lit of the seventies and eighties, an examination of Lindsey and Falwell's work reveals a theology with Jesus at the crux of dispensationalism's evangelizing project.

First, though, this next section offers a brief overview of the roots of dispensationalism that will elucidate the social utility of this kind of thinking. Rather than provide an in-depth discussion on the intricate theological constructions of dispensationalism, this section will look at the historical conditions of its roots and subsequent implementation. Certain parallels emerge when observing the socio-political conditions at the time of the original biblical prophecy writers, those during the formation of dispensationalism in the nineteenth century, and those in its popular resurgence in the 1970s and eighties. In all three eras, end-times prophecy challenged social and political conditions that threatened believers; it offered judgment and grave

consequences to those who were deemed evil, despotic, and immoral. The messiah emerges here as a judge and an enforcer of morality, while he protects those who are 'true believers.'

Following this historical examination is a discussion of the social and political factors of the 1970s and 80s that helped to form an apocalyptic, cold war version of Jesus. Not coincidentally, the dispensational version of the end-times gained popularity just as conservative Christian groups were gaining considerable political clout in the US. Both textual manifestations and concerted political efforts formed in reaction to social conditions at the time, including countercultural trends, gay and women's rights movements, political instability occurring on an international stage, and Vietnam War and nuclear arms protest. This apocalyptic messiah ran in stark contrast to the social justice Jesus that was held up by Civil Rights activists and the "hippie Jesus" that was displayed popularly in films such as *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1973) and *Godspell* (1973). However,

significantly, Hal Lindsey employed the youth language of the day in order to make his message palatable to the 1970s counterculture. Likewise, influential dispensational preachers like Chuck Smith actively sought out “the hippies” in Orange County, California, catering his mission to the language and lifestyle of these uninitiated.<sup>4</sup> Obviously, there is not just one version of a dispensationalist Jesus in the late-twentieth century.

For this reason, this project attempts to narrow down one version of a conservative 1970s and 80s Jesus, with this last section tying in historical considerations with a discussion of Lindsey’s version in *The Late Great Planet Earth*, and Falwell’s construction in *Nuclear War and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ*. While the two authors write in distinct decades, both react to similar social and political conditions, placing a very similar messiah at the center of this end-times story. Falwell and Lindsey’s version reveals the Jesus that would become the subtle but powerful driving force for conservative Christians in the Reagan era and into

the twenty-first century. This version is relevant for its implications for international and domestic politics. Of course, their end-times story draws explicitly from the nineteenth-century formulations, as will be discussed next.

### **Formations of Dispensationalism**

When Jesus came the first time it was not to judge the world, but to save it. He came as the Lamb of God who gave His life to take away the sin of the world. The one thing that God has established for man to do is to believe in His Son as savior. When Jesus returns the second time it will be as a lion to judge those who rejected the free gift of salvation from sin. Man will have completely demonstrated his worthiness of judgment.<sup>5</sup>

These are Hal Lindsey’s striking words at the end of *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Without always directly claiming it, Lindsey worked from the constructions of dispensationalism, which were formed almost a century and a half before he wrote his best-selling book. While Lindsey’s version of Jesus was formed by

social and political factors of his time, it was also directly informed by the dispensationalist story. Premillennial dispensationalism finds its roots in the intellectual labor of the Plymouth Brethren in nineteenth-century Ireland. Their most influential member, John Nelson Darby, is largely responsible for the creation and dissemination of the unique story of dispensationalism throughout Britain and the United States.<sup>6</sup> Darby was originally an ordained member of the Anglican Church of Ireland, but left because of objections to its hierocratic structure and connections to the British crown.<sup>7</sup> Like the original prophesy writers, Darby's work was in reaction to what he saw as oppressive ruling structures. Likewise, the resurgence of prophesy literature in the latter-half of the twentieth century was largely in reaction to what was seen as the despotic powers of communism. In these eras, the messiah that emerged cared for and protected those who truly believed, while he returned with vengeance and punished unbelievers.

The basic concept that was developed by Darby and

the Plymouth Brethren was that God had divided time into seven eras or dispensations, and that the present one would culminate in the second coming of Jesus at the end of seven years of Tribulation. Each dispensation was characterized by a different means to salvation. While the past and future dispensations are revealed through prophesy in the Bible, the present epoch—the Church Age—is not explicitly described.<sup>8</sup> Thus, there was the need to cobble together the words of Jesus in the Gospels and prophesy in the Old Testament in order to create a comprehensive vision of what will occur at the end of the present age.

Dispensationalism includes the notion of a pre-tribulation rapture, what Timothy Weber identifies as its “most distinctive doctrine.”<sup>9</sup> It is distinct from other premillennialist doctrine, which purported that Christ's second coming and the rapture would occur at the end of the tribulation. In a way, the pre-tribulation rapture is an especially powerful evangelization tool, as it emphasizes the need to accept Jesus *now* rather

than risk going through the seven years of hell on earth during the tribulation. Those who have not accepted Jesus as personal lord and savior would have to not only suffer the reign of the Antichrist during the Tribulation, but would have to endure the loss of loved ones who had gone to Christ. The idea of the secret or sudden rapture, as popularized by Darby, comes from Jesus' admonition in Matthew 24:40-41 to remain vigilant and watchful for the end, for "one will be taken and one will be left."<sup>10</sup> Darby and those who followed him extracted this passage to illustrate the sheer suddenness and seeming arbitrariness of the rapture, while emphasizing that those who truly believe will be spared all of the suffering of the Tribulation. Jerry Falwell, for example, used this idea to express the urgent call to Christ, and to assure believers that they would not experience "even a minute of suffering."<sup>11</sup> The image of the privileged position of the raptured believer, protected by a powerful Christ, worked as a potent evangelizing tool.

In fact, according to the dispensationalist story, the

raptured saints have the special privilege of joining Jesus in defeating the Antichrist and his legions, as they will appear in the clouds with him at the end of the Tribulation.<sup>12</sup> They will not only observe the Antichrist's defeat, but also they will witness Jesus' judgment of those who had not previously been raptured.<sup>13</sup> The seven years of hell will end with this Battle of Armageddon between the good forces lead by Christ and the Antichrist and his legion. Ultimately, the forces of evil will be cast into a fiery lake, while Satan will be bound and cast into a bottomless pit, only to arise again at the end of Jesus' thousand-year reign.<sup>14</sup> Naturally, Jesus will again defeat Satan, and then the last judgment of all the living and the dead will commence, until the seventh dispensation (Millennium) will end. After the judgments, the good and the evil will be relegated to their proper place, and, as Weber puts it, "time shall be no more."<sup>15</sup>

Certainly, this end-times story is not unique to dispensationalism. Historian Paul Boyer chronicles the appearances of end-times material in the Old

Testament and the Gospels. He discusses three biblical apocalypses that are mostly widely invoked in late-twentieth century US culture: Ezekiel and Daniel offer prophesy that would figure prominently into Cold War apocalypticism in America, while the Revelation to John explicitly enters Jesus into the apocalyptic story, ending with the plaint, "Come, Lord Jesus!"<sup>16</sup> Boyer points out the difficult socio-political contexts that the authors of all three texts had to endure: Ezekiel and Daniel both wrote during times when Jews weathered endless persecution at the hands of tyrannical rulers who sought to eradicate Judaism, while John received his revelation when the early Christians suffered at the hands of Roman despots. All three books are a reaction to social and political upheaval and are also a call for redemption from this suffering. These texts would be crucial to late-twentieth-century imaginings of the apocalypse, when, for many believers, fears about potential worldwide eradication through the nuclear bomb could be quelled by the idea of Christ's return,

and international politics would become intelligible through Old and New Testament prophecies.

Boyer names Ezekiel "the first cold warrior,"<sup>17</sup> citing this Old Testament book as central to current political manifestations of end-times theology. Indeed, sections of Ezekiel, most notably 38:1-6, describe the "northern parts" from whence "a great company and a mighty army" will come. The lands of Gog and Magog that the author describes would figure prominently in twentieth-century interpretations of biblical prophesy in terms of world events. During the Cold War era, the Soviet Union was frequently interpreted as 'the land from the north,' representing Ezekiel's Magog, with Gog as any nation or people that aligns with Magog. Gog was frequently interpreted as Iran, or any conglomeration of "Pan-Arab forces."<sup>18</sup> Lindsey, following several biblical scholars, interpreted Gog as the central leader or driving force of Magog.<sup>19</sup> Gog and Magog would attack Israel from the north, but Israel would be protected by God. This type of thinking

emerged explicitly in the foreign policy opinions of President Reagan and his cabinet. In fact, years before his presidency in 1971, Reagan is quoted as invoking Ezekiel at a political event in Sacramento: "...It can't be long now. Ezekiel says that fire and brimstone will be rained upon the enemies of God's people. That must mean that they'll be destroyed by nuclear weapons."<sup>20</sup> Likewise, dispensationalist authors and preachers like Lindsey and Falwell, not to mention Pat Robertson and Jack Van Impe, believed that Russia would play a special role in the beginning of the end-times as a fulfillment of ancient biblical prophesy. This only fed into the already-present anti-communist sentiment that aligned Christian and "secular" conservatives of the 1960s on.<sup>21</sup>

Beyond Old Testament descriptions, New Testament books, including select Gospels, the Revelation to John, as well as parts of Thessalonians and Corinthians, brought Jesus explicitly into the end-times vision. Jesus' eschatological discussions with the disciples as recorded in Matthew 24-25, Mark 13, and Luke 21, describe the

destruction of the Temple, "wars and rumors of wars,"<sup>22</sup> natural disasters, punishment to unbelievers, extreme sinfulness, false messiahs, and terrible suffering, all of which constitute the time of great Tribulation. This will end suddenly with the appearance of the "Son of Man" in the clouds,<sup>23</sup> which harkens back to Daniel's prophetic visions.<sup>24</sup> All three Gospels then mention the parable of the fig tree wherein Jesus describes the tender branch of the fig tree signifying that summer is near.<sup>25</sup> The disciples are then instructed that when they see these aforementioned signs, including the destruction of the Temple and the great Tribulation, they should know that the end is near.

This metaphor has been central for dispensationalists in their imaginings of the role of Israel in the end-times. According to this thinking, Israel is the fig tree, and it has "put forth leaves" when the Jews have returned to the holy land. This parallel seemed to "bear fruit" with the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. This was a major windfall for dispensationalists, as it suggested

the imminence of the end. Likewise, the Six-Day War in 1967, which secured certain crucial land rights for Israel, led many dispensationalists to believe that the time was near. Significantly, Hal Lindsey began his series of lectures on the end-times at UCLA just one year later. Here he articulates this line of thinking about Israel: “When the Jewish people, after nearly 2,000 years of exile, under relentless persecution, became a nation again on May 14, 1948, the ‘fig tree’ put forth its first leaves.”<sup>26</sup>

Well before Lindsey, John Darby had interpreted the role of Israel according to the Olivet Discourse (the parable of the fig tree in the three synoptic Gospels) and Old Testament predictions. The Jews would return to the holy land, then during the Tribulation they would be attacked from the “kingdoms of the north,” while the Antichrist would provide a counter-attack.<sup>27</sup> God would protect the Jewish state, but his protection of these “chosen people” was not indefinite. George Marsden explains that dispensationalists

acknowledged the original Abrahamic Covenant,<sup>28</sup> wherein God promised to make Abraham the father of this nation, “through which the rest of the world will be blessed.”<sup>29</sup> In Darby’s understanding, the Jews were fortunate in this story because the Abrahamic Covenant still stood, allowing these people to remain protected by God’s graces. This “protection,” however, was not without an expiration date. It was Darby’s interpretation that God had two distinct plans for the people of the earth (Israel) and the blessed people (the soon-to-be raptured church).<sup>30</sup> Marsden asserts that it was essential to dispensationalist understanding that God made this distinction between his original chosen people and those who would surely be protected as they had accepted Christ.<sup>31</sup> After enduring the hardship of the Tribulation, the Jews would have to accept Jesus, or they would be dealt the same fate as other unbelievers. At its nineteenth century inception and in the twentieth century manifestations, dispensationalist sentiment about Jews was ambivalent at best. Jews

were to be protected, and Israel was to be supported, but the ultimate fate of God's original chosen hinged upon their acceptance of Jesus.<sup>32</sup> Dispensationalists rested assured of their protection through Jesus' rapture of the church.

This idea of Christians' special role in the eyes of God and in terms of the second coming of Jesus fit well into historic conceptions of America as God's chosen nation. Before Darby's formulations, but in a similar prophetic vein, Cotton Mather helped to promulgate a feeling of "apocalyptic expectation" in America. He believed that America would play a special role, and that Jesus' reign on earth would bring "economic justice, social harmony, and the downfall of dishonest merchants and politicians."<sup>33</sup> Indeed, New England would be the "capital" of the millennial kingdom of Christ.<sup>34</sup> Of course, Darby rejected any idea of Israel being anywhere but the original holy land. However, there seems to be some alignment between the dispensationalist conception of Christians as God's favored people and

similar sentiments about America as the chosen land. Jerry Falwell makes this connection explicitly without denying the original holy land as Israel. He suggests that the US is chosen and favored by God because of its support of Israel and Americans' treatment of "the Jew."<sup>35</sup> He also asserted that the US has the ability and clout to evangelize to the world, thus ensuring its special role in building the raptured church.

Darby brought dispensationalism to the United States in 1859 after having spread the message on horseback throughout Britain. Two of Darby's prominent followers in the US were William Blackstone and James Brookes. Blackstone wrote the very popular *Jesus Is Coming* (1878), which was subsequently reissued in the early twentieth century. Brookes wrote the influential *Maranatha: or, The Lord Cometh* (1870), and helped to organize a number of prophesy conferences in the late nineteenth century.<sup>36</sup> Several notable revivalists and evangelicals were also attracted to dispensationalism, including Dwight Moody, for

whom Chicago's Moody Bible institute, which still promotes dispensationalist thought, was named. Cyrus Scofield (1843-1921) was profoundly influenced by Darby. He included dispensationalist ideas in his *Scofield Reference Bible* (1909), which would become a main source for this theology world-wide until the present day. Interestingly, the *Reference Bible* was reprinted the year of the Six-Day War in 1967, and it would sell upwards of ten million copies by 1990.<sup>37</sup> Also, Lewis Sperry Chafer, inspired by this theology, published widely on dispensationalism, and went on to form the Dallas Theological Seminary in 1924, which remains a major dispensationalist stronghold. Significantly, Hal Lindsey attended Dallas in the years before he assembled the lectures that would become *The Late Great Planet Earth*.

The publication of Scofield's *Reference Bible* coincided with the solidification of "fundamentalism" as a self-appellation for conservative Christians in the first two decades of the twentieth century. It was from

1910-1915 that R.A. Torrey edited a series of booklets defining correct adherence and interpretation of the Bible, called *The Fundamentals*. The self-appellation "fundamentalist" originated with Northern Baptist editor Curtis Lee Laws, who named his group of biblical literalists during an intra-denominational skirmish.<sup>38</sup> In the aforementioned examples, this type of self-identification was necessary to demark those "true" believers who affirmed the virgin birth, the actuality of Jesus' miracles, his death and resurrection, and his imminent second coming. Nancy Ammerman suggests that an easy distinction between fundamentalists and evangelicals at the time was the former's adherence to premillennial dispensationalism as the true story about the Second Coming of Christ. She explains that they draw these beliefs from the footnotes in Scofield's *Bible*, which provides "a common source of knowledge for Fundamentalists around the country."<sup>39</sup> While evangelicals and even liberal Christians would affirm that there would be a

“second coming,” the imminent return of Christ was even more prominent in fundamentalist worldview.<sup>40</sup> Of course, one cannot equate fundamentalism with dispensationalism, as Amy Frykholm points out.<sup>41</sup> Many prominent fundamentalists, including those at Princeton Theological Seminary, rejected dispensational notions.<sup>42</sup> However, many non-academic fundamentalists at the time and into the twentieth century embraced this particular story of the second coming of Jesus, as it provided a sharp contrast to “liberal” interpretations of the bible.

These sorts of distinctions were not only in reaction to growing liberal interpretations of the time, but also “secular humanism” in the form of academic interpretations of the bible, as well as general scientific advances. Indeed, premillennial dispensationalists rejected scientific and philosophical thought that suggested human progress. Charles Darwin’s evolutionary theory and Enlightenment thought, for example, were viewed as false, precisely because both

purported an improvement in the human condition, rather than a declension.<sup>43</sup> That the world was ending was a certainty; theories suggesting otherwise were simply wrong, as well as theologically unsound.

The Jesus that fundamentalists held up at this time, was, in Richard Fox’s words, a “religious proclamation and a cultural password.”<sup>44</sup> Fox goes so far as to identify fundamentalists’ invocation of Jesus as a “talismán” that could “ward off” secular humanism.<sup>45</sup> In fact, the dispensationalist and fundamentalist version of Jesus was powerful precisely because these adherents firmly believed that theirs was the real and true version, and that he would one day exact punishment against these detractors. This Jesus was described in great detail in the Bible; thus, only close literal interpretation could bring one to Christ. This sort of mindset emerged in reaction to scientific and theological confrontations to firm Bible-believers in the early twentieth century. Likewise, the 1970s and eighties would be a time of social conflict and unrest, and the “true” version of Jesus would have

to be articulated and defended. This next section looks at some of the social and political factors that led to the formation of a premillennial, cold war Jesus that was communicated by Lindsey and Falwell.

### **Social and Political Factors Inform an Apocalyptic Jesus**

We don't have to march out on the streets with the peaceniks and the freezeniks, who are in a suicidal effort to force our country into some unilateral disarmament that would place us at something less than parity in our ability to protect us against the hammer and the sickle, Marxists, Leninists, who are set out to conquer the world. May we pray for peace, but not let anyone make us capitulate to these powers.<sup>46</sup>

Jerry Falwell's reaction to the historic nuclear freeze rally of June 12, 1982 illustrates well the multivocality of dispensationalist responses to social and political conditions of the latter half of the twentieth century. A nuclear disarmament rally, in New York City of all places, was of course objectionable to Falwell. He exhibits here an anti-communist paranoia that had

fueled conservative movements, religious and non-religious, since the beginning of the Cold War in the late 1940s. Obviously though, it is not just the threat of the hammer and the sickle that motivates Falwell into action; it is those "peaceniks," 750,000 of them, filling Central Park in a mass demonstration that would only signify weakness to the great Russian Bear.<sup>47</sup>

Falwell's response to these compelling social and political threats, like the reaction of others of his time, is fascinating in its intricacy and multiple implications. His motivations are partly political and partly evangelistic. His evangelizing work was focused on bringing people to Christ through his mass-media projects like the *Old Time Gospel Hour* television program, and publications such as *Listen, America!* (1980)<sup>48</sup> and the "prophesy packet" that is examined here, *Nuclear War and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ*. Through his evangelism, Falwell was ostensibly preaching that the end is coming, but not to worry, if you accept Jesus, you will be saved. His political message was somewhat

different. While he preached acceptance and almost resignation to an imminent end, he actively engaged in politics, supporting politicians like Ronald Reagan, who would once again fuel the Cold War in the early eighties with his strong-arm approach to the Soviet Union. As one can gather from the above quote, Falwell was against the “freezeniks” gathering in protest, which signified not just his objection to their view on nuclear armament. He was objecting to the *types* of people who would gather in such an alarmingly large disarmament demonstration. In his prophesy packet audiotape, Falwell laments in a single breath those “peaceniks” and “freezeniks” along with all of the other objectionable characters in America from the 1960s on: feminists, the homosexuals, the astrology-readers, the hippies, the acid-rock bands, etc.<sup>49</sup> Without his explicitly stating it, one can see that Falwell, at least through his rhetorical construct, aligns the communist threats with the counterculture threats. These forces are linked in their godlessness and immorality: the godless communist threat,

and the immorality of countercultural movements. This is why he had to assert an image of Jesus firmly embedded in the Bible, one who will return and care for those who live and believe correctly, and one who will punish those who do not.

One decade earlier, Hal Lindsey posited an analogous version of Jesus that formed in opposition to similar political circumstances. Only Lindsey attempted through his language and literary style to appeal directly to those uninitiated involved in countercultural movements. He wrote his very popular *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970) during the so-called nuclear thaw, or *détente* (around 1969 until the late seventies), with the publication of the book following the beginning of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks between the United States and the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, his book is fraught with references to the looming nuclear threat, as he draws out a specific story for the end-times that is situated in the socio-political conditions of the late 1960s and early 70s. Working from preexisting communist

paranoia in the US, Lindsey constructs an intricate story of the battle of Armageddon as commencing when Russia (Magog) and allied “Pan-Arab forces” (including Iran, Ethiopia, and Libya) will attack Israel.<sup>50</sup> Following the classic dispensationalist narrative, this “attack from the north” will spur the second coming of Jesus, who will appear in the clouds with all of his raptured saints, ready to defeat the Antichrist and the forces of Satan.<sup>51</sup>

Lindsey suggests that the “clouds” that Daniel and the synoptic Gospels referred to were actually the robes that the saints would be clothed in: “The clouds then would be all of the church age believers, you and I, returning in immortal glorified bodies, having been previously caught up to meet Christ in the air in the ‘ultimate trip,’ prior to the seven years of Tribulation on earth, and the resurrected saints of the Old Testament.”<sup>52</sup> His mention of the “ultimate trip” refers to the eleventh chapter of the book, wherein he describes the rapture, when the “impossible” will happen: Jesus will come to take away all of his believers to experience “eternal life,” which

will “surpass the greatest pleasures we have known on earth.”<sup>53</sup> Here he employs rhetorical strategies and concepts that would appeal to counterculture youth of the day—instead of an acid trip, this would be “the ultimate trip,” which will bring one to the “greatest pleasures.” He anticipates readers’ disbelief by summoning up other unbelievable events, like man’s first walk on the moon.<sup>54</sup> This reward to the believer, to be whisked away by Jesus to experience a pleasurable eternity, was surely compelling to many readers during the 1970s. Without too much hard evidence indicating its actual psychological impact on youths of the day, the book’s sustained place on the *New York Times* bestseller list throughout the seventies might suggest its influence.<sup>55</sup>

Lindsey, however, did not just attempt to cajole his readers into accepting his story and ultimately welcoming Christ into their hearts. However subtly, he also attempted to denigrate certain elements of counterculture that might distract these potential believers from Jesus. In two early chapters he points

out the shortcomings of astrology, while he makes a strong case for prophesy belief. Later in the book, he draws on Genesis to suggest that the Tower of Babel was actually a center for astrology, which God eventually destroyed.<sup>56</sup> Falwell makes a similar case, asserting more forcefully that “God hated the Tower of Babel, just as he hates astrology!”<sup>57</sup> Lindsey more gently argues that astrology is simply not the proper approach. Though he also slips in a sly political argument here: as God punished Babylonians for Nimrod’s aspirations to form one language and government for the whole world, so would God disapprove of a one-world government today.<sup>58</sup> This sort of admonition is connected to a general conservative suspicion of the United Nations at the time. He writes, “God’s plan for the world until the Prince of Peace returns is not an international one-world government, but nationalism. This is the one way the world can keep from falling under a dictator who could virtually destroy mankind.”<sup>59</sup> Like Falwell, Lindsey points out the “signs of the times” that would

suggest the imminence of the second coming. But also like Falwell, he undergirds his message with some conservative political admonitions, which, in this case, involve a subtle jab at the United Nations.

However, Lindsey’s main task with the *Late Great Planet Earth* appears to be evangelical. He uses the dispensationalist story of the second coming of Jesus to draw in youths who might find comfort in a strict set of morals and a detailed and intricate story by which to shape one’s behavior. Not insignificantly, Lindsey’s material for this book came from a series of lectures he delivered at the student union at UCLA in the spring of 1968.<sup>60</sup> Timothy Weber is careful to point out that Lindsey spoke from “the same stage on which Timothy Leary had promoted the use of LSD and Angela Davis had preached Marxist revolution.”<sup>61</sup> Like the original proponents of dispensationalism in the US, Lindsey used charts and other visual aids to draw a clear picture of just what the end-times would look like. His main message, also like that of other dispensationalist

speakers and preachers, was evangelical: “Do you want to be left behind when Jesus comes?”<sup>62</sup> Weber claims that these talks resulted in “scores of college students” committing to Christ. This was not without outside influence, of course: these young people were dealing with undeniable fears revolving around the Vietnam War, the hovering specter of nuclear war, and countercultural movements that had left many young people “searching.” Indeed, west and east coast hippie movements as embodied by the 1967 Summer of Love in San Francisco and Woodstock in 1969 surely left many young people “burnt-out” and looking for consequences to actions in a time of moral relativism. Jesus as he appears in the dispensationalist story no doubt offers clear ramifications for disbelief and appealing rewards for belief.

Lindsey spends almost an entire chapter describing just how Jesus’ “credentials”<sup>63</sup> qualify him for the role of messiah and judge. He explores the same Old and New Testament passages that were discussed in the

previous section of this paper, to “prove” through the coherency of biblical prophesy and colluding evidence of international politics of the day that Jesus would surely return.<sup>64</sup> He suggests that “two completely different portraits” were drawn of Jesus by Old Testament prophets: one as the “Suffering Messiah” and the other as “the Reigning Messiah.”<sup>65</sup> In his first appearance on earth, Jesus suffered, was sacrificed for our sins, and resurrected. In his second appearance, naturally, Jesus will be the triumphant “Reigning Messiah,” who will return as “a lion to judge those who rejected the free gift of salvation from sin.”<sup>66</sup> This image of the vengeful, punishing Jesus was certainly effective as a way to establish the stakes for unbelief. This image, along with the idea of the secret and sudden rapture of the church, provided very compelling reasons to accept Jesus *now*. Certain world events, such as the establishment of Israel in 1948, the Six-Day War of 1967, and the ever-present threat of nuclear war, only increased the urgency to accept Christ.

Instead of speaking *to* counterculture populations of the US, Jerry Falwell very forcefully spoke *against* these people. Of course, Falwell was surely influenced by the decade of popular prophetic literature that Lindsey instigated with the success of *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Lindsey's success spurred a whole new "non-fiction" genre of religious literature, which was no longer confined to the religious bookstore. One could find titles like *Destined for the Throne* (Paul Billheimer, 1975) and *Armageddon, Oil, and the Middle East Crisis* (John F. Walvoord, 1974) mass-produced in paperback.<sup>67</sup> Films like *The Omen* (1976) and the James Bond film *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1977) brought the apocalyptic genre into "secular" entertainment.<sup>68</sup>

In a more explicitly dispensationalist vein, Falwell's own *Fundamentalist Journal* published articles on the end-times in the wake of Hal Lindsey's successes.<sup>69</sup> Falwell himself was part of the Southern Baptist convention, which has been historically influenced by dispensationalist ideas on the second coming of

Jesus. While Southern Baptist churches had long been non-creedal and independent of hierarchic governing structures, in 1979 fundamentalists took control of the denomination and made biblical literalism the litmus test for correct belief.<sup>70</sup> Falwell aligned his biblical literalism with a conservative perspective on international politics and domestic social issues, articulating the sorts of ideas one encounters in *Nuclear War and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ*. For scholars who believed that fundamentalists just don't engage in "the secular world," Falwell is a prime counterexample. Of course, as Lisa McGirr shows in her *Suburban Warriors* (2001), since at least the early 1960s with Barry Goldwater's presidential campaign, conservative Christians had actively engaged in politics.<sup>71</sup> Both McGirr's case study of 1960s Orange County conservative activism and Falwell's rhetoric indicate two main motivating factors for mobilization despite traditionalist religion: the communist threat and the rising counterculture.

Falwell seems to conflate the threats of worldwide communist domination with the growing moral decline of America in the form of feminism, gay rights, the hippies and their drugs, astrology, the popularity of eastern religions, and the Grateful Dead and the Beatles, among others.<sup>72</sup> These were issues to noisily protest and condemn in a political arena, but they were also signs of the imminent end-times. Along with communism and American immorality in the list of end-times signifiers were signs like the ecumenical movement, computerization, and the UN. These three latter indicators pointed toward the unification of world systems, which according to scriptural evidence, would suggest the beginning of the rise of the Antichrist.<sup>73</sup> Unlike past dispensationalists, Falwell did not attempt to identify the potential Antichrist, but as recently as 1999, he endured harsh criticism for proposing that the Deceiver would be Jewish.<sup>74</sup>

Falwell's discussion of the "signs" is basically fatalistic: the end is imminent, one cannot and should

not pin down a date (for Jesus clearly admonishes against this<sup>75</sup>), but one should rest assured that Jesus will protect the believer against "even a minute" of suffering through his pre-Tribulation rapture.<sup>76</sup> Then again, Falwell did not rest in this fatalism. He rails against "the hammer and the sickle" that threaten to "enslave our children through worldwide communist domination."<sup>77</sup> Aside from his rhetoric in this cultural artifact, Falwell's actions at this time show that he was not content to merely wait for the end. Falwell worked tirelessly in Reagan's first presidential campaign, and in the wake of his success, boasted that the sheer clout of his newly-formed Moral Majority had helped to propel this president into office.<sup>78</sup>

Indeed, according to Falwell it is the sheer power and clout of the powerful "majority" of Christians that will ensure God's favor toward America when the end-times begin. After his litany of signs of America's fall to immorality, Falwell boasts of the redeeming qualities of this great nation: "I believe that those 1600 Christian

radio stations in this country and sixty-five Christian television stations and those 20,000 Christian day schools, 110,000 fundamentalist churches are all playing a major role in bringing this nation back to God, for which I praise the Lord.”<sup>79</sup> According to Falwell, the US has the special privilege and power to “evangelize the world,” which will surely secure our fate as a “protected nation.”<sup>80</sup> Further, our government’s kind treatment of the state of Israel and “the Jew” will ensure our special status, for “God deals with nations in relation to how they deal with Israel.”<sup>81</sup>

This theme of the US as a favored nation, with special duties in God’s plan, fits well into the dispensationalist story of the “chosen” believer, who will be raptured to heaven by Jesus himself. Like Lindsey, Falwell expends significant intellectual labor to show exactly how Jesus fulfills ancient prophesy and how his words through the Gospels (particularly the Olivet Discourse) “prove” his imminent second coming. In this way, Falwell’s Jesus is very situated in the Bible. Even the cover of the prophesy

packet shows a large Greek-lettered alpha and omega, rather than a picture of Jesus, or a graphic scene of the battle of Armageddon. This Jesus is conceptualized in the words of the Bible. At the same time, this Jesus is animated and enlivened through the dispensationalist narrative. According to Falwell, he will return to defeat and “bind Satan for 1,000 years so that He may reign and rule with a rod of iron.”<sup>82</sup> During the Millennium, the raptured believers will have “special responsibilities, special roles,” while peace and harmony will replace the war and conflict of the Tribulation period.<sup>83</sup> Unbelievers, of course, will enjoy neither the “special roles” nor the “peace and harmony” that Jesus’ second coming will bring. They will be crushed beneath God’s thumb when he returns to “unleash His wrath and judgment upon unbelievers.”<sup>84</sup> Clearly, Falwell sets the stakes for accepting Christ.

Falwell’s evangelizing mission with this publication is not limited to his admonitions and warnings against unbelief through the dispensationalist story. In the two

audiotapes, he periodically invites listeners to accept “Lord Jesus into your heart,” and he promises that being a believing Christian means that one will enjoy “at least 1,000 years of peace on this earth with your Lord Jesus.”<sup>85</sup> At the end of the prophesy packet booklet, he describes in detail what heaven will be and what hell will involve, and invites readers to make the right choice and “receive the Lord Jesus Christ into your life,”<sup>86</sup> even including a blank form for new believers to fill out and mail to him in Lynchburg, Virginia.

Falwell mentions the possibility of nuclear war and uses this threat to underscore the need to immediately accept Jesus. But at the same time, he uses dispensationalist theology to show that nuclear war could not possibly completely destroy the planet, because God needs it for at least another 1,007 years (the seven years of Tribulation and the thousand-year reign of Christ).<sup>87</sup> For this reason, there is no reason to become just another one of those activists demonstrating in Central Park, making America look

weak and divided to the communist forces. Instead, one’s political involvement should revolve around restoring and maintaining America’s morality to ensure its status as a beacon to a world that may soon find itself embroiled in the seven worst years of human history.

### **Conclusions**

Lindsey and Falwell both rendered an image of Jesus as a powerful protector and vengeful judge. This image of Jesus contrasted with the social justice Jesus that was held up in Civil Rights rhetoric and the “hippie Jesus” that one could encounter in Catholic folk masses and popular films like *Godspell*. In fact, their dispensationalist version of Jesus was a reaction to these more liberal interpretations. Their idea of Christ-as-punisher was effective for many people during the 1970s and 80s. This image of Christ, as punisher to the wicked and the sinful, surely resonated with people who were looking for parameters for belief in a time of social upheaval. While countercultural movements

called for “free love,” freedom to choose, and freedom from war, dispensationalist authors told their readers to relax, accept the fate of the world, and most of all, accept Jesus. Underlying this fatalistic attitude, as one can see from the example of Falwell and more subtly in Lindsey’s work, was a directive to align with the correct, conservative political forces. The basic thinking here was that God is on the side of the US while he is against the evil forces of the communist Soviet Union, so one should ensure God’s favor by choosing the correct political side. Falwell especially communicated such a polarized vision.

There were profound effects in the US from this biblically-situated dispensationalist Jesus who would return to protect and judge. Lindsey’s rendering spurred a whole genre of apocalyptic lit that would continue on to the present day, most popularly with the *Left Behind* series. Falwell’s publication was vastly less popular, but it exemplifies an underlying dispensationalist influence in his mass-media evangelizing project. One need only

consider Reagan’s cabinet in the early 1980s to see the influences of such end-times theology. Reagan’s Secretary of the Interior, James Watt, did not expect many more generations to live before “the Lord comes,” while his Secretary of Defense, Caspar Weinberger, brought his dispensationalist convictions into his foreign policy approaches to the Soviet Union.<sup>88</sup> Reagan himself was influenced by dispensationalist literature like Lindsey’s, and voiced these views when discussing foreign policy toward the “evil empire” of the Soviet Union.<sup>89</sup>

While the original prophesy authors and John Darby’s Brethren constructed their vision of the end-times amid very real oppression by powerful political forces, the Cold War era authors did not encounter with immediate suffering. Both Lindsey and Falwell enjoyed privileged lives. However, both authors recognized the efficacy of the genre of prophesy writing for those living in unsettling times. This was an effective evangelizing story that would bring people to Jesus, as it assigned

grave and imminent consequences to unbelief. This version of Jesus was an effective symbol, or “talisman,” as Fox puts it, against the threats of a changing culture and frightening international politics.

**Notes**

- <sup>1</sup> Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, Michigan: Zondervan, 1970.
- <sup>2</sup> Jerry Falwell, *Nuclear War and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ*, Published by the Old-Time Gospel Hour, 1983. Includes audiotapes and a booklet.
- <sup>3</sup> Drawing mainly from historians, including George Marsden, Timothy Weber, and Paul Boyer
- <sup>4</sup> Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001) 244.
- <sup>5</sup> Lindsey 174
- <sup>6</sup> Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992) 87.
- <sup>7</sup> Boyer 87

- <sup>8</sup> Boyer 88
- <sup>9</sup> Timothy Weber, *On The Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals Became Israel's Best Friend*, (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2004) 23.
- <sup>10</sup> Matt. 24:40
- <sup>11</sup> Falwell, *Nuclear War and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ*, audiotape 1 side 2.
- <sup>12</sup> Weber 25
- <sup>13</sup> Weber 25
- <sup>14</sup> Weber 25
- <sup>15</sup> Weber is drawing from Rev. 10:6
- <sup>16</sup> Rev. 22:20
- <sup>17</sup> Boyer 152
- <sup>18</sup> Lindsey 158
- <sup>19</sup> Lindsey 63
- <sup>20</sup> Qtd in Boyer 142
- <sup>21</sup> See Lisa McGirr's discussion of this phenomenon in her *Suburban Warriors* (2001)
- <sup>22</sup> Dan. 9:26; Mark 13:7
- <sup>23</sup> Matt. 24:31; Mark 13:24; Luke 21:27
- <sup>24</sup> Dan. 7:13-14
- <sup>25</sup> Matt. 24:32-35; Mark 13:28-31; Luke 21:29-33
- <sup>26</sup> Qtd in Weber 190
- <sup>27</sup> George Marsden, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming: American Premillennialism 1875-1982* (Michigan: Academie Books, 1983) 107.
- <sup>28</sup> Gen. 12:2-3
- <sup>29</sup> Marsden 18
- <sup>30</sup> Marsden 17
- <sup>31</sup> Marsden 17
- <sup>32</sup> Boyer 183
- <sup>33</sup> Boyer 69
- <sup>34</sup> Boyer 70
- <sup>35</sup> Falwell, *Nuclear War and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ*, audiotape 2, side 1.
- <sup>36</sup> Boyer 91
- <sup>37</sup> Boyer 98
- <sup>38</sup> George Marsden, *Religion and American Culture*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990) 182.
- <sup>39</sup> Nancy Ammerman, *Bible Believers: Fundamentalists in the Modern World*, (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1987) 5.
- <sup>40</sup> Ammerman 5
- <sup>41</sup> Amy Johnson Frykholm, *Rapture Culture: Left Behind in Evangelical America*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

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- <sup>42</sup> Frykholm 18  
<sup>43</sup> Boyer 96  
<sup>44</sup> Richard Fox, *Jesus in America: Personal Savior, Cultural Hero, National Obsession*, (New York: Harper San Francisco, 2004) 331.  
<sup>45</sup> Fox 331  
<sup>46</sup> Falwell, *Nuclear War and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ*, audiotope 1 side 1.  
<sup>47</sup> This is how Falwell frequently refers to the Soviet Union. He even provides an illustration of the Bear attacking the Israeli flag on page 21.  
<sup>48</sup> Jerry Falwell, *Listen, America!*, (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1980).  
<sup>49</sup> Falwell, *Nuclear War and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ*, audiotope 2, side 2  
<sup>50</sup> Lindsey 71  
<sup>51</sup> Lindsey 173  
<sup>52</sup> Lindsey 173  
<sup>53</sup> Lindsey 137-138  
<sup>54</sup> Lindsey 136  
<sup>55</sup> Boyer 5  
<sup>56</sup> Lindsey 117  
<sup>57</sup> Falwell, *Nuclear War and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ*, audiotope 2, side 2  
<sup>58</sup> Lindsey 118  
<sup>59</sup> Lindsey 118  
<sup>60</sup> Weber 188  
<sup>61</sup> Weber 188  
<sup>62</sup> Weber 189  
<sup>63</sup> Lindsey 35  
<sup>64</sup> Lindsey 28-42  
<sup>65</sup> Lindsey 29  
<sup>66</sup> Lindsey 174  
<sup>67</sup> Boyer 6  
<sup>68</sup> Boyer 8  
<sup>69</sup> Boyer 7  
<sup>70</sup> Susan Friend Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000) 17.  
<sup>71</sup> McGirr chapter 3  
<sup>72</sup> Falwell, *Nuclear War and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ*, audiotope 2, side 2  
<sup>73</sup> Falwell, *Nuclear War and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ*, audiotope 2, side 2  
<sup>74</sup> <http://www.christiancourier.com/penpoints/antichrist.htm>  
<sup>75</sup> Matt. 24:32  
<sup>76</sup> Falwell, *Nuclear War and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ*, audiotope 1, side 1  
<sup>77</sup> Falwell, *Nuclear War and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ*, audiotope 1, side 1  
<sup>78</sup> Harding 80

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- <sup>79</sup> Falwell, *Nuclear War and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ*, audiotope 1, side 2  
<sup>80</sup> Falwell, *Nuclear War and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ*, audiotope 1, side 2  
<sup>81</sup> Falwell, *Nuclear War and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ*, audiotope 2, side 1  
<sup>82</sup> Falwell *Prophecy Packet Booklet* 8  
<sup>83</sup> Falwell, *Nuclear War and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ*, audiotope 2, side 2  
<sup>84</sup> Falwell *Prophecy Packet Booklet* 14  
<sup>85</sup> Falwell, *Nuclear War and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ*, audiotope 1, side 1  
<sup>86</sup> Falwell *Prophecy Packet Booklet* 41  
<sup>87</sup> Falwell, *Nuclear War and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ*, audiotope 1, side 1  
<sup>88</sup> Boyer 141  
<sup>89</sup> Weber 202-203

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*The Marriage  
of Mystery and Mysttetry:  
Blake's Apocalypse and Joyce's Last Podding*

Annalisa Volpone

*The man who never in his mind  
and thoughts travel'd to heaven  
is no artist.*

(William Blake, *AR*, 458)

*Gauze off heaven! Vision.*

(James Joyce, *FW*, 566.25)

The notion of Apocalypse is explored in two of the most challenging, and for a diligent reader most rewarding, works of the last two centuries: William Blake's illuminated epic *Jerusalem: the Emanation of the Giant Albion* (*J*), written and illuminated between 1804 and 1822, and James Joyce's novel *Finnegans Wake* (*FW*), written between 1922 and 1939. The very concept of Apocalypse, and the way it is developed respectively in *J* and in *FW*, can bring to light (*reveal* should be the word) fascinating and remarkable convergences.

*J* appears to be a narrative written in a reasonably standard English, with a third-person narrative voice, characters, events. Nevertheless it resists being linked into a chronology of represented actions constituting a story, forming a plot. *FW*, on the other hand, deconstructs the very idea of the *gramma* being written in a "re-cycled language," an idiolect that illustrates all the major steps of human communication. Yet, like *J*, in the novel it is possible

to detect characters, a third-person narrative voice, events. But again, exactly like *J*, this is not enough to grant the reader a reliable plot. In *J*, and for certain aspects in *FW* as well, the characters seem like human personalities only for brief passages. They soon expand and contract into polymorphous personifications of psychic or cosmic categories; thereby they resist stability and definition.

In both works, space is conceived as multi-dimensional, in *J*, real places like Britain or Palestine are blended with fictional places; in *FW*, Ireland is blended with the topographies of HCE's unconscious. Time is also multiply represented, with moments and eternities each containing the other. In *J*, eternity is directly connected to Human Imagination, hence the poet's task is "to open the Eternal Worlds, to open the immortal Eyes of Man inwards into the Worlds of Thought, into Eternity ever expanding in the Bosom of God, the Human Imagination." (5:18-20, E 147)<sup>1</sup> In *FW*, Joyce goes even further by making space and

time interchangeable elements of a Viconian multi-dimensional continuum. This is perfectly exemplified by the well-known question, “Where are we at all? and whenabouts in the name of space?” (558:33)<sup>2</sup> which is addressed to the author by a fictional reader who is at pains to locate himself.

In 1911 Joyce participated in the evening lecture series at the Università Popolare Triestina. He delivered a lecture in which, talking about the conception of space and time in William Blake, he observed:

To him, each moment shorter than a pulse-beat was equivalent in its duration to six thousand years, because in such an infinitely short instant the work of the poet is conceived and born. To him, all space larger than a globule of human blood was visionary, created by the hammer of Los, while in a space smaller than a globule of blood we approach eternity, of which our vegetable world is but a shadow. Not *with* the eye, then, but *beyond* the eye, the soul and the supreme love must look, because the eye, which was born in the night while the soul was sleeping in rays of light, will also die in the night.<sup>3</sup>

Joyce’s assimilation of Blake’s temporal and spatial categories is proved by the way he has chosen to tell HCE’s vicissitudes. As a matter of fact, when he conflates in a single piece the story of mankind and the destiny of a single man, HCE; the destiny of everyman, the memories of an individual and the conscience of the collectivity; a city and the infinity of the universe; he is (re)writing Albion’s epic, imagining his own “ever expanding Eternity” and his own Jerusalem, which he calls Dublin.

Both Blake and Joyce show a tremendous awareness of the medium they are using, even forecasting its being superseded. Blake materially creates *J*: like his fictional *alter ego* Los, it is from his forge that the text and its medium come. One of *FW*’s major hypotexts (in Genette’s conception of the term) is *The Book of Kells*. This illuminated manuscript, produced by Celtic monks around A.D. 800, is described as the zenith of Western calligraphy and illumination. In Joyce’s novel the manuscript turns into a mnemonic vector that

leads the reader through the history of literacy and of the book.

Both Blake and Joyce, in their own peculiar ways, question the very grounds of human understanding. As Robert Essick has pointed out, on our first reading of *J* we experience the text as “a verbal texture and a whirlwind of pictorial images” that hardly succeed in conveying a unique, non-contradictory message.<sup>4</sup> For the same reason, the first reading of *FW* reveals a “kaleidoscopic verbal texture,” an engine that we must learn to start.<sup>5</sup>

Joyce begins his universal journey with the fall of a man, who at the same time represents both an individual and humanity. Blake in *J* explores a reality in which man (symbolized in his universality by the giant Albion) has already fallen. Like Tim Finn, Humpty Dumpty, the giant MacCool and of course HCE, Albion’s body of earth and stars, falling, is scattered away from him as he lapses into a nightmare (and sometimes, indeed, HCE’s dream turns into

a nightmare). *J* is Blake’s final and longest epic in illuminated printing, as *FW* is Joyce’s last and most complex novel. They both constitute a recapitulation and summation of their authors’ multiple interests, ranging from their own mythologies to biblical history (let us think of the Kabbalah and the myth of Adam Kadmon as a basis for the myths of Albion and Tim Finn), from sexuality to epistemology, from the Druids to Newton and scientific discoveries.

What is the role of Apocalypse in such works? How can we possibly talk of an eschatological closure/ending in two texts that systematically refuse any form of hermeneutics? Can *J*, a non-sequential narrative that begins, like a traditional epic, *in medias res*, with the word “Jerusalem” and ends with the same word, be really conclusive? Can its illuminations be part of this conclusion? And what about *FW*? What kind of Apocalypse is that recounted in the last book and prefigured from the very first page? Can a work that ends with “the most slippery, the least accented, the

weakest word in English” (“the”) and that prompts the reader to start again its mechanism admit any form of Apocalypse, of a final *Aufhebung*? Does the account of the End-of-the-World, object of the Biblical Apocalypse, coincide with the end of these epics?

I will try to answer these prominent questions by focusing on the meaning of Apocalypse.

“Apocalypse” entered the English dictionary with the meaning of “revelation” circa 1348. It comes from Church Latin “apocalypsis” which on its turn comes from the Greek “apokalyptein,” meaning “to uncover,” “to disclose,” “to reveal.” The prefix “apo” means “from” and “kalyptein” “to cover” or “conceal,” “Calypso” derives from this verb as well.

I am particularly interested in the translation of “apokalyptein” as “to reveal;” indeed the English verb contains the term “veil” that is crucial to the understanding of the conception of Apocalypse both in *J* and *FW*, especially in the Platonic sense of “removal of the veil of ignorance.” In *J*, the word “veil” occurs

more than forty times and is often employed to indicate Vala’s veil,<sup>6</sup> the film of matter which covers all reality; it symbolizes the Mundane Shell and the code of Moral Law as well. In *FW*, terms like “veil” and “cloud”<sup>7</sup> usually refer to the letter Mamafesta<sup>8</sup> (symbol of the novel as a whole), considered as a manuscript that has to be decoded, or better “decorded,” from its hidden meanings. In some parts of the *Wake* it even seems that the Mamafesta is used to *conceal* HCE’s infraction, rather than justify it. Veil symbolizes the state of inanity, hypnosis from which we must awake. John Bishop in his *Joyce’s Book of the Dark*<sup>9</sup> has selected some of the most interesting terms used by the Irish writer to express the concept of awakening. It does not come as a surprise that many of them contain the word “veil,” for example “unaveiling,” “veiled world,” “reveil,” “veiled memory,” etc.

“Awakening” is a particularly fit term also for explaining how the inception of *J* in 1804 is connected to an unpleasant episode in Blake’s life.<sup>10</sup> In plate 3, in

fact, the poet writes, “After my three years slumber on the banks of the Ocean, I again display my Giant forms to the Public.” Blake’s “slumber” refers to the Felpham years and to the events that took place there. In August 1803, while he was in Felpham, Sussex, he removed John Scofield, a drunk soldier, from his garden. Scofield afterwards claimed that Blake “damned the King and said that soldiers were all slaves.” On Scofield’s testimony, the poet was charged with high treason and put on trial at Chichester. After Blake was acquitted of high treason he moved back to London, never completely recovering from such a bitter experience. Thus *J* comes after Blake’s trial that so strikingly resembles HCE’s.

Both in *J* and *FW* the idea of an imminent revelation, of a turning point in the narrative, is always alluded to and widely influences the narrative. The semantic isotopies about “covering,” “concealing,” “obscuring” constitute a geography of their own in the textures. It is as if the reader’s view were obstructed and

momentarily incapable of dissolving the thick mist that metaphorically wraps the text. In the title I have chosen for this essay I use the Finneganesse “Last podding.” The expression is employed in the very last part of the novel, when we have arrived at the moment of Recorso and of the recycle, just a few pages before the reader’s biggest dilemma: to restart *FW*’s engine or to activate “the stand-by modality” (since you can never finish with *FW*). This is what Joyce writes: “The big bad old sprowly all uttering fool! Has now stuffed last podding. His fooneal will sneak plice by creeps o’clock toosday. Kingen will commen. Allso brewbeer” (617:19-21).

In this final, but not conclusive, part of the *Wake* the references to Apocalypse (mainly in the sense of the second coming, “Kingen will commen”) become page after page more copious. At this point, “Last podding” could be understood as an ironical interpretation of the Last Judgement, Apocalypse’s objective correlative. “Podding” refers to both “pod” and “pudding.” As for the first, “pod” means “seed of beans” which, in the

image of the seed that gives life to beans, symbolizes the beginning of a new natural cycle (in this case probably the last). The mentioning of the last biological cycle suggests a connection with Gautama Siddharta (“the last Buddha”) as well, in his role as the one who has achieved his final incarnation and is ready for Nirvana. Buddha is echoed in the word “pudding”—the second possible reading of “Last podding”—especially if related to the French “boudin” or the Italian “budino,” the most plausible origins for “pudding.”<sup>11</sup> If we consider the root “pud” (“to swell”) in its Middle English slang usage, that is “penis,” it opens out a new semantic field. The sense of reproduction and procreation not only of beans, but also of human beings, hinting at the beginning of the last stage of man’s life. Furthermore, “Last podding,” precisely because it employs as its first semantic field that of food, reminds us of the “Last supper” as well, conflating in a sole expression Jesus’ first and second coming.

On reading the quotation again, though, we notice another semantic field worth mentioning, that of “thievery.” Words like “sprowl,” “sneak,” and “creeps” refer all to “stealthy and furtive movements” (OED) appropriate to someone who enters a house in order to steal. Interestingly, both Peter and Paul describe Jesus’ advent as that of “a thief in the night,”<sup>12</sup> faithfully reporting the words of their master in the Olivet Discourse. In some biblical (apocryphal) accounts Jesus’ coming coincides with his arrival at a wedding feast in the moment in which the bride and the bridegroom take their nuptial veils off as a sign that the sacrament has been administered. Significantly, this rite is described as “Apocalypse.” Hence, the three words, thief, veil/revelation and wedding (the uncovering of the bridal veil is a metaphor for wedding) share the same root “apokalypto,” I remind you here that Apocalypse literally means “away with the veil.”

In the first chapter of *J*, one of the conflicts which sets the various characters into motion is between

Albion and the Saviour for the love of Jerusalem (here representing both the city of redemption and a woman, predestined to become the bride of the Lamb by marrying the Saviour).

The poem opens with Albion's rejection of Jesus. In jealousy he hides, conceals, *veils* Jerusalem, even accusing Jesus of his Bride's abduction. The Saviour is therefore introduced from Albion's perspective frame as a thief.

Revelation as the uncovering of the veil is taken literally by Blake. At the same time Albion conceals Jerusalem from the Saviour and the reader's view and unveils Vala, whom now he considers his real bride. In such a context, she is Jerusalem's counterpart; she represents nature and lust, in a word, the negative side of the Feminine Will. As a consequence of his mistake, Albion falls asleep. When he wakes up, at the end of the poem, he will try to unveil Vala again, this time not out of a wedding rite but of a new awareness about reality. If he wants to survive and redeem

humanity he needs to know who Vala truly is.

In the Bible, the Apocalypse entails the revelation of the mysteries; things lie beyond the ordinary range of human knowledge. God gives to prophets or saints instructions concerning such hidden matters. Both in *J* and in *FW*, Blake and Joyce are the prophets of an analogous initiation. The difficulties and ordeals disseminated in their works are a means of putting readers to the test, and selecting the "chosen one," i.e. the reader who proves to be worthy of the "final message." From this perspective, the well-known declarations of both writers on the possibility that someone could eventually understand their artistic effort can be read as something more than a narcissistic statement.

In a letter to his friend Cumberland (1754-1848) Blake writes: "The Last work I produced is a poem entitled Jerusalem the Emanation of the Giant Albion, but find that to print it will cost my time the amount of twenty Guineas. One I have finished: it contains 100 Plates but it is not likely that I shall get a Customer for

it.”<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Joyce in a conversation with Eugen Jolas (1894-1952) on *FW* honestly declares: “I imagine I’ll have about eleven readers.”<sup>14</sup> Anticipating one of the most controversial issues of post-modern literature, i.e. the relation between author and reader, not only do Blake and Joyce make the latter negotiate the meaning of every line and page, but also impose/propose a reconfiguration of the roles of producer (author) and consumer (reader).

As the title of this essay suggests, part of my investigation on *J* and *FW* focuses on the very concept of the marriage/union between mystery and “mystettry.” I have already noted the relation between mystery and Apocalypse in terms of revelation of that mystery. Now I would like to concentrate on the pun “mystettry” concocted by Joyce and employed in the last book of the *Wake*.

“Mystettry” is a particularly complex and dense compound. We might unzip it into at least seven main words, it depends of course on our reading: “my,”

“mist,” “tet,” “try,” “tree,” “mystery” (which we may also read as “mystery tree”) and “mystory.” First, I would like to analyze the symbolic expression “mystery tree,” frequently mentioned by William Blake to whom Joyce seems to allude when in *FW* he refers to trees (it usually occurs in the last chapters, but it is not a rule).

In William Blake, the symbolism of trees, and in particular of the Tree of Mystery, recurs throughout his works. The Tree of Mystery is mainly connected with false morality, the false church of mystery, and the whore of Babylon. It represents the tree on which Jesus was crucified as well. Its roots and branches form a labyrinth. On this tree Urizen crucifies his son of fire, Fuzon. Most of all, however, the Tree of Mystery is the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil, by its fruit man sets himself up as a God (thus it is the deadly tree).

In *FW*, a first Blakean hint at trees occurs on page 58: 20 when we read: “Ashu ashure there, the unforgettable threeshade [...]” A part from “threeshade,” also “ashu”

and “ashure” echo the word “tree.” In fact “shu” in Chinese means “tree;” here Joyce uses it as a pun for “sure,” “assure.” This reference is particularly meaningful if we think that, just on the previous page, he has introduced for the first time the four old chronicles/judges, Mamalujo, who overtly assimilate the Four Zoas by calling them “Zoans.”<sup>15</sup>

Reading on in the chapter, it is quite apparent that something in the narrative has changed or is about to change, something connected with the dominating semantic field of the passage, as if Joyce had switched to a sort of “William Blake Modality.” Indeed, exactly on page 58, we read: “As holyday in his house so was he priest and king to that: ulvy came, envy saw, ivy conquered. Lou! Lou! They have waved his green boughs o’er him as they have torn him limb from lamb.” (58:5-7)

The sentence “As holyday in his house so was he priest and king to that” is taken from the letter (that we have already mentioned) written by William Blake

to George Cumberland where the poet observes: “the Mind, in which everyone is King and Priest in his own house.” The rest of the quotation might be a reference to Blake’s Felpham incident and his subsequent trial, especially because this is the chapter devoted to HCE’s trial and incarceration. “Lou! Lou!” echoes “Los,” and the last sentence “They have waved his green boughs o’er him as they have torn him limb from lamb,” not only contains one of the most important Blakean symbols (i.e. the lamb) but also reminds me of a particularly violent episode in *J*, considered by many scholars the poetic translation of Blake’s trial, when in plate 25, Albion/Blake is tortured by three cruel dominating females,<sup>16</sup> who draw out his entrails (“the Divine Lamb is cruelly slain”). Back to the *Wake*, a few pages ahead we are introduced to the “mysttetry,” as we read: “Sankya Moondy played his mango tricks under the mysttetry.” (60:18)

Mark L. Troy, in his “Mummeries of Resurrection: The Cycle of Osiris in Finnegans Wake,”<sup>17</sup> considers the

compound “mystettry” strictly connected with the cult of Osiris. He focuses on the word “Tet,” which “was a wooden pillar of some sort, and it may have been the stylized representation of a tree, perhaps that in which the body of Osiris had been concealed.” In ancient Egypt, the setting up of the Tet was the symbolic action signifying that the god himself had risen.

In this passage, HCE’s imminent awakening (physical and metaphorical) is intertwined with two other kinds of awakening: that implied in the Biblical Apocalypse as well as that implied again in the prophetic character of Buddha. As stated in McHugh’s *Annotations*, the expression “Sankyamundi” can be read as Sakya Muni, another name for “Gautama Siddhartha” or Buddha. According to tradition, Siddhartha’s first words at his birth were: “I am the leader of the world. This is my final birth.” Thus his last reincarnation might be read as an allusion to HCE, to the novel’s last cycle and to the reader’s “Last

podding.” Equally important, the appellative Buddha in Sanskrit means “the awakened one,” “the one who has fully achieved consciousness,” which establishes a direct correspondence between the prophet and HCE.

Besides, the second part of the compound “Sankyamundi,” that is “mundi,” can be read as the genitive of the Latin “mundus” which means “clear,” “purified,” “humanity” and “profane world.” The latter, in particular, in the context of *FW* might be interpreted as if Joyce wanted to convey in a single expression all the world’s faiths and confessions (including the pagan). Finally, “mundi,” meaning “pure,” refers to a sense of pureness or purification, crucial in the passage in which HCE is on trial for his obscure infraction.

The Joycean quotation might also be connected to the discovery of the sculpture of Buddha Sakyamuni. Soon after the mass destruction of Buddhist monasteries in Tibet in the Sino-Tibetan border war of 1905-1918, a medical missionary, Albert L. Shelton, found the statue of a Buddha, which was brought to the Auckland

Museum in 1920. It is likely that English newspapers wrote about the discovery and that Joyce might have been so fascinated by the images of the statue to “use” them in *FW*.

From these observations, it is clear that Joyce’s intention is that of creating a kind of collision among all the possible forms of Apocalypse, linked one to the other by the expression “mystettry,” that eventually turns into “mystory.” Once again, to be really appreciated, the *Wake* has to become a personal experience; the reader has to change into a *homo viator*, who with his own, unique, interpretive tools starts his journey through its mysteries and codes. Likewise, the reader of *J* has to wake up and discover (“apocalypto”) the ultimate meaning of a work in which “Every word and every letter is studied and put into its fit place” (3, E 146). Conceived as palimpsests of human experiences, these two texts do not admit any form of revelation that is not personally lived and felt. To be free from the roots of the labyrinthine “Tree

of Mystery,” the reader has to create his own exegetical system; he has to take off the veil that covers his eyes.

As Fred Dortort has noticed, in *J*, the text of plate 3 contains indications that its readers will benefit from a certain degree of circumspection.<sup>18</sup> The words “Sheep” and “Goats,” above on the side of the address (perhaps the words of the narrator, perhaps not), symbolize the process of selection. Readers may then proceed to read the text in the manner either of the docile sheep, or the more cantankerous goats, paradoxically inverting Matthew’s account in the apocalyptic sections of his book.<sup>19</sup>

On page 563:7-9 of the *Wake* completely devoted to William Blake,<sup>20</sup> whom Joyce calls “pale blake,”<sup>21</sup> we read: “You will know him by name in the capers but you cannot see whose heel he sheepfolds in his wrought hand because I have not told it to you.”

The passage refers to Jesus’ second coming and Matthew’s biblical account (“caper” in Latin is “goat,” and “sheep” is contained in the compound

“sheepfolds”). But here again, as in Blake, Apocalypse is used as a metaphor for describing the author/reader relation and for investing the reader with his own responsibility in the *wreading* of the text.

Unquestionably, the longing for Apocalypse in these two textures becomes a longing for liberty and emancipation from every form of intellectual restraint. Only if we allow such an investigation can Los’ strong resolution in *J* be ours: “I must create a system or being enslav’d by another man’s” (10:20-21, E 153).

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> All the quotations from *Jerusalem* follow the Erdman standard edition of Blake’s works (E): David Erdman, ed., *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake. Newly Revised Edition* (New York and London: Anchor Books, 1988).

<sup>2</sup> James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (London: Faber & Faber, 1939). All editions of *Finnegans Wake* follow the same pagination as the first one.

<sup>3</sup> James Joyce, “William Blake,” in *The Critical Writings of James Joyce*. Eds. Mason Ellsworth and Richard Ellmann (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1959): 214-222. Page 222. For further readings, see also Robert F. Gleckner, “Joyce’s Blake: Paths of Influence,” in *William Blake and the Moderns*. Eds. Robert J. Bertholf and Annette S. Levitt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982): 135-163.

<sup>4</sup> Robert N. Essick, “Jerusalem and Blake’s Final Works,” in *The Cambridge Companion to William Blake*. Ed. Morris Eaves (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 251-271.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Jacques Aubert, “riverrun,” in *Post-Structuralist Joyce. Essays from the French*. Eds. Derek Attridge and Daniel Ferrer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984): 69-77.

<sup>6</sup> Vala is the Goddess of Nature and Luvah’s Emanation.

<sup>7</sup> Again the term conveys the idea of “covering” and “concealing,” as in Blake who presents the Divine Vision always hidden in a cloud.

<sup>8</sup> We know that Issy too is represented by a “Nuvoletta” (a Little Cloud), since she is often described as a being who, from the sky, watches over her family’s actions (“That little cloud, a nibulissa, still hang isky,” 255:31). We might say that hers is a privileged further point of view proposed to the reader. In such a context, Issy’s function is to complete/enlarge the picture.

<sup>9</sup> Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 1986.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Harold Bloom, *Blake’s Apocalypse: A Study in Poetic Argument* (London: Victor Gollancz LTD, 1963).

<sup>11</sup> Generally speaking, “pudding” connotes “a kind of sausage” or “a dessert” (OED).

<sup>12</sup> We can find references to Jesus’ coming as a thief in the night also in Thess. 5:2: “For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.” and in Apoc. 3:3: “Remember therefore what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. If therefore you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.”

<sup>13</sup> The reference here is to a letter written by William Blake to George Cumberland on April 12, 1827, in which the poet says: “Flaxman is gone & we All soon follow, everyone to his own eternal house, leaving the delusive Goddess nature & her laws to get into freedom from all law of the members into The Mind, in which every one is king & Priest in his own house. God send it so on Earth as it is in heaven.” Cumberland was an amateur artist and engraver, author of *Thoughts on Outline*; instrumental in the founding of the National Gallery; Blake’s friend for more than thirty years. For him Blake made a number of illuminated books as well as his last engraving, a small allegorical calling card.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969): 588.

<sup>15</sup> According to Northrop Frye (“Quest and Cycle in *Finnegans Wake*”, in *Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Mythology* (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1963): 256-264) it is too reductive to speak of a direct correspondence between the Four Zoas and the Four Judges Mamalujjo: “The parallel sometimes suggested between Blake’s four Zoas and Joyce’s four old men is not a genuine one. The Zoas in Blake are his major figures Los, Orc, Urizen and Tharmas, and are fully individualized; the four old men in Joyce are always a chorus, and seen unintegrated to the rest of the symbolism. These four men are inorganic tradition, or, more accurately, the conscious memory: they are linked to the four evangelists, the four historians of Ireland, and to the psychoanalytic technique of trying to clear the mind of guilt by awakening the memory. In Joyce, as in Blake, the memory and the creative imagination are distinct or even opposed principles. The nearest equivalent in Blake to the four old men would be the four chief sons of Los in their ‘abstract’ form.”(2)

For completeness’ sake it must be said that Roland McHugh (*Annotations to Finnegans Wake* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980)), in opposition to Frye, admits a possible equation between the Four Zoas and the Four Judges (100).

<sup>16</sup> They can be compared with the three drunken soldiers who witness HCE’s sexual abuse.

<sup>17</sup> <<http://www.kirbymountain.com/Troy-Mummeries/troybook.htm>>, 04-20-06.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Fred Dortort, *The Dialectic of Vision: A Contrary Reading of William Blake’s Jerusalem* (Barrytown: Station Hill Arts, 1988).

<sup>19</sup> “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world [...] Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels....And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.” (Matt 25:31-34, 41, 46)

<sup>20</sup> In the novel “Blake” refers to both the poet and one of the twelve tribes of Galway known as “The Blakes.”

<sup>21</sup> The Pale or the English Pale comprised a region in a radius of 20 miles around Dublin, which the English in Ireland gradually fortified against incursion from Gaels. From the thirteenth century onwards the Hiberno-Norman invasion in the rest of Ireland at first faltered then waned, allowing Gaelic Ireland to become resurgent.



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