

Textual Labour

Delivering the
Monstrous Child

Rejecting interpretation and
embracing buggery

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MA Fine Art 2012

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Introduction

I saw myself as taking the author from behind and giving him a child that would be his own offspring, yet monstrous. It was really important for it to be his own child, because the author had to actually say all I had him saying. But the child was bound to be monstrous too, because it resulted from all sorts of shifting, slipping, dislocations and hidden emissions that I really enjoyed. (Deleuze 1995: 6)

I bugger the author senselessly but surely not meaninglessly to produce this monstrous child, to deliver a piece of writing that places my voice firmly between the language of the author and the text that ensues. My voice, the *writing*, 'there is room, between a language and a style, for another formal reality: writing'. (Barthes 1967: 13) The author's language is the history, the text his style. The writing is mine(d).

This approach may regulate the language but it does not restrict my choices. Within the limits set by the history and History, my decisions state my freedom: I am free to write. Paradoxically, temporality thwarts this freedom, I write 'but it is impossible to develop it within duration without gradually becoming a prisoner of someone else's words and even of my own'. (Barthes: 17) Just as sexual desire is derailed by the actual act, ' "What am I doing here, sweating and repeating these stupid gestures?" ', (Zizek 1997: 65) so my writing as an assertion of freedom succumbs in time to repetition and remembrance; the more I write, the more I lose; the more I fuck, the more I lack.

And yet, before duration imposes its condition there are moments of freedom, pockets of innocence, flashes of neutrality that raise the text out of the realm of frigidity. The writing trembles on the edge of intensity, words '*glisten*', (Barthes 1973: 42) they are affects, they produce an affect, 'a reaction in/on the body at the level of matter'. (O'Sullivan 2001: 126) There is potentiality.

To use my voice to write with and in the language of the author is not a conceit or an cognitive exercise/excuse to stalk and vicariously fuck the object of my desire, (for of course I desire the author, but only through his text), rather it is a mode by which I collude with his language in an attempt to locate, but not identify (for that is the reader's role) these moments of intensity.

I do not use my voice to mimic the authors, this is not about appropriation, (though I do sometimes use their 'linguistic tics' (Barthes 2011: 29)), and I do not claim to be the voice of the author's Other as 'manifested in the voice', (Fink 1995: 92) it's more an attempt to provoke their (and the reader's) desire less through what is said and more in the tenor and quality of how it is said. What Barthes might call the 'grain of the voice'. (1977: 179)

This paper is in two parts; part one is a more formal reading of the texts of Roland Barthes and Georges Bataille, though I use the word 'formal' loosely; the writing vacillates between the academically conventional and the unorthodox. Part two takes four writers; Chuck Palahniuk, Brett Easton-Ellis, J G Ballard and Kathy Acker and is an attempt to identify what Barthes might mean when he uses the phrase 'pathetic criticism' and therefore reads more as a piece of creative writing:

A mode of criticism -- that would be concerned with or that would start out from the *moments* of a work: *powerful* moments, moments of truth, or, if the word doesn't frighten us, moments of *pathos* [...] Pathetic criticism: rather than logical units (structural analysis) would start out from affective elements. (Barthes 2010: 108)

But the *goal* of both is the same. They try to resist any kind of interpretative process: 'Never interpret; experience, experiment.' (Deleuze: 87)

Roland Barthes Speaks Without any Noise

Crumbs

I know Roland Barthes. I know when he wakes, what he has for breakfast with his mother, how he takes his coffee, when he works, naps, drifts, waters the garden and plays (the piano). (Barthes 1977: 82) I know what he reads in bed. His bedroom: white walls, floorboards, Moroccan rugs, no mirror and no ashtray for he does not smoke in bed as he has no need to talk.¹ I know that at ten o'clock, he sinks into his mattress, (apart from food, this expensive mattress is his one concession to luxury, a sort of material adjective), reads a little: a bit of Lamartine, a detective novel maybe, an (unfashionable) English novel but then finally...finally and with pleasure, he loses his-self in Zola.

In short, I do not know Roland Barthes at all.

I cannot grasp Barthes, no sooner have I garnered meaning, sure that affirmation of my understanding will follow, then his words elude me. I am adrift in the text. He draws me in, seduces me with lucidity then abandons me in a textual vacuum.

Is pleasure only a minor bliss? Is bliss nothing but extreme pleasure? Is pleasure only a weakened, conformist bliss – a bliss deflected through a pattern of conciliations? Is bliss merely a brutal, immediate (without meditation) pleasure? On the answer (yes or no) depends the way we shall write the history of our modernity. (Barthes 1975: 20)

Clever Fucker.

Clever because I enjoy it.

Like the apocryphal crumbs, when I try to retrace my steps, meaning is negated.²

Does this suggest a lack of commitment, a cautiousness, an inability to, in his own words ‘let his hair down’? (2011: 31) Or is it, as Robbe-Grillet believes, a deliberate strategy of ‘slippage’ as opposed to ‘trembling’ that has at its core a fixed meaning:

¹ Alain Robbe-Grillet (tenderly) accuses Barthes of using the cigarette as a form of self-control, ‘You don’t speak quietly but you take the precaution of always having a cigarette between your lips, which, as you know, from the point of view of articulation, doesn’t allow you to shout things out’ (2011: 33)

² Although I am referring to *Hansel and Gretel*, Barthes also uses the analogy of the crumb when writing about fragments, ‘the fragments are then so many stones on the perimeter of a circle: I spread myself around: my whole little universe in crumbs; at the center, what?’ (1977: 92)

The structure of a slippage, on the other hand, is totally different: it never stops abandoning positions that it pretends to have won... 'Barthesian thought' lies in slipping and not at all in the elements between which the thought has slipped. (2011: 24)

This slippage leaves me floundering, unable to keep hold of the idea and desperately clutching to the text in a bid to gain a foothold, however tenuous and unstable it might prove to be (though of course Barthes will never *prove* anything to me and this is his joy; he does not lecture me and thus avoids dogmatism; just as he is free to write, I am free to read, to drift, to float, to clasp).

Yet far from signaling caution, the structure of slippage is arguably a form of risk taking. To undermine one's own language, to stultify the idea before it takes root invites at best, irritation, at worst, ridicule.

And because I know Roland Barthes, I know he cared what people thought, how his work was received, how he looked in photographs, how he hated the vulnerability of being seen in profile.³ And Barthes, if 'the performance of the language system is...quite simply fascist' (Barthes 1982: 461), then why did you make such an art form of your chosen medium; language?

Ah, of course, because 'Fascism does not prevent speech, it compels speech'. (1982: 461)

In *Why I Love Barthes*, Françoise Gaillard denies the charge of caution on Barthes's behalf:

We mustn't be taken in by this cautiousness in the writing, either, since it strikes me personally, on closer inspection, to show a real lack of caution on the part of Roland Barthes, which I actually enjoy the most: daring to go to the limit of a certain form of naivety in the best sense of the term, agreeing to say what people no longer dare to say, or what theory has prevented us from saying'. (2011: 40)

This linguistic audacity that masquerades as caution; the slippages that have no nucleus; these are key to what compels me to read and keep on reading Barthes. They can be attributed to what Agamben describes as the work's philosophical element, its 'capability to be developed'. It is my responsibility as reader to identify this element and pursue 'something which remains unsaid within the work but which demands to be unfolded and worked out'. (Agamben 2002)

When I embark on a love affair, it is the possibilities that thrill, the anticipation that seduces. I enjoy the actuality, but I am enthralled by the potentiality; so it is when I read Barthes.

³ 'When Barthes took his seat, he immediately realized that some spectators could see him from the side[...] Seized by panic, he stood up and had the room cleared. He himself told me this anecdote: he could not stand being examined in this way, for two solid hours.' (Robbe-Grillet 2011: 67)

What's in a name?

Cleaning her six year old daughter's bedroom she finds, as she pulls out the chest of drawers to Hoover, the writing on the wall. Different pens, different cases, large text, small text, scrawled, meticulously crafted, rubbed out, crossed out, but all repeating the same words: Jack Thomas, jack thomas, JACK THOMAS, jACk ThomaS, JAck Jack JACK Thomas. A slew of textual Jack Thomases spawning yet more Jacks, jacks, jack...

She cried because she remembered that need to write a name, and she knew why it was hidden.

There is an erotic thrill in affirming, by writing, the name of the one I desire. But in so doing, I lose my power. Pleasure is frustrated. I write and re-write in the hope of reclaiming that thrill but seeing the name only confirms my lack. I cannot destroy my writing, my Other, so I hide it.

I hide it because there is something wrong, something the six year old knows intuitively but cannot articulate; the paradox that 'desire is situated in dependence on demand' (Lacan 1977: 154) in other words, demand acts as a conduit for desire, but any response to this demand cannot quench desire:

In this way, demand annuls (aufhebt) the particularity of everything that can be granted, by transmuting it into a proof of love, and the very satisfactions demand obtains for need are debased (sich erniedrigt) to the point of being no more than the crushing brought on by the demand for love. (Lacan 1977: 317)

By writing the name I have articulated my desire through a demand and in so doing have blighted any hope I had of satisfying my desire.

Barthes's texts does not demand anything from me, or so I believe. I tell myself they are purely texts of desire. But if desire is contingent on demand, then by definition there is a demand being made. Maybe it is slippage that rescues Barthes. Slippage is the metaphorical cigarette that tempers demand; the cigarette that stops Barthes shouting is the slippage that keeps the demand quiet.

And so I am not crushed by his demands as they tiptoe around his desire.

Textual Sensuality

I sense fault lines running through Barthes's texts. Barely perceptible cracks that are hard to locate but nevertheless jolt and affect. Yes, the slippage unnerves me but within the structure of slippage it is these fractures that shift and abrade that offer me my moment of intensity. (Of course I do not know whether these are intentional on Barthes's behalf as seen in the Persian flaw or accidental like the imperfect ceramic.)⁴ They are discernible in the nuance: 'Unexpected sensual streaks. In a way, the Nuance: that which irradiates, diffuses, *streaks* (as a beautiful cloud streaks the sky).' (Barthes 2011: 46)

The nuance as the particular, as that which in asserting its potency conflicts with its surroundings. This conflict is erotic; affects and prattle in friction, chafing in their discord: the 'region where one thing *Brushes Up Against* another'. (Barthes 2011: 29)

Language is a skin: I rub my language against the other. It is as if I had words instead of fingers, or fingers at the tip of my words. My language trembles with desire. (Barthes 1979: 73)

Textual porn for the intellect.

But characteristic of the nuance is its interiority, likened by Barthes to what he terms 'the Poetics of the Void' (2011: 46) as expressed by Joubert and quoted by Barthes, "what is all matter but a grain of emptied metal, a grain of glass made hollow." (2011: 46) The nuance, distinguished by the void correlates to to the glitch, the disconcerting malfunction initially unsettling but on reflection violent and treacherous, for there is *nothing there*.

(A coincidence (?): Glitch; possibly from the Yiddish word *glitsh* 'a slip'; from the German word, *glitschen* 'to slip')⁵

The nuance is present in the haiku, either as a single word; the 'cutting word' that distinguishes haiku; or as the whole, whereby the haiku acts as the affective holophrase⁶. Or indeed as both, a nuance within a nuance.

⁴ Barthes uses this metaphor to illuminate a quote by Blanchot, "Every art draws its origin from an exceptional fault, every work is the implementation of this original fault" Metaphor that supports this view: the most beautiful ceramics where a flaw, where firing the glaze for too long has produced incomparable nuances' (2011: 46)

⁵ Online etymology dictionary <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=glitch> [accessed 16.7.2012]

⁶ 'There are phrases, expressions which cannot be broken down, and which have to be related to a situation taken in its entirety – these are holophrases' (Lacan 1954: 225)

Haiku, nuance as a ‘minimal act of enunciation’, (Barthes 2011: 23) short bursts of affect in an attempt to stave off the withering impact of duration. What Barthes strives for in his use of the Incident, the fragment.⁷ However, in comparison to the writer of haiku (and indeed James Joyce with his series of textual spasms), Barthes considers himself a failure. The affectiveness of the incident/haiku/fragment lies in the author resisting the temptation to explain, there must be ‘*no-commentary*’. (Barthes 2011: 102)

In the West, we are overwhelmingly conditioned to furnish every reported fact with the alibi of an interpretation. Here in France, short forms are required to be overmeaningful: maxims, lyrical poems – for us, the haiku (or its substitutes) is impossible.’ (Barthes 2011: 102)

(Again, the slippage; I am seduced by Barthes’s (lengthy) argument on the power of haiku, only to be told it is not possible.)

Failure or not, Barthes’s fragments have a quality that resonates, stirs, and reverberates long after the reading is over. The nuance, the incident, the fragment agitates my memory; it is a process of individuation, the ‘notion that consists in relating the irreducibility of the individual (civic and psychological subject) to a given moment of that individual’. (Barthes 2011: 43)

An short exercise in individuation

I’ve nothing to add other than this: anyone who has lost someone dear to them retains a painful memory of the season; the light; the flowers, the smells, the harmony or discrepancy between mourning and the season: how it’s possible to suffer in the sun! (Barthes 2011: 40)

It is 13 Days before Christmas and her son is dead. She went in as two and left as one. As she drives out of the hospital she is blinded by the low winter sun. Eleven years later, it is not a place, a photograph, a phrase that recalls the pain but the low winter sun, rare but exquisite, and she smiles clutching her empty stomach.

No, I do not know Roland Barthes at all, but through his writing, he knows me. How did this happen?

I have been head-fucked by the quietest lover I have never known.

⁷ Barthes uses this form in *Pleasure of the Text*, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, *A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments* and *Incidents*, though he did not necessarily intend for the latter to be published.

Sacrificing Georges Bataille

Madame Edwarda's Rags as Riches

Bataille is not afraid of the wound, of entering the void in agony and acknowledging death. He subjects his writing to the thrashing it desires; I read, fascinated and horrified as he strips naked before me, exposing his textual genitalia in all its lacerating pitifulness. Not pitiful because impotent, but because, like the eleven year old boy doomed to surreptitiously rub his seemingly permanent erection against any upright object he can find; sofa; washing machine; table leg; even, God forbid, his mother: Bataille's trembling, sore, unsatisfied organ throbs on the page before me. It's pathetic, and I am in awe of him.

Madame Edwarda spreads her legs, fingers the folds and declares triumphantly, 'I am GOD' ' (Bataille, 1989: 150)¹

Her 'wound', her 'gash', her 'rags' for christ's sake.

But this does not offend me, woman's cunt reduced to rags. Bataille's member may be thrumming through the text, but not to the beat of misogyny. This is cunt as different from, not in thrall to, the phallus:

The body politics of sacrifice is one which privileges the wound as a determining figure [...] is one which, more often than not, construes feminine genital sexuality as openness, exposure, wound, site of sacrifice: the body as open rather than closed by the totemic phallus. It is the inverse of a phallocentrism. (Ffrench 2007: 38)

Moreover, as Andrew Ryder points out, Bataille rarely uses the word 'vagin', partly he assumes, to avoid any medicalizing associations that would detract from erotic affect, but he also finds significance in the etymological root of the word; ' "vagina" is the latin for "scabbard," [sheath] which makes it secondary to and complementary with the phallus.' (2010: 99)

¹ Bataille wrote *Madame Edwarda* under the pseudonym, Pierre Angelique. Bataille used various pseudonyms for his erotic 'stories', a point worth noting when textual sacrifice is discussed on p. 9 of this paper

Thus 'Madame Edwarda's "old rag and ruin" loured at me, hairy and pink, just as full of life as some loathsome squid'² Thus Madame Edwarda's 'gash' is not the envious lack prescribed by 'a symbolic order that privileges the signifier of the penis' (Johnston 2002), but a glorious, shameless well that Bataille is desirous of falling into. Yes, Bataille's cunts are a void but not a void that is dependent on being filled to exist. Thus his cunts revel in their autonomy.

The 'gash' or 'wound' as feminine genitalia, as openness and potential, potential for what? Queer theory has related this wound to the open wound on Christ's side as he is suspended on the sacrificial cross (Lochrie 1997: 189-193), but aside from the erotic connotations of the analogy, Christ's wound signifies potentiality; Lochrie quotes Catherine of Siena being encouraged by Christ to drink from his wound, ' "and by that draught your soul shall become enraptured with such delight that your very body, which for my sake you have denied, shall be inundated with its overflowing goodness." ' (1997: 197)

What happens when a man 'drinks' from woman's wound, is he equally sated?

As the narrator presses his lips to Madame Edwarda's 'living wound', he is suspended, 'I thought I heard the sound of a sea swell, the same sound you hear when you put your ear to a large conch shell'. The shell, a hollow body, a resonating chamber that amplifies ambient sound; the cunt as that which makes louder, an intensifier.

I have alluded to the sacrifice in passing, but in Bataille's writing it is palpable, as both a subject matter in the narrative of many of his texts but also as a driving force in the structure and style of his work. If 'sacrifice[...]is the religious act above all others', (Bataille 1962: 81) then how do I read his assertion that 'literature is in fact religions heir'? (1962: 87) Is Bataille writing a text of sacrifice, whereby subjectivity is relinquished in order that the continuity of the text is assured?

On sacrifice, Bataille writes, 'the victim dies and the spectators share in what his death reveals.' (1962: 82) It reveals what only a violent death can reveal, that of continuity.³ If this

² Andrew Ryder finds a link between the description of Madame Edwarda's crack as a squid and Lacan; 'the narrative refers to the octopus as the figure for femininity -- that is, a cephalopod with myriad legs, invertebrate, with three hearts, without hair, and whose skin is slimy and inky. Lacan will later describe the octopus as "the most beautiful animal there is," perhaps in tribute to Bataille's story.' (2010: 99) A tenuous but gratifying link

³ 'Death means continuity of being. Reproduction leads to the discontinuity of beings, but brings into play their continuity; that is to say, it is intimately linked with death.' (Bataille 1962: 13)

violence is witnessed, then the onlooker participates in this knowledge; with respect to the sacrificial text, the reader is the observer and thus the participant. Paradoxically it is this very act of reading that affirms the sacrifice and therefore annihilates the text.

With sacrificial participation comes extreme anxiety. I want to read, I even enjoy the wretched spectacle I am witnessing, so why am I anxious, is it because, as Benjamin Noys argues, ‘to reject Bataille is to fail to read him, but to become an apologist for Bataille is also to fail to read him’? (Noys 2000: 4) By colluding with textual sacrifice, do I apologise for Bataille?

No.

My anxiety stems from the writing.

Madame Edwarda’s orgasm drips off the page, ‘a fountain of living water’ courses through the text, ‘the sap that was rising through her sprang out in her tears’ and leeches into the language. ‘Nothing did not contribute to this blind slipping into death’ as the writing parodies the ‘final shudders’, but my anxiety is ‘refused the pleasure’ that the narrator’s anguish yearns for. ‘Her eyes dead, she let me do as I please’ and I do as I please, poised on the edge of anticipation...

And then he leaves me.

Georges Bataille does not care.

And that is why he can write.

The relinquishment of subjectivity referred to above requires further exploration; how vanquishing the ‘self’ and therefore risking the text assures its continuity:

The texts of Bataille are those in which the authorial subject risks itself...language enters finite transcendence as authorial subjectivity abandons itself through an *ek-stasis*, an opening or laceration that allows for a true or essential communication. Bataille’s writing is not merely the writing of an “I,” but the writing of the subject’s loss of subjectivity. (Kilpatrick 2005)

This erosion of subjectivity may operate as a ‘vitalistic and life-affirming possibility’ (Butler 1993: 266), but it comes at great cost. The subject with no subjectivity ceases to exist and who is willing to take that risk. *Desire* is at work here. Erotic desire. ‘Eroticism is assenting to

life even in death'. (Bataille 1962: 11) So Bataille takes the risk and performs his 'insidious heroism'. (Barthes 1975: 30).

For Lacan, pleasure presupposes desire,⁴ whether his early account whereby the two coexist or later when he posits that desire is founded on the impossibility of jouissance are acknowledged, in both, desire is an essential component of jouissance. (Evans 1998: 6) But the erotic compulsion and the ecstasy that ensues (or not) necessitates acknowledgement and acceptance of death; for Bataille, this acceptance is twofold; firstly, the sexual act is bound to the actuality of reproduction and therefore 'implies the existence of *discontinuous* beings' (Bataille: 12), and secondly, the violence of climax resonates with the rupture of death. The ecstatic being is precisely the negated subject:

The outside as an encounter that does not know itself, and makes the self not present to the self but nonetheless teeming with unqualified intensity, is how I will define ecstasy. (Maccormack 2010: 111)

I am repelled but drawn to the horror, the *abject* as jouissance. But this oscillation between desire and anxiety explicit in ecstasy doesn't just resonate with the self's relationship with the abject, ('the abject simultaneously beseeches and pulverizes the subject' (Kristeva 1980: 5)), rather it shapes the basis for its very possibility; 'it follows that jouissance alone causes the abject to exist as such...one joys in it. Violently and painfully.' (Kristeva: 9)

In pulverizing his-self and the language, does Bataille manage the seemingly impossible with his text? In renouncing the subject, 'can it be that pleasure has made us *objective*?' (Barthes 1975: 32)

⁴ the words pleasure, bliss, jouissance and ecstasy are not interchangeable, But I see one as a continuation (or varying degree) of the other, starting with pleasure and culminating in ecstasy/agony/death

The Language of the Sacred: a subplot

She was in the tomb with Christ. She said that she first kissed Christ's chest, and saw that He lay there with His eyes closed, as He did in death; she next kissed His mouth from which she received a wonderful and indescribably delightful odor breathing forth from His mouth... Then Christ's faithful one heard these words: "Before I lay in this tomb, I held you this tightly." And although she understood that it was Christ who spoke these words, nevertheless she saw Him lying there with his eyes closed, and His lips motionless -- as when He lay dead in the tomb. And her joy was extreme and indescribable.

She straddled the naked cadaver again, scrutinizing the purplish face with the keenest interest, she even sponged the sweat of the naked forehead and obstinately waved away a fly buzzing in a sunbeam and endlessly flitting back to alight on the face. All at once, Simone uttered a soft cry. Something bizarre and quite baffling had happened: this time, the insect had perched on the corpse's eye and was agitating its long nightmarish legs on the strange orb. The girl took her head in her hands and shook it, trembling, then she seemed to plunge in to an abyss of reflections.

Only once the superficial difference between the corpse and the living body started to rot away through the agency of worms, which bridged the two bodies, establishing a differential continuity between them, did they stop feeding the living. Once both the living and the dead had turned black through putrefaction they deemed it appropriate to unshackle the bodies, by now combined together, albeit on an infinitesimal, vermicular level. The so-called climax of the punishment -- the blackening of the body.

Angela of Foligno's Memorial - Angela of Foligno

The Story of the Eye - Georges Bataille

The Corpse Bride: Thinking with Nigredo - Reza Negarestani

fig. 1: *Three Texts, Textual Sacrilege*

I am shackled to Bataille's text, consumed by the 'mad bitch' (Bataille 1962: 10) that possessed Angela of Foligno,⁵ and suspended as my and his self decomposes.

In thrall and enthralled.

'Of all that is written I love only what a man has written with his blood. Write with blood, and you will experience that blood is spirit.' (Nietzsche 1883: 152)

⁵ Amy Hollywood makes reference to the influence of the thirteenth century Umbrian mystic, Angela of Foligno, on Bataille's style of writing, in particular the character of Madam Edwarda (1999: 220), but is well documented elsewhere specifically by Bataille himself in *Guilty*. Hollywood highlights Bataille's ambivalence towards the 'relationship between inner experience and mysticism' (222), nevertheless, the manner in which Angela expresses the ecstatic moment (the brush with death) is critical to Bataille and subsequently the language he employs, as exemplified in figure 1, p.12 of this paper.

Chuck and Brett

A Write Off

Two authors

Same genre

Same place in cultural hierarchy

Nothing clever

I just want to see who wins

"So?"¹

"I'm into, oh murders and executions mostly. It depends."²

"Who did you kill do get here?"

"What in the fuck do you want to hear?"

"Are you menstruating?"

"You're projecting."

"Ok. You fuck me, then snub me. You love me, you hate me. You show me a sensitive side, then you turn into a total asshole. Is this a pretty accurate description of our relationship?"

"Fucking nitwit."

"Oh love me, love me. I'll be anybody you want me to be."

"Fucking weasel."

"Give me lust, baby..."

"Clean and pink and wet and spread, her clit swollen, engorged with blood, her cunt hangs over my head and I push my face into it..."

"Give me malice..."

"I slap her hard across the face and hiss the words "Dumb bitch", spraying her face with spit. I mace her again and then I try to fuck her in the mouth once more but I can't come so I stop..."

"Give me detached existentialist ennui..."

"I have all the characteristics of a human being: blood, flesh, skin, hair; but not a single clear, identifiable emotion, except for greed and disgust..."

"Give me rampant intellectualism as a coping mechanism..."

"Are you freebasing or what?"

"I lost my virginity through my ear."

"I'm not impressed. I tried to make meat loaf out of the girl but it became too frustrating a task and I spent the afternoon smearing her meat all over the walls."

"Just for the record, the weather today is calm and sunny, but the air is full of bullshit."

"You should take more lithium."

"Just for the record, being smeared with shit and naked in the wilderness, splattered with pink vomit, this does not necessarily make you a real artist."

"Where is the goddam water-soluble spermicidal lubricant?"

"Just for the record, the weather today is bitter with occasional fits of jealous rage."

"Your hairline looks like it's receding."

"It's not love or anything, but I think I like you too."

"Dumb son-of-a-bitch."

3

¹ All quotes by Chuck Palahniuck are in courier

² All quotes by Brett Easton Ellis are in American Typewriter

³ Draw?

PIGMENTOPHILIA

LAST NIGHT I DREAMT OF BACON'S BRUSHWORK AGAIN.

IT SEEMED MY OBSESSION HAD NOT ENTIRELY LEFT ME. FOR A WHILE, A FEW YEARS AGO, I WAS CONSUMED, INFATUATED BY THE WAY FRANCIS BACON APPLIED PAINT. I HAD NO INTEREST IN HIS SUBJECT MATTER, BUT I WAS ENTHRALLED BY THE VIOLENCE, AGITATION AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, RESTRAINT OF THE APPLICATION OF PAINT.

IN MY DREAMS I FUCKED HIS BRUSHWORK. NOT BACON, NOT HIS SUBJECTS, BUT THE CONTORTED, SHUDDERING MARKS SUSPENDED ON THE EDGE OF ECSTASY.

WHEN I READ THAT JG BALLARD WAS EQUALLY AS ENGROSSED BY BACON, (DID HE EVER BEND OVER IN HIS DREAMS TO BE ARSE-FUCKED BY A PAINTERLY GESTURE?), I DETERMINED TO READ EVERYTHING I COULD BY BALLARD.

DOG STEW CONSUMED WHILE RECORDING THE TORMENTED CHOKES OF HIS RAPE VICTIM, BREAST-FEEDING HER TORTURER BEFORE CUTTING HIS THROAT, MASTURBATING OVER A CHROME GEAR STICK, GENITAL WOUNDS PROVIDING VISUAL STIMULATION FOR SEXUAL GRATIFICATION. ALIEN AND ALIENATING. BLEAK. TAWDRY. DYSTOPIAN.

TEXTUAL MANIFESTATIONS OF BACON'S DEFORMED NARRATIVES SCREAMING WITH THE FREEDOM, HOWEVER PAINFUL, THAT COMES WITH KNOWING THERE IS NO GOD.

FOR GOD'S SAKE DON'T TELL BACON I SAID HIS PAINTINGS WERE NARRATIVES.

SPARSE, TENSE, AND DESOLATE, LANGUAGE AND PAINT AS AFFECTS, PUSHED TO THE LIMIT BUT TREMBLING UNDER THE WEIGHT OF SELF-CONTROL.

I SLIP BACK INTO MY REVERIE AND I AM ANXIOUS; NOT WITH UNEASE THAT I WILL CONFRONT THESE INSIDIOUS STREAKS:

BUT FEARFUL THAT I WON'T.

BUT THE SLASHES SPED TOWARDS ME WITH MUTE FURY FROM THE BRUSH.

**“Kathy Acker,
can I take a woman from behind?”**

“Hell Yes, if she’s man enough”

So, how do I actually do it? I mean really, *do* it. Because it's harder than you might think. Physically, I mean. It's awkward and the librarian is watching me. Ah fuck it.¹

Ok shall I type with my left hand or right hand, oh crap, I wish I'd worn a skirt, would've been easier. Jeans Bollocks. Bad planning.

Has anyone invented a remote controlled vibrator, I'm sure I've seen one, somewhere. Oh, shut the fuck up.

Concentrate.

Is being turned on enough, or do I actually have to be about to come. Thinking of Leopold Bloom writing in the sand while masturbating (Joyce 1922 ... oh for christ's sake don't reference now, footnote footnote footnote and cum back to it)²

But then Bloom was doing it by hand -- the writing as opposed to masturbating -- well presumably he was doing both by hand -- unless he had a remote controlled vibrator of course. FOR FUCK'S SAKE I HAVE COMPLETELY LOST MY RHTYHM NOW.

Concentrate.

And Molly Bloom's brimful of yeses, yes and perfumed breasts, geraniums and a rose.

Yes why, James, James why is *yes* a female word? Are you affirming or subverting Juliet's contradictory *no*³ (curse that man for thereafter giving man false and dangerous hope).

And Yes is a cunt?⁴ Yes, I get that. Yes it makes sense to me, though maybe not as you intended. So it indicates acquiescence, but is it the yes or the cunt that is acquiescing? Oh, the cunt is *expressed* by the yes. Yes, yes, I definitely get it now, the word yes, infinite but empty...

Just like the cunt.⁵

¹ In an interview with R U Sirius Kathy Acker says 'And I'm working at trying to find a kind of language where I won't be so easily modulated by expectation. I'm looking for what might be called a body language. One thing I do is stick a vibrator up my cunt and start writing -- writing from the point of orgasm and losing control of the language and seeing what that's like'. (1997)

² I don't remember reading this in *Ulysses*, (what exactly do I remember from *that* book) but Deleuze refers to it when discussing writing as a flow, 'flows of shit, sperm, words, action, eroticism, money, politics, and so on. Take Bloom, writing in the sand with one hand and masturbating with the other: what's the relation between those two flows?' (1995: 8)

³ 'If thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully.

Or if thou thinkest I am too quickly won,

I'll frown, and be perverse, and say thee nay,

So thou wilt woo; but else, not for the world.' (*Romeo & Juliet*, Shakespeare 1591-1595:)

The relation between this quote and Molly's soliloquy (Joyce 1922) is noted in 'An Alphabet of Feminism' <<http://www.badreputation.org.uk/2011/04/11/an-alphabet-of-feminism-25-y-is-for-yes/>>

⁴ In a letter to Frank Budgen, Joyce talks about his use of the word yes, 'It begins and ends with the female word yes. It turns like the huge earth ball slowly surely and evenly round and round spinning, its four cardinal points being the female breasts, arse, womb and cunt expressed by the words because, bottom (in all senses bottom button, bottom of the class, bottom of the sea, bottom of his heart), woman, yes.' (Ellman 1975: 285)

⁵ 'The cunt is reduced to lack. The vagina literally and actually represents a blind-spot. It is seen as empty space or aperture despite the vaginal walls being in permanent occlusion. It is invisible 'space', needing to be 'filled'.' (McCormack 2007: 803)

To Be Continued

For the sake of academic rigor I must survey my text and look for, gaps, omissions, tie up loose ends, bring my argument full circle to give the reader some closure. Given that I am attempting, in Barthes's words, an approach rather than an analysis (2011: 30), it is tempting to misquote Deleuze and say, 'in a way it's nothing to do with [me], because [I'm] working on other things.' (1995: 10) Similarly, if Agamben's assertion that it is the work's 'capability to be developed' (2002) that is crucial, then closure is the last thing I want the reader to experience.

But I will behave and instead re-interpret Deleuze's quote and say that it is precisely the moving on that is important. This paper has been a series of movings on, a meta-text in which the trajectory of the content is as critical as the content itself. Indeed, the trajectory is the content. In writing about Foucault's body of work, Deleuze elucidates on this point:

You have to take the work as a whole, to try and follow rather than judge it, see where it branches out in different directions, where it gets bogged down, moves forward, makes a breakthrough...you see that some element that seems less convincing than others is an absolutely essential step in his exploration. (1995: 85)

I have edited, cut, re-structured and corrected, but I hope I have done this honestly: It has been an exercise in restraint with respect to the language that oscillates between transgression and adherence to grammatical structure, but it has also been an exercise in nerve; in retaining the dead ends and holes in the arguments that I feel are pertinent to the whole. (An example; the use of the word cunt by Bataille led me to Joyce's use of that same word and subsequently to writing the final piece, *Kathy Acker*, in which the idea of the cunt as needing to be filled contradicts my earlier argument that it is independent -- it would have been easy to fix by simply omitting the last four words in the footnoted quote 'needing to be "filled" ', but I have never liked editing a quote to fit my argument.)

(Though of course, I do it all the time.)

The use of footnotes in *Kathy Acker* and to a lesser degree, the subtitle of *Chuck & Brett* are also problematic, but I hope it is a problem Barthes would sympathize with. If I do not want to analyse, then why have I given any explanations? Surely it would have been braver to have let the pieces stand on their own;

Deprived of all commentary, the inconsequentiality of the Incident is laid bare, and to stand by inconsequentiality is almost heroic. (Barthes 2011: 102)

Crap. I could have been a hero just by hitting delete. I couldn't do it.

If, however, as explained in the introduction, I am taking the authors from behind, using my voice to deliver their child, the text, then this ambivalence towards my writing is justified. All of the authors I 'take' share two things in common, firstly an ambiguity; textual, linguistic, aesthetic and ideological fluctuations and contradictions pervade the work and thus any claim to 'truth' is avoided. Secondly, they write as though there is '*Nothing left to lose*' (Barthes 2011: 20). They transgress but without shame, without the fear of losing face. 'This isn't a "performance" but a "path." To be in love is to lose face and to accept it, hence there is no face to be lost.' (Barthes: 20)

Have I (or has 'I') lost face, I wonder?

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