

ENTRANCE TO A COLONIAL PAGEANT IN WHICH WE ALL BEGIN TO INTRICATE

by

JOHANNES GÖRANSSON

(Under the Direction of Jed Rasula)

ABSTRACT

In the critical preface to this pageant, I develop a theory of the grotesque that brings together Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of "minor literature" with Lennard J. Davis's idea of the disabled body. I argue that the grotesque mode is a way to undermine the majoritarian demand for a stable language and the state's demand for an illusory whole, able body. The grotesque text discomforts because it reveals the lie of normal bodies and normal language. The pageant itself collapses the language and imagery of imperialism into the world of the American suburb. The threatening outsider is shown to be a fantasy essential to maintaining the heterosexual, xenophobic American idyll of suburbia. The language is exaggerated and interpenetrated by foreign languages. The leading characters of this grotesque resistance are The Passenger, an immigrant, and Miss World, a molested child. Both of them display a radical artificiality both in terms of actions and language.

INDEX WORDS: Grotesque, pageant, violence

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The concept of the “grotesque” was coined in the Renaissance to describe the art displayed in uncovered “grottoes” from the Roman era. These artworks, which depicted human-animal hybrid beasts in intricately ornate compositions became both scandalous and popular; they were criticized for being unnatural and ornamental, thus lacking the moral and artistic depth of the religious work being produced during this era (Russo 3). As grotesque art has continued to fascinate and repulse – perhaps no time more than the twentieth century with its numerous avant-garde provocations and culture wars – these themes of the unnatural and immoral have remained important to discussions of the grotesque. In this paper I use ideas about the grotesque to explain my manuscript *Entrance to a colonial pageant in which we all begin to intricate*. I will read the hybridity and flux of the grotesque as a form of resistance to the standardized body and language and ultimately stable subjectivity. In grotesque bodies and grotesque languages, I find a state of “becoming,” an unfinished state of flux. That which is supposed to be outside becomes inside; that which is natural becomes unnatural.

1.

In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson shows how print capitalism furthered the creation of nation states in the nineteenth century. Through such mass-produced texts as national newspapers, print capitalism helped standardize languages and erase or marginalize minor languages. As a result people from vastly different backgrounds were able to see themselves as

part of an “imagined community,” the nation state. Building on Anderson’s work, Lennard J. Davis has shown that the same process that held for the standardization of language was also true of the standardization of the subject. Just as the creation of nation states depended on standardized language, it also depended on the formulation of the “normal” or “able” body:

Is it a coincidence, then, that normalcy and linguistic standardization begin at roughly the same time? [... F]or the formation of the modern nation-state, not simply language but also bodies and bodily practices had to be standardized, homogenized, normalized.

(“Bodies” 101)

Davis argues that the role of art in this age is to cover up “the chaos of the body”: “... the fear of the unwhole body, of the altered body, is kept at bay by depictions of whole, systematized bodies – the nudes of Western art” (*Enforcing* 134). In *Entrance* I explore how the grotesque body and language undermine this social constraint of normality and completion.

Literature– and in particular poetry – played an important role in this process of nation-building. As Anderson notes, “there is a special kind of contemporaneous community which language alone suggests – above all in the form of poetry and songs” (132). In the essay “Discourse in the Novel,” Mikhail Bakhtin uses the term “monoglossia” to show how the purpose of poetry has become “creating within a heteroglossic natural language, the firm, stable linguistic nucleus of an officially recognized literary language” (*Dialogic* 667). Although language is in a constant state of flux of various languages and usages, poetry establishes the illusion that there is a constant center, a correct use of the language. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari make a similar point with “major” versus “minor” language: “The unity of language is fundamentally political. There is no mother tongue, only a power takeover by a dominant language” (*Plateaus* 101). In their formulation, major literature reinforces this illusion of a

central language. Behind the monoglossic, ableist major text is an assumption of a stable, complete body, subject and text.

It is against this stable subject and centralized language– which was at the core of the invention of the nation state – that a grotesque body and a grotesque language may be posited. In their book *Kafka: Toward A Minor Literature*, Deleuze and Guattari explore the interaction of the grotesque body and the minor usage of language. Not to be confused with (though not necessarily totally divorced from) minority literature, minor literature is a kind of “revolutionary” literature that undermines the stability of languages from within: “A minor literature doesn’t come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language” (16). Minor literature is not another language, but a way of making minor use of language, of pushing language from a disciplinary tool of establishing “being,” towards a “becoming,” an unfinished flux. While “major” literature strives to uphold the idea of language as signification, literature that follows the old Cartesian binary distinction between body and mind, as well as the old metaphysical idea of subjectivity, minor literature deterritorializes the “major” language and its “signification.”

Kafka deliberately kills all metaphor, all symbolism, all signification, no less than all designation. Metamorphosis is the contrary of metaphor. There is no longer any proper sense or figurative sense, but only a distribution of states that is part of the range of the word. The thing and other things are no longer anything but intensities overrun by deterritorialized sound or words that are following their line of escape. (22)

Part of the result of such minor usage of language is a physicalization of the language:

Since the language is arid, make it vibrate with a new intensity. Oppose a purely intensive usage of language to all symbolic or even significant or simply signifying

usages of it. Arrive at a perfect and unformed expression, a materially intense expression.

(19)

Because the signification-function is short-circuited, minor literature emphasizes the physical aspect of language. Just as Gregor Samsa's language becomes a kind of nonsensical buzzing, so Kafka's language becomes "materially intense."

The result of such a deterritorialization is inherently political, as it opposes the signifying structures that discipline the population: "There is nothing that is major or revolutionary except the minor. To hate all languages of masters... be a stranger within one's own language" (26). Minor language undoes the standardization of language which plays such an important role in nation-building.

The body is of central importance to Deleuze and Guattari. There are no "inner drives" or traditional interiority in Deleuze and Guattari; desire is created by assemblages that pull bodies into intersection with each other. Minoritizing pushes language toward becoming, toward the "Body without Organs." This body is constantly "becoming," in a state of flux, not stabilized – instead of an organism where every part works for the final whole, we get a body that is "constantly dismantling the organism, causing asignifying particles or pure intensities to pass or circulate..." (4). In this becoming of Bodies Without Organs, we can see a definite connection to the historical appearance of the grotesque: Gregor Samsa's "becoming-insect" is a modern incarnation of the grotesque hybrids that caused such a sensation in the Renaissance. Deleuze and Guattari write: "There is no longer man or animal, since each deterritorializes the other, in a conjunction of flux, in a continuum of reversible intensities" (22). The deterritorialized body is a grotesque body.

In *Rabelais and His World*, Mikhail Bakhtin famously argues for the liberatory politics of the grotesque. He claims that in the “becoming” of these metamorphizing bodies, the grotesque challenges a social order based on stable subjects. Bakhtin celebrates the grotesque body because “the grotesque . . . discloses the potentiality of an entirely different world, of another order, another way of life” (*Rabelais* 48). Like Deleuze and Guattari’s *Body Without Organs*, Bakhtin’s grotesque body “ignores the closed, smooth, and impenetrable surface of the body and retains only its excrescences (sprouts, buds) and orifices, only that which leads beyond the body’s limited space or into the body’s depths” (317–18). Like the *Bodies Without Organs*, Bakhtin’s grotesque body is not one of exchange, but permutation and interpenetration.

2.

The grotesque inevitably entails a discussion of the foreign and the normal. A large reason why the original grotesque art so fascinated the Renaissance painter was its startling foreignness (foreign in the midst of the familiar, as they discovered the grottoes beneath their own civilization, so to speak). But this is also why the grotesque has been so feared: it undermines simple binary distinctions between normal and abnormal. In her book *Skin Shows*, Judith Halberstam argues that the Gothic, a close relative of the Grotesque, undermines the division of normal and abnormal, natural and unnatural, by creating a monster, which in its constructedness reveals its own artificiality and thus the artificiality of the normal and non-monstrous. Halberstam writes: “...the artificiality of the monster denaturalizes in turn the humanness of its enemies” (106). I would argue that the grotesque works in similar ways. My book is an attempt to use the grotesque to break down the boundaries between normal and abnormal.

America's ultimate myth of normalcy is of course the suburban, nuclear family. This xenophobic idyll has been perpetuated since the 1950s, when advertisement and television shows tried to cover up the trauma caused by the war, as well as the undermining of gender roles caused by women having to take active roles in the war effort. Since the 1960s it has been used in a not so subtle attempt to discredit the social and political changes of the 1960s, a xenophobic and racist myth of original purity. It is also at the core of all "culture wars," treated as the center of our culture, a center that must be protected from the foreign and degenerate, much the way "English Only" is a protection against foreign languages.

This is in part why I have set *Entrance* in the mythical nuclear family. The characters of the nuclear family – the father, mother, daughter, son and a variety of girlfriends and boyfriends – are most of the prominent characters. However, the nuclear family has been disordered. For one thing, I collaged much of their dialogue from a nineteenth-century textbook called *Wonders of the Heavens, Earth and Ocean*, which struck me as imperialist in attitude. (The natural world and the non-Western world are treated with the same paternalistic curiosity.) So there is a parallax effect of the nuclear family being on a colonial adventure (which strictly speaking is correct, considering the American Dream was built over the destroyed cultures of Native Americans). Further complicating this situation, "the Natives" seem to be not colonial subjects but cliché Americans, asking questions on a video screen broadcast from a mall. In addition, their name is echoed in another set of characters, "The Parasites," who appear in a choir like "The Natives." In difference to natives, parasites are animals that invade a host organ; they are the opposite of native. I wanted the effect of this ambiguity to be to raise the question: Who is the native and who is the parasite?

The pageant takes the myth of the nuclear family from its highly striated, cliché location in the suburbs and moves it to an in-between state. As Geoffrey Galt Harpham notes, that “liminal” space is the space of the grotesque:

[A]lthough the grotesque is more comfortable in hell than in heaven, its true home is the space between, in which perfectly formed shapes metamorphose into demons. This mid-region is dynamic and unpredictable, a scene of transformation or metamorphosis. (8)

This interpretation is similar to Judith Halberstam’s description of the Gothic as an “invitation to a free zone of interpretative mayhem” (85). In Deleuze and Guattari’s words, the grotesque is a space of perpetual “becoming.”

Perhaps the most overt critique of the mythical nuclear family comes in the shape of the character “Miss World,” a young boy who is naked except for a baseball jersey. This character, which was based on a real life meeting in my neighborhood, appears to have been molested in some way and has an all-around violated aura:

I’ve had a shrapnel wound since I was 17 years old. A photographer forgot to cut his eye out after he saw my sign language. I made the sign for paranoia. The miscarriage was my dance-out craze. Nobody understands the American Dream like I understand assaults and blossoms surround in China. I was harmed. Hammered. The pig was me. Now I pilfer a garbled spectator and rehearse meat aura cinema. In the final scene I am groaning and complete like a retina. The flatbed is decorated with rosy hues and my nudity is decorated with 47 billion dollars of contaminated blankets. I’m Miss World and I’m more dissected than fetal. (58)

The “American Dream” with its nuclear family is here associated with “assaults” and violence (for example of the “contaminated blankets” of the war against Native Americans). Although

American culture is obsessed with the dangerous world that lurks beyond the borders of the nuclear family, the fact remains that the most common threats come from within those borders.¹ The perpetrators of sexual abuse are almost always either a member of the family or a close acquaintance, not some demonic outsider. This dark side of the American Family is also shown in the Father apparently trading in the Daughter to the Colonel, and in the overall colonial scheme.

As a reminder of the dark underbelly of the American family, Miss World could be seen as a cliché. For every myth about the purity of the nuclear family, there is a Hollywood movie exploring its dark and seamy underbelly. These are perhaps not two competing myths but flipsides of the same myth: in both cases the morality of the country is located in the family unit (as opposed to say the government or its policies). This is why I have not just written a story about child abuse, but I've tried to link it to other aspects of our country: the president, Hollywood, Colonialism. In a sense I've tried not to shatter the myth of the nuclear family (thus reinforcing the myth that morality is determined by the health of the family) but to subvert the striated and striating ideal of the nuclear family, opening up that rhetorical figure to a flux, moving it as it were towards a Body Without Organs, which is open to all kinds of politics and imagery from the world outside the family.

However, I also like the cliché-aspect of Miss World as the molested child because the cliché calls attention to its own artificiality. Miss World is associated with a high degree of artifice: he is washed in "pearls," he walks into a "Japanese room" (representing an orientalist foreignness which is associated with a high level of artificiality). His very body seems to have

¹ * 30-40% of victims are abused by a family member. (2, 44, 76)
* Another 50% are abused by someone outside of the family whom they know and trust.
* Approximately 40% are abused by older or larger children whom they know. (1, 44)

become artifice: his lungs are described as “honey-combed” and “intricate” as if they were just another piece of artifice. He is so artificial that his very name comes from the song “Miss World” by the 90s band Hole (“I’m Miss World, somebody kill me/ Kill me pills/.../...watch me break and watch me burn”) that suggests some of the same tensions between artifice and violence.

The connection to Hole goes beyond the mere name. Their lyrics and imagery get recalled frequently, not just by Miss World but also by other characters when they describe Miss World. For example, the Parasites refer to him as “cakey,” evoking the Hole song “Doll Parts.” The lyrics of this song include the following lines: “I am doll eyes, doll mouth, doll legs... I want to be the girl with the most cake... I fake it so real I am beyond fake...” While I have never particularly liked this band, I thought of them because their critique of “girlhood” and gender roles took the shape of a grotesque exaggeration of the ideals of the nuclear family: Courtney Love (the singer) would dress up in a little girl’s princess outfits, which juxtaposed with her adult (in both senses of the word) body with its heroin-dragged-out eyes and pale skin, created a dizzying effect that I wanted to replicate in my work. The foregrounded artificiality of Miss World and the juxtaposition of innocence and heroin-inspired fashion are also meant to invoke the feeling of religious and allegorical iconography. (“Miss World” is not just meant to evoke Hole but also another transvestite icon, Jean Genet’s *Our Lady of Flowers* from the novel of the same name.).

The artificiality – or the un-natural – is a key part of the way the grotesque challenges norms. By posing a very un-natural version of the world, the grotesque challenges us to see the “natural” as equally artificial. That is why David Lynch’s films are so successful: they exaggerate the behavior and characteristics associated with the American Dream to a grotesque

* Therefore, only 10% are abused by strangers.
(http://www.darkness2light.org/KnowAbout/statistics_2.asp)

level, showing how the dangerous world supposedly lurking “out there” is a kind of fantasy or extension of the fantasies “the normal America” has about itself. This is how Courtney Love and Hole used the grotesque and the American Dream as well. This is largely why I made this work a pageant. I think of the child beauty queen JonBenet Ramsey’s murder: how those grotesque shots of her acting “sexy” in beauty pageants seemed to automatically incriminate her mother and father. Her murder showed the perversity of the very “normal” act of pageants. The frequent response from the American tabloids was to retreat to the narrative of the “seamy underbelly”: to accuse the parents of abuse. My book suggests another way: the very accepted (and normal) act of exhibiting your daughter is unnatural, as un-natural as all of those acts (homosexual intercourse) and people (foreigners) that the myth of the “normal America” condemns (as unnatural). Or as Halberstam notes:

Gothic reveals the ideological stakes of bourgeois realism – namely, there is no one generic form that resembles “life” and another debased form that deviates from the natural order of things. There are only less or more fantastic costumes, less or more Gothic interpretations of reality (62).

In this pageant, the nuclear family is literally a costume. However, there is nothing that replaces the “natural order of things.”

(There is also a pun involved in the idea of a pageant. It refers not only to the beauty pageant but also to that other All-American pageant, the Christmas Pageant. Miss World here becomes both the Christ child and the molested child.)

3.

The other main character of the pageant, The Passenger, is a kind of double to Miss World. The pageant begins with The Passenger's statements, but as the pageant moves along he seems to nearly disappear into the strange world of the pageant, while Miss World comes on stage and takes over the central role of the second half of the production. The name of The Passenger is a reference to Michelangelo Antonioni's famous 1975 film *The Passenger*, starring Jack Nicholson as an American traveling in Africa who steals the identity of a dead man. I wanted to reference this film because it is part of a whole genre of colonial stories and films in which places like Africa and Asia provide an opportunity for Westerners to assume fake identities. The colonial world becomes a "tempest" where identities become more fluid (as in Shakespeare). This is why it is not clear who are the parasites and who are the natives. The Passenger begins the pageant by being inducted by an institution that is partially based on the Immigration Services (their kinds of questions) and a hospital. This is of course autobiographically based, suggesting some of the ways foreigners are policed into normalcy or cast out as "foreigners" in Suburban America. The grotesque offers a way out of this binary thinking (us versus them) by pushing the very nuclear family towards the Body Without Organs and its fluidity of identity and language.

This sense of hybridity and fluidity can be seen in the depictions of the bodies in this text. The body is at the center of this pageant, not just because the piece is a pageant (and thus all about looking at people's bodies and the clothes they cover them with) but because most of the individual statements are in some way about the depictions of the body. The bodies are never – as they often are in post-Romantic culture – icons of the "natural." They are cobbled together from a variety of sources, such as insect anatomies, flower parts and fashion. They are hybrid-bodies and hybrid-texts. The very title of the poem evokes this "fragmentation" and

deterritorialization, as well as the “fragmented body” of Davis’s disability theory. What does it mean to “intricate”? In this pageant it means to break down into parts that do not coalesce into an able, complete whole, but remain in pieces.

At the start of the pageant, the Passenger is still functioning as an illusory whole, stable subjectivity, but part of the price of becoming a foreigner, of immigrating into the world of the pageant, means to become cut up and monstrous. So in the very first poem the authorities ask him a series of questions. The questions start out with the kind of deceptively simple identity questions the Immigration Authorities ask immigrants: “Are you gay? Are you a terrorist? Are you a communist?” But these questions soon give way to stranger questions (“What do insects have to do with cinema? Can you hear me? Are we underwater? Can I kick you in the face? Why do your spasms look infantile? Do you know how to break a radio?”) which begin to move towards an instability of identity and body. The speaker is for example having spasms that look infantile. The speaker himself does not appear to be aware that he is even having spasms, much less that he’s underwater and has a bag over his head. To enter into this pageant means entering into a grotesque world of unstable bodies and subjectivities.

In the third piece of the pageant “The Girlfriend” describes the Passenger in words lifted largely from descriptions of insect anatomy:

The Passenger’s nervous system can be divided into a brain and the ventral nerve cord. The head capsule has six pairs of ganglia. The first three pairs are fused into the brain, while the three following pairs are fused into a structure called the subesophageal ganglion. The head capsule is also called the plague. He wears a bird mask to keep the ganglia from getting infected. The subesophageal ganglion is the part that gets most

infected. It looks like a black shell and it excretes a liquid. He has promised me the black shell and several other parts: the sound organ and the devour organ. (5)

This is mostly a quote from Wikipedia about insect anatomy applied to the Passenger's body. But the "headcapsule," a regular scientific term describing insect anatomy is deterritorialized by "the plague," which merges the modern scientific tract with allegorical, medieval imagery. The pun evokes the bird masks people used to wear in a now-discredited attempt to ward off the Bubonic Plague. The bird-beak casts the scientific "head capsule" in a new light, turning it into a medieval image. The insect body is merged with a historical masquerade image, while the scientific language merges with fable-like language. Thus it is not only the human body but the supposedly objective, normal language of science that is upended.

4.

The very language of *Entrance* is a hybrid, including many collaged and appropriated texts. The nuclear family speaks in the cut-up version of the nineteenth-century textbook *Wonders of the Heavens, Earth and Ocean*. One of the Repulsive Man's statements is a collage of, among other texts, that same textbook (the chapter about colonies in Africa) and an anatomical text:

The human body has three kinds of valves: univalves, two-valves and multivalves. Sometimes it contains the shells that are used as receptacles for water. The natives use it for marital horns. The Colonel left behind a snuff box made of this material. I am more interested in the tumor that spiraled like gems! The tumor has no interior bones. It exhausts two horses in less than five minutes. (11)

In this way, the colonial body – exhibited, categorized in the nineteenth century – merges with the medicalized body – graphed and ordered in medical books. In a collaged text there is always a radical incompleteness: they are “fragmented bodies” in the sense that their context is missing (it’s elsewhere). There is always something missing: what was left behind in the original text.

I have tried to push the collaged quality into the very language and syntax of the pieces. In difference to what Bakhtin calls poetry’s monoglossic function – to uphold the centripetal illusion of a central language – I have tried to use language centrifugally, not only to include other languages than the poetic language (scientific language, textbook language, the language of pop music) but to embrace the noise and errors of language.

I have tried to use my native Swedish, not by including actual Swedish words, but in a way close that the way Deleuze and Guattari argue that Kafka used Yiddish: “a nomadic movement of deterritorialization that reworks German” (*Kafka* 25). On the level of individual words, I have used the Swedish practice of compounds words, as in “crashbrilliant close-ups” (59). In that phrase I place a neologism next to a hyphenated word so that the two will work off each other. “Close-ups” is a standard word, but I place it next to an un-conventional neologism like “crashbrilliant” to undo the seeming naturalness of this term. The goal is to denaturalize the English language the way grotesque hybrid bodies denaturalize the “natural” body.

Other times I use Swedish syntax patterns to denaturalize the English. The sentence “Soldiers are disordered with necklaces” follows the Swedish phrase for stupid – “dum i huvudet” (“dumb in the head”). There are many such odd phrases that in many ways depend on “translations” of Swedish words or sentence structures. In fact I did translate several phrases back and forth between the languages. In this use of translation I follow the German Romantic idea (later picked up by Benjamin in “The Task of the Translator”) of using translation not to

domesticate a foreign text, but to use a foreign text to expand the target language. However, I would modify this idea slightly: I do not seek to expand the English language, but to make the English language permeable. As Lawrence Venuti has pointed out, the most common criticism against translated texts is that they remain foreign-sounding, that they have not been properly domesticated (Venuti 18). We live in a literary culture in which Robert Frost's maxim "Poetry is what is lost in translation" may be the most famous and widely held belief. This belief represents the monoglossic ideal of poetry as a true core of language and culture. In these pieces I have embraced the loss of a fluid-seeming language; I have made my poetry that which is not poetry according to Frost's definition.

As many critics have noted, the modernist practice of collage taken to the extreme becomes "the readymade" of early avant-gardists Marcel Duchamp and Francis Picabia. Some sections in the pageant are indeed hardly altered at all but merely brought into the pageant as readymades.

The Martyr (played by a skinny man – and when I say skinny I mean as in photographs of mass graves – who is punished for the crimes of the nation in a disgusting posture):

In placental mammals, the umbilical cord (also called the birth cord or funiculus umbilicalis) is the connecting cord from the developing embryo or fetus to the placenta. Developed from the same zygote as the fetus, the umbilical cord normally contains two arteries (the umbilical arteries) and one vein (the umbilical vein), buried within Wharton's jelly. The umbilical vein supplies the fetus with oxygenated, nutrient-rich blood from the placenta. Conversely, the umbilical arteries return the deoxygenated, nutrient-depleted blood. (86)

This section comes from a Wikipedia entry for “mammals.” As in Duchamp’s readymades, the title becomes highly important. The ridiculous, highly artificial-seeming, religious “Martyr” (who is of course not a martyr but merely a dubious person playing a martyr) speaks a supposedly “neutral” language of science. But the title and the context of the text within the pageant ask the reader to read the science as poetry. We begin to see the artifice in a language that is supposedly neutral.

If the readymade, as Michael North argues in *Camera Works*, was the result of the feeling that photography had made a work of art of all of reality – had turned every aspect of daily life into a potential work of art – then perhaps my use of readymade could be said to be a response to the Internet Era, which has brought together various languages (scientific, technological, pop music) through a “web” or a rhizome where everything is connected. Poetry cannot maintain its monoglossic function of keeping language pure, when the reader can always click into another discourse. The monoglossic idea of poetic is ruined, and everything becomes potentially poetry. The act of navigating through the Internet can be said to be a hybridizing act. Texts become monstrous: interpenetratable and perpetually incomplete.

This collage element of the text does not necessarily need to be seen entirely in the tradition of the historical avant-garde. Another way to view it is in the tradition of the grotesque and, that related convention, the Gothic. This is what Judith Halberstam writes about the patched-together quality of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*:

The cannibalism of Gothic form, its consumption of its own sources, allows for the infinitude of interpretation because each fear, each literary source, each desire, each historical event, each social structure that the text preys upon becomes fuel for the manufacture of meanings. (34)

The two traditions are not separate but largely intertwined, perhaps most clearly in nineteenth-century figures like Comte de Lautremont and Arthur Rimbaud, but also in such twentieth-century avant-gardists as Richard Huelsenbeck (with his *Fantastic Prayers*) and Max Ernst's bird-monsters in his various collage books, not to mention the German Expressionists.²

5.

There is a sense of hybridity in the very structure of the pageant, which does not cohere into a narrative but remains largely fragmented. Instead of, for example, a play, where the various lines expose motivations, stabilize and develop character, react to other lines, and situate the present moment in the temporal device of a plot, we are given isolated monologues. In Walter Benjamin's famous formulation about Dada, my goal was not to give the viewer/reader a chance for "contemplation" but instead to offer a "distracting" aesthetic based on "ballistics" (238).

Benjamin argues that Dadaism wanted to create an effect similar to cinema, but as Thomas Elsaesser has argued, what Dadaism was nostalgically searching for was not merely cinema, but an experience of early cinema, which he describes like this:

In a typical program, say in Berlin in 1913 (but surviving in the suburbs well into the early 1920s), non-narrative films would be mixed with sketches and fantasies. The Kaiser (or Hindenburg) would be shown on parade right after a filmed variety number. The items would be introduced, a lecturer would stand at the back of the room or hall and comment sarcastically or pathetically on the action, explain, or provide the kind of epic distance that Brecht, copying from the cinema tried to create in his theater. There was

² It is also noteworthy that the grotesque artists of the historical avant-garde were indicted by the Nazis precisely for their questioning of normalcy and the natural, leading to the Degenerate Art

little sense of "illusionism" or any suspension of disbelief. Skepticism and sarcasm mingled freely with wonder and amazement. (18)

During the actual time period of Dadaism, Elsaesser argues, film had already moved away from this early experience, in which "[s]kepticism and sarcasm mingled freely with wonder and amazement," to one closer to the contemporary model, in which the effect is much more absorbing (18). The Dada film experience is thus something more like montage. Although Elsaesser argues that Surrealism engages with the later form of cinematic experience, we can also see this montage-like experience of cinema in André Breton's recollections of going in and out of different movies with Jacques Vaché based on chance and interest:

[Jacques Vaché] would enter a movie theatre without knowing what was playing, watch the film for a few minutes, and then leave – repeating this procedure, in the course of an evening, at all the theatres in town... Much later [Breton] would write: "I have never known anything more magnetizing. What was important was that we came out 'charged' for a few days." (Rosemont 9-10)

As in Breton's and the Dada movie-going experiences, it is more than the actual film that matters; it is the experience of entering the darkened theater, sitting in a crowd, and leaving before the film is finished. That is one reason I decided to make this poem a pageant – to create a space where bodies could distract and be engaged. As in early cinema, I think my pageant – should it ever be performed – would have a similar effect. Because the different statements are so separate, because they don't build into an absorbing story, they invite distraction and conversation; the audience would likely start to talk in between various characters appearing on

exhibitions in Nazi Germany.

the stage in their garbs. In this way the pageant might be said to follow Francis Picabia's example when he created the spectacle *Relâche*.

In his book *The Artwork Caught by the Tail*, George Baker argues against the common view that *Relâche* was a twentieth century version of that most troublesome concept, the Wagnerian idea of "total art," a completely absorbing form of spectacle. Rather, Baker sees the following in *Relâche*:

Forms, mediums - even objects and beings - come together in *Relâche* and *Entr'acte*.

Connection and relation are surely at stake. But the mediums come together precisely not to unite, to become One, to become newly Total. Rather they split each other apart. They interrupt each other's limits, in order to be rendered, quite precisely, multiple. Forms come together in Picabia's project to break each other open. They consolidate nothing.

Instead, they undo each other's medium conventions, disrupting what we might call the Law that each form excludes in order to define its operation... (330)

In difference to the "totality" of Wagner, Picabia creates a spectacle that does not cohere, the parts remaining heterogeneous. This is in large part what I wanted the effect of *Entrance* to be – a spectacle that never coheres into a totality, that distracts.

6.

I have so far discussed mainly the influence of the historical avant-garde, but clearly this is not my only influence. One of my major influences was contemporary Swedish poet Aase Berg and especially her second book, *Dark Matter*. Berg herself has a complex relationship to the historical avant-garde. Her artistic trajectory began in the mid-eighties, at the tail end of the Social Democratic welfare state, when she joined the Surrealist Group of Stockholm. In many

ways this group followed core Surrealist beliefs: they privileged games and trance-like exercises over the creation of capital-L Literature.

However, the group's main opposition was not – as with the historical Surrealism of André Breton – to Fascism or the overtly repressive governing forms of the capitalism of the first half of the twentieth century, but rather to the administrative and hygienic manipulations of the Swedish welfare state and the all-pervasive ideology of late capitalism. In contrast to Breton, the Stockholm Group is more concerned with the state of the body than with the unconscious. They seldom even mention the unconscious. Instead, throughout the writings of Berg and her fellow Surrealists, the grotesque body is used as a trope of opposition to the health-based ideology of the Swedish welfare state.³ Berg and the group saw the grotesque and the flawed, the ugly and disabled, as a form of realism, opposed to the idyllic, idealistic and insular culture of welfare capitalism.

Berg herself draws direct and indirect connections between grotesque and opposition to the health-founded ideology of the welfare state. When Berg titles her 1999 essay “It’s Not OK To Be A Fatso,” she is already in dialogue with the corporeal obsessions of the welfare state. To write in an excessive, minor way is in a sense to be willfully unhealthy, or obese. Berg argues that “[p]oetry is about letting oneself get damaged, hurt, and withstanding the least normal version of reality; it’s about NEVER being able to recognize oneself.” In a culture that has been driven by a Social Democratic focus on the healthy body, she asserts that art should damage the body, make it unnatural. In a 2005 interview with the American literary journal *The Bitter Oleander*, Berg says: “This is the only thing I know: it’s just a matter of questioning everything you consider normal, natural or self-evident, and never stop.” Furthering her rhetoric of illness,

she traces her entry into literature, as a young member of the notorious Surrealist Group of Stockholm, to the exploration of “the schizophrenic world” (Roth 50). In other words, she advocates art that does not fulfill its modern role of creating an illusion of the complete, natural body, but one that shows the human body as damaged and, in Davis’s terms, “fragmented.”

By the early 1990s, the Social Democratic government was collapsing, ushering in an era of neo-conservatism. The illusion of the caring welfare home was rapidly being pulled down. In “Ruese,” Berg notes that it is the collapse of the welfare state that has given rise to this new diseased body. As the welfare state collapsed, its illusions came to an end as well:

The 90s is characterized by a fear which was foreboded by the extreme hygienic revolution of the 1980s. To go to the tanning booth, shower every morning and stay anorexic were a few of the expressions of the new bacteria-fear. It was a matter of pupating, shutting oneself into the hygiene and TV machines. The 90s are suffering from hangover because of this antiseptic hot-air-balloon existence. There is a war in the Balkans, we are ugly, shitty, and broke, sloppy in the flesh again. But wasn’t everything going to be good when the wall fell? Yes, we’re in agony. The world is infected by deadly bacteria and cancer.

Here, grotesque imagery is a kind of realism, uncovering the harsh truths the welfare state covered-up in its cozy “pupa.” Berg wants to take the opportunity afforded by the economic struggles of the welfare state to expose the lies of the national culture. She wants to show people that they are actually “sloppy in the flesh” and that the world is “infected by deadly bacteria and cancer.” The collapse releases Berg and the Surrealist Group’s monstrous bodies, much like Deleuze and Guattari described the collapse of empires after World War I: “The breakdown and

³ The Swedish term for the welfare state is “välfärdshemmet” or “folkhemmet.” That is, “the welfare home” or the “people’s home” – suggesting that it was not a government or state, but in

fall of the empire increases the crisis, accentuates everywhere movements of deterritorialization, and invites all sorts of complex reterritorializations – archaic, mythic, or symbolist” (*Kafka* 24). As in the breakdown of the European empires of the 1910s, the breakdown of the Swedish welfare state seems to have released deterritorializations, especially concerning that central metaphor of the welfare state, the healthy body.

In the joint essay “Surrealismen i den Yttersta Tiden” (“Surrealism at the Edge of Time”), first published in the group’s journal *Stora Saltet* in 1996, Berg and Mattias Forshage write that Surrealism “doesn’t solve anything, but it continues to create zones where something interesting can take place.” This is all Surrealism can settle for in the supersaturated world of late capitalism. At the end of the article, Berg and Forshage describe such a zone:

And maybe with this journal [*Stora Saltet*] we can put some ants in the head of one or another half-dead guinea-pig brain (ourselves not excluded), plant one or another derangement or short-circuit... Surrealism on the outer edge of time: unreasonable, compromising, conspiring, confused, monotonous, blood-thirsty. Meet us with the lemurs, on the blood-stained backstreets or in those parks that are still ugly.

In this search for these “zones,” Berg and Forshage evoke not just the spatial experience of the grottoes of the original grotesque, but also the Surrealist practice of searching out un-modernized buildings around Paris. In contrast to Breton, the Stockholm Surrealists do not call for a revolution; they advocate “compromising” and being “confused” – two qualities that seem far from Breton’s heroic visions. Instead of the Major artistic-political revolution, these late surrealists imagine surrealism as a minor, revolutionary force found from within. Their models are not high literary heroes but “desperate zombie-losers.” They abolish Breton’s majoritarian

fact an extension of the family.

stance – and the implications of the military metaphor of “the avant-garde” – in favor of a minor “garde,” a literature that critiques by collapsing, by becoming grotesque, less than human.

The grotesque lemurs appear with some frequency in Berg’s second book *Mörk Materia* (*Dark Matter*, 1999). In a statement written for the American online journal *Double Room*, Berg writes that this book was based on “hallucinations” and that the result was “sickeningly kitschy” (“A Poetic Statement” 56). These are poems that are not only tasteless, but unhealthy, thus locating them in that nexus of good taste and healthiness that formed the basis for the cultural revolution of the welfare state.

As in “Surrealism at the Edge of Time,” swarms of lemurs provide a kind of poetics statement for *Dark Matter*, most prominently in the two poems “Röntgen” (“X-Ray”) and “Purgatorius, Indri.” As in the manifesto, these lemurs only appear “in rare frequencies” (31). As in the manifesto, Berg combines the cuteness of the animal with a “bloodthirsty” quality: The “x-ray” sound they make is “deadly,” capable of “tearing apart the eardrum” and “break[ing] through the structure of the middle ear.” Rather than defining the poems as the Romantic “voice,” that icon of authenticity, which comes from the inner soul of the poet, Berg’s poetry is unnatural: it is not a human voice but a frequency – both machine-like and associated with animals. This conflation of machine, animal and human is, as we shall see, indicative of the overall project of the book. Moreover, the sound can barely be heard; it is more physical than sonic. Perhaps more importantly, this is not poetry that tries to preserve the ideal of a stable subject; its purpose is to undo that illusion, to damage, even to kill.

Based on this poem, the entire book could be said to follow an “x-ray” aesthetics that perforates and cuts up the human skin and flesh. The most prominent artistic expression of Swedish National Romanticism is Karl Larsson’s paintings of nude people bathing in a wooded

lake, as icons of the natural and true. Berg does not merely avoid this imagery (as the Swedish Marxist poets of the 1960s did when they called for a poetry of the city, excluding both nature and the body) but perverts it, exaggerating the natural body beyond recognition. In National Romanticism the healthy, naked body represents authenticity and health, removed from all the artifice and disease of modern culture. Berg's poetry is hyperbolically Romantic: it does not just show nudity, it goes through the skin and flesh like an x-ray, finding and exploiting the welfare state's contradiction of Romantic and medicalized views of the human body. In Berg's poetry the Romantic body is so natural it becomes unnatural. In "Life Form" the speaker asks about her body:

Where does this mass end? I seek my way in through the strata to find the core of my plasma soaked in juices, to find the core of the bodyflesh despite the outer, surrounding flesh, the stable surface of the naked body, a sort of human here inside the bluing, plant-growing. (21)

We see the result of this x-ray aesthetic, which goes through the "stable surface of the naked body," in the constant references and images of the interior of the human being – the cartilage, the bones and heart. Too much attention to the natural body makes a grotesque out of the natural, undermines the very illusion of the natural.

These depictions of the interior of the body are far from anatomically correct. In her perversion of the human body, Berg not only moves through the skin to the interior, she also disorders this interior. The body is rearranged so that, for example, we get "the blue ventricles of the tongue" (22) or "the fetus-plasma grows in her ribcage" (23). The result is close to a literalization of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the Body Without Organs: Berg's body is a fluid body, where the organs are not "organized." Like Bakhtin's idea of the grotesque, Berg's

body is full of orifices and holes. The very skin is perforated erotically, undermining the idea of an enclosed human body (or text).

Returning to the original grotesque, Berg merges this Body Without Organs with animal parts as well as plants, insects and non-living physical objects, even theoretically scientific matters, like “dark matter.” For example, in “Life Form,” the speaker refers to her “bird body,” and throughout the book the speaker engages in “snail kisses” – as if the very lips were made of snails (22). In “4.4 The Animal Gap,” Berg gives us a vision of this grotesque body:

I moved myself forward through Dovre’s nobuspheres. The particles that had rushed through thin capillaries. Where Ivo was led in toward the machines in the heart of our heavy meeting. Where chains beat hard against the steering-veil of the form. It was so close to going bad apart here in our body’s cathedrals. We saw each other’s faces like bladders beneath the membranes, a sunken city of singing fossils anemones. (42)

Here the poem moves through outer space (nobuspheres) to find scientific “particles” that are actually coming out of the inside of human bodies (“capillaries”). By going out into space, the poem ends up in the “heart.” But importantly, the heart is not the natural heart of Romanticism, but includes a “machine” inside a body that equated with a “cathedral” (perverting the Romantic cliché of the body being the temple of the soul). The faces are insides the membranes. The distinctions of natural and unnatural, complete and fragmented are undermined. Berg creates, as one of the book’s section titles has it, an “antibody” to the official welfare body. This “antibody” is a body that works as an antidote to the disciplinary naturalness of the welfare state, damaging and fragmenting the illusion of the able, autonomous body, turning it from medicalized stability into fluid, obscure “dark matter”.

Berg creates this antibody largely through a cinematic use of montage and collage. The human body is collaged with descriptions of science and botany. It is an aesthetics of cut-and-paste: a monster aesthetics. We can see this in the very form of these poems. They are largely in prose, and they proceed not through discursive or narrative arcs, but through a radical addition of sentences and words. They give the impression of having been collaged together – they lack the suture of conventional film. The cuts are left bare. The reader gets an accumulation of images (of the human body, architecture, marine animals etc) that are hard to hold together in one's mind (as I noted above, we go from outerspace to the inside of the human being in a matter of one sentence; snail replace lips). The result both in terms of the imagery and the very language of the work is horrific for the same reason Lennard Davis says that Frankenstein's monster is horrific: "What is found to be truly horrifying about Frankenstein's creature is its composite quality, which is too evocative of the fragmented body" (*Enforcing* 145).

This fragmented body is not held together by a traditional lyrical interiority of the speaker. Just as the "x-ray" seems to be coming both from a machine and a swarm of lemurs – not a voice that comes from within – the speaker of these poems does not seem to have an interiority. She enumerates acts and visions: I do this, I do that; I see this; I see that. She does not reflect on her feelings about these events. Because she shows no sign of memory or narrative continuity, she may be more than one speaker. Each poem could be several speakers ("Aase-we" she calls the speaker in the second to last poem of the book). The very concept of a "speaker" becomes pointless. Although the book at times purports to be a love poem of sorts, the love object changes not only name but "form." At times the love object may be "Ivo," at other times he is "Alexander." At one point the speaker notes: "Here Ivo changes form into Alexander" (51). It is as if the name itself was the same as "form." This is complicated in "4.5 In Reactor," where

“Ivo” becomes “Leatherface” and “Golem,” monstrous figures composed of sewn-together body-parts.

For Deleuze and Guattari, multiplicity is important because it undoes the old scheme of Otherness: “It was created precisely in order to escape the abstract opposition between the multiple and the one, to escape dialectics, to succeed in conceiving the multiple in a pure state.” This is the model of Berg’s grotesque: out of the pathological, the crisis, open up new “zones where something interesting can take place,” where new models of figuration can take place.

Much as in Deleuze and Guattari’s reading of *The Metamorphosis*, Berg’s grotesque bodies are closely tied to a grotesque, minor language. Much the way Deleuze and Guattari argue that Kafka took certain elements of Prague-German and exaggerated them, Berg amplifies certain features of the Swedish language.⁴ The most striking of these features may be her use of compound words. Just as she collages together images and sentences, so she forges together striking neologisms, such as “korngränshuden” (“grainborderskin”) and “läderömsningen” (“the leather-shedding”) (43). The official Swedish language allows for neologisms to be created in this way, but Berg’s use of this rule is exaggerated; as with the image-montages, the words are not sutured. The words not only sound unnatural, they look unnatural. One result of this denaturalizing of the Swedish language is that the reader begins to break down standard compound words, discovering within the standard language a strange new language. For example, in the sentence after the one that contains the “grainborderskin,” we get the standardized term for reptiles, “kräldjur.” But Berg’s denaturalized use of compound words has taught the reader to read these compounds in an unsutured way. We may thus read the two

⁴ “A minor literature doesn’t come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language. But the first characteristic of minor literature in any case is that in its language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization.” (*Kafka* 16)

components of this compound: “kräl” (“crawl”) and “djur” (“animal”). Instead of a reptile, we get a grotesque “crawl animal.”

Further de-naturalizing the Swedish language, Berg invents and half-invents all kinds of Old-Nordic-sounding words, while bringing in a variety of languages to deterritorialize the Swedish language. I am using the term “languages” the way Bakhtin does, to include any number of standard languages, such as Berg’s puns that move between Swedish and English, as well as non-poetic discourses like science fiction and theoretical science. We can say that she uses these foreign languages much like Kafka uses Yiddish, “as a nomadic movement of deterritorialization that reworks the [Swedish] language” (*Kafka* 25). The most obvious example of her use of foreign languages are times when she actually uses Norwegian or English names and words in her poems. She uses a wide array of Norwegian names, such as “Dovre,” as well as old-fashioned Swedish words like “myling” (the malevolent spirit of an unborn child) that function as a foreign language (thus pointing out the fluidity of language itself). She also includes many English words like “*beyond*” and “Leatherface.” These two terms are doubly foreign. They are English words, but they are allusions to cheap C-movie horror flicks (“*Beyond*” is the title of an Italian horror film, while “Leatherface” is a character from *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*). When the speaker of *Dark Matter* calls out for her lover, “Come Leatherface” the English name functions as a pseudonym for the lover (his name elsewhere is “Ivo”); the English language functions as a kind of mask on the Swedish (like the *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* character who wears a leather mask). English may seem to be a kind of masquerade, but like a drag show it is not clear whether the costume is any less true than what is beneath, for the same poem includes such radically un-natural words as ““grainborderskin,” a word that sounds oddly already-translated.

As Daniel Sjölin has noted, *Dark Matter* is in many ways a revision of canonical poet Harry Martinsson's national epic *Aniara* (Sjölin iii), which was published in 1963. Martinsson's epic tells the story of a post-disaster world. The spaceship *Aniara* gets knocked off course and ends up floating away from the solar system. While floating through space, the passengers' only consolation comes from Miman, a TV-like super-computer that shows the crew and the passengers images from home as well as other distant worlds. Unfortunately Miman one day happens to come upon images from the nuclear devastation of their home-world of Dorisburg. The horror of these images causes the computer to burn out. Martinsson's allegory seems to be not just about the alienation in the modern world and the dangers of nuclear arms, but also a metaphor for the Swedish welfare state – which was during the 1950s and 60s peaking in material wealth (including the spread of television), but was largely isolated from the rest of the world. Martinsson's repeated reference to the ship as a “sarcophagus” evokes a similar feeling as Berg's reference to the welfare state as a “pupa” – isolated, fragile and helpless. But in difference to Martinsson's “sarcophagus,” Berg's “pupa” leaves the possibility of rebirth, of the inhabitants breaking out of their enclosure.

Martinsson's book presents a series of binaries - the real of the world against the incomprehensibility and wonder of outer space, the human against technology, the inside against the outside and, implicitly, Sweden against the rest of the world – which Berg breaks down. In *Dark Matter* it is unclear what is natural and unnatural, human and inhuman, whether the speaker is an “android” or human, a “hermaphrodite” or reproductive woman. In Berg's poem “*Aniara*,” an android/human/monster watches *Aniara* soar by in the sky while feeding her infant “black skim.” The icon of the natural and human – the nursing mother – becomes strange and

grotesque.⁵ Becoming-technology, or becoming-android in Berg's poem is not what we might expect of technology and robots – over-rational, cold, unemotional – but rather “becoming-molecular,” becoming saturated in images and language, or “dark matter.”

Like the original *Aniara*, Berg's book straddles narrative and poetry: it is part in prose, part in verse (very old-fashioned verse at times). The book features Tom Benson's strange visual photo-collages that interact with the texts. Further, the book breaks the sarcophagus-containment of the monoglossic text by featuring connections to web pages on the Internet, including photographs and texts. Berg called these “metastaser” after metastasis, the cancerous cells that spread from one organ to the next. In Swedish, the word echoes “extaser” – ecstasies. And the book seems driven by a certain ecstasy of mutation and disease. In an interview from the time of the book's publication, Berg claims that these Internet portals were meant to provide numerous “entryways” into the text (Smith and Zachrisson 36-37). With its constant movements and mutations, Berg's book is reminiscent of the connectivity of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizomatic map:

It fosters connections between fields, the removal of blockages on bodies without organs, the maximum opening of bodies without organs onto a plane of consistency. It is itself a part of the rhizome. The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modifications... Perhaps one of the most important characteristics of the rhizome is that it always has multiple entryways. (12)

Like Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the map, Berg's grotesquerie undermines linearity with her multiple entryways and her vision of the book as being not isolated like a sarcophagus but intertwined and interpenetrated by readers and society.

⁵ It also evokes the “black milk” of Paul Celan's canonical holocaust poem “Todesfuge,” evoking that most horrific of crises.

As the reference to “Leatherface” indicates, *Dark Matter* cannibalizes source texts and genre. It is a “monstrous” book. It is not a critique of Martinsson’s *Aniara*, as much as a permutation of the earlier book. And it imbibes all kinds of languages and vocabularies, creating a highly heteroglossic, unruly assemblage of languages and images. It is a text that cannot be contained in a sarcophagus, but is continually mutating and making new connections.

7.

In a manifesto called “Find Us With the Lemurs: Disability and the Språkgrotesk,” Joyelle McSweeney and I call for a grotesque surrealism based in large part on Aase Berg’s poetry and ideas. We called it “Soft Surrealism” after a phrase coined by Ron Silliman. On his blog, Silliman has long been disparaging “soft surrealism” as insufficiently political and serious. By “Soft Surrealism,” Silliman means primarily poets like Charles Simic and James Tate. His problem with this vague group of writers is that “soft surrealism permits disruptions at the level of plot & character, but never at the level of poet-reader relations, where the power relations of writing remain unchallenged.” According to Silliman, soft surrealism is superfluous and ornamental, unable to bring about real change in the politics of the reader-writer relationship. That is to say, Soft Surrealism makes claim to an avant-garde status (it is after all Surrealism) without following the Language Poets’ argument about the need to change the power relations between reader and writer.

In this term, Silliman relies on a sexist rhetoric: serious poetry is hard and masculine, unserious poetry is soft and feminine. There is also an ableist element: the healthy, complete, progressive political poetry versus the unhealthy, obese Surrealism. The irony of the statement is that he ends by proposing that “hard” poetry is “constantly becoming,” a process that would

render it soft and incomplete. McSweeney and I decided to turn this piece of rhetoric on its head and call for a soft surrealism that is grotesque, soft and permeable rather than strong and masculine:

We admit a fatso poetry, lemur poetry, disabled poetry, språkgrotesk. A softness, malformation, which may be penetrated, distended by multiple languages from multiple directions, which is a process, which undermines hierarchies of wellness and illness, ability and disability, which is becoming, minor and non-exemplary.

We discard the traditional avant-garde, militaristic desire for complete revolution, in favor of a poetics of “confusion” (as Berg notes in her manifesto quoted above), a grotesque body that rather than invade opens itself up to the foreign and chaotic. It is precisely in the softness – the quality Silliman derides – that we find poetry subversive. This is exemplified in the very manifesto by our use of foreign languages (for example “språkgrotesk”).

It is in this idea of “Soft Surrealism” that I would ultimately place *Entrance to a colonial pageant in which we intricate*. In this pageant I have tried not to didactically attack American myths of normalcy or American imperialistic notions; instead I have wanted to create an obese text, which takes in various languages and positions, and which breaks down rather than invades (whether with the advanced troops or the main army). But this breaking down perhaps offers a different sort of critique, a minor critique that takes place in the distorted voice of people who turn into cockroaches and other grotesque hybrids.

This stance connects various avant-garde practices to that absolutely-not-new genre of the grotesque and the gothic. In *Skin Shows*, Halberstam writes:

This book will argue that Gothic novels are technologies that produce the monsters as a remarkably mobile, permeable, and infinitely interpenetratable body. The monster’s

body, indeed, is a machine that, in its Gothic mode, produces meaning and can repeat any horrible trait that the reader feeds into the narrative. (21)

This soft and “interpenetrable” monster body is the threat to both the strictly striated normalcy of the myth of the American nuclear family and the ableist rhetoric of Ron Silliman’s “hard” avant-gardism. Instead of seeking to conquer and set up alternative hierarchies, I aim for a poetry that breaks down into a state of becoming, a Body Without Organs that is permeated by different languages and dialects.

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CHAPTER 2

EXPLANATION

The main scene should be full of ornaments and crime.

What the characters wear is more important than what they say. The words attributed to the characters do not necessarily have to be spoken; they can be acted out, or played on an archaic tape-player.

The second stage is an abandoned factory in downtown South Bend, IN, where during the entire performance my daughter Sinead dances while changing in and out of various costumes: the Hare Mask, the Cartoon Face, the Red Robe of History, the Reversible Body. She is only once actually seen by the audience, on a video screen streaming live from her dance. Mostly she is hidden because she represents that which is hidden.

The third stage is a mall, where the Natives stand still, watching, interviewing and photographing the Customers. Sometimes I feel a certain tenderness towards the Natives. Other times I want to stab them in their plug-ugly faces.

CHAPTER 3

ENTRANCE TO A COLONIAL PAGEANT IN WHICH WE ALL BEGIN TO INTRICATE

The Passenger:

I was admitted. I had to answer questions. Are you gay? Are you a terrorist? Are you a communist? I answered No to all the questions. After a while I started noticing that the questions had changed. What do insects have to do with cinema? Can you hear me? Are we underwater? Can I kick you in the face? Why do your spasms look infantile? Do you know how to break a radio? But I kept answering no. Because that's what I wanted to hear myself say with that bag over my face.

The Passenger:

The nurse shaved my head before the operation. During the operation the doctor handed her rags soaked in blood. Most of the time he handed her the rags behind my head but after a while he seemed to forget about that technicality and I could see how much blood was pouring out of my head. That felt good. Afterwards she told me to sit still for a couple of minutes before I got up. I had lost a lot of blood.

The Girlfriend (*her body covered with severe burns*):

The Passenger's nervous system can be divided into a brain and the ventral nerve cord. The head capsule has six pairs of ganglia. The first three pairs are fused into the brain, while the three following pairs are fused into a structure called the subesophageal ganglion. The head capsule is also called the plague. He wears a bird mask to keep the ganglia from getting infected. The subesophageal ganglion is the part that gets most infected. It looks like a black shell and it excretes a liquid. He has promised me the black shell and several other parts: the sound organ and the devour organ.

Father (*speaks to a crowd of shell-shocked victims, with a camera flashing in his face*):

My daughter is white-alive and appeases the Colonel. It's a breakthrough. Porcelain-like, she has kissing diseases and the Colonel takes the hint. Gives her three pounds of beads. My daughter does not want to give up any teeth. A piece of ivory hangs ahead of us, I tell my daughter softly to convince her to relent. American teeth are made for microphones; American bullets are made for fashion. I tell this to my daughter while gesturing toward the Colonel. He has recruited survivors to carry his infant representations. The survivors's knees are permanently bent and their torsos are covered with scars. My favorite scar is on the tip of a breast where a nipple was torn off.

Father Exchange (*while Daughter wraps gauzes around his limbs*):

My daughter whispers while gesturing toward the helicopters. She has a harelip and is the host of various organisms. She will not die of Scarlet Fever despite the virus's intricate makeup. The virus has infiltrated the Colonel but he is still neat around his loins. I cannot infiltrate an albino. I cannot endorse the new torture operations. My daughter finds crustaceans on the shore. Her living flesh is heroic. Her principle enemy, Man.

Daughter (*television-horny*):

Mother is selling obscene figurines. The landscape sweeps majestically from one tropical scene to another. I am too hungry to be a ringleader. Too captured to be royal. When we had reassembled all the children, they brought forth nothing more fantastic than this kind of architecture: sluggish, mute, diminutive, spoils of organisms, colossal, perished thousands, impregnated shores, and tiny shells mingled with seaweed.

The Natives (*ask these questions of the most beautiful people they can find in a mall*):

1. What is your favorite building?
2. Would you ever consider tattooing an image of that building on your body?
3. If so, where would the tattoo be located on your body?
4. If not, why not?
5. What is your favorite instrument?
6. What is your favorite body part?
7. Have you ever had bleeder's disease?
8. Do you ever have nightmares? If so, please describe them.

The Passenger (*with a hood over his head*):

If there's one thing I've learned from the other refugees in the erotic ward it is how to perform operations on the ganglia and ovules of certain exotic flowers. Most of the operations involve cinema. We sit there shuddering in the dark watching balloon-like images of the native bodies. The officials have even started to call our room the balloon room. We call it the rancid room on account of the stench.

The Repulsive Man:

I'm a promoter. I promote things like chronic empires or rashes or torture equipment or even the human body. The human body has three kinds of valves: univalves, two-valves and multivalves. Sometimes it contains the shells that are used as receptacles for water. The natives use it for marital horns. The Colonel left behind a snuffbox made of this material. I am more interested in the tumor that spirals like gems! The tumor has no interior bones. It can exhaust two horses in less than five minutes. The father is now surrounded in a soccer stadium. The crowd roars. We use the proper varnish to take care of the scabs.

The Passenger:

I had trouble eating the food. The potatoes were overboiled, the mashed-up meat was not warm. I grew weak. I thought I heard the nurses talk about my spine. There was an ant-infestation in the thighlet. On my way to the x-ray I collapsed on the floor. A nurse carried me in her arms. This is how I invented erotics.

The Passenger:

When they asked why I had been scared I told them as I lay there in the basement I thought I heard the clothesline jangling like fish skeletons. This was during my visionary period, where I saw all kinds of things that were not true, especially on my girlfriend's body.

My Girlfriend's Body (*looks black, polished*):

The tympanal organ is the hearing organ, consisting of a membrane (tympanum) stretched across a frame backed by an air sac. Sounds vibrate the membrane, and the vibrations are sensed by a chordotonal organ. Tympanal organs occur in just about any part of the infected body: the thorax, the base of the wing, the abdomen, the legs, etc., depending on the state of infection. Within the organ, particular structures vary in shape and are used to indicate the nature of the disease. The opening may be in a different orientation and the structures differ in shape.

Father Voice-Over (*his garb inspired by the clothes of inmates, his voice inspired by insects*):

The new torture operations are largely aesthetic. They involve shells, a pretty new torso and my eyes are smeared in a mascara made from fish scales. It is an acrid secretion. The riots are exhibited but we are not near the revolver. Turn on the subtitles: The natives have small mouths and full, but not thick, lips. The riots have been stripped of artifice. I give the visitors a treacherous surface that is colored red. The natives are as comely as they are savage. They have high foreheads, large lips and high cheekbones. The Colonel is full of duplicity and rapacity. An eel-like species is the only thing that matters to him right now. I have sunstrokes. Mother is surrounded by 3000 troops.

Repulsive Man (*speaking into a shell that is leaking or possibly bleeding, possibly infected with hoof-and-mouth disease*):

Engineers use anemones to build the walls of the city. In the beds live coral insects. They have the power to carry on their work beyond the surface. The native children are endowed with bright insects and are soft in consistency. The Colonel wants the children deposited in a common pile or mound. The natives are large, heavy limbed creatures, used to drudgery. They pay much attention to the decoration of their hair. I am not native to this pile of spent bullets but I have been sold out for days. The most critical organs are housed in the torso, including the defective cat-heart. I am housed with a dead male. The robberies take place. The cops chase teenage gangs. The colonial exhibition is hard from asphalt, but we wealth around in women's burnouts. We use sticks for the abdomen. I photograph a bullet hole.

The Natives:

We interrupt this meat culture to inform you that the pest control is bringing pigs in a school bus.

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Father Insect (*stutters and twitches*):

The natives are marauders. They conduct their parties with haste. They are promiscuous with pistols. That's what the Colonel tells my daughter while listening to a promoter. The promoter has an oink-oink heart and a scorpion disease. Nobody knows that the cancer ward is closed. That I'm surrounded by snakes. Daughter, I am surrounded by snakes.

The Natives (ask the following questions of the most beautiful people they can find in a mall):

1. What is the most terrible disease you can think of?
2. How does it attack the body?
3. What is worse: Cancer or AIDS?
4. What is worse: Cancer or Execution?
5. AIDS or hanging?
6. Have you ever heard a disease used as a metaphor?
7. Why does the body make a good/bad metaphor for the nation?

The Virgin Father:

The natives make royalty more shot in the horse's head. I use lye and the animal's shoulders. I am discovering a disease in my mollusk. My daughter is a magnificent torrent with her bristling and bare and very long arms. Her former method was to mount experiments in blooded Abyssinian animals. Now she is adhering to the liver. She gives me an inky substance and tells me to manufacture fine guns from it.

The Oil Daughter:

I am by nature carnivorous and ferocious, killing as if by an inborn murderous instinct. But do I ever attack men? My disease does not measure above six inches in length, but I am searching among the shells for a new fold to piecemeal with my instruments. I convulse in a recoil system. Gasoline is good for the skin. The Colonel is attracted to my iris. It was severed in an evacuation drill. It was one kind of meat and then another kind of meat made the audience roar. Just listen to my father. He came of age in confetti and bleeds in a disco. I came of age in an age of strychnine and cover-ups. Ten second ago. On a highway. And here we are decorated with our daily makeup. The stutter grows worse every minute.

Mother Empire (*speaking to a cheering nation from a balcony, her hair bleached and her fashionable dress crawling with ants*):

Small pox is raging among both natives and Turks. The Colonel is worse yet. He is evidently a master singer. Waiting is awful in such a crowded operation. That is what Daughter tells me about the Colonel's song while I am taking photographs of rabid animals. The natives take these to be representations of erotic deities and leave the mimosa trees on which they are feeding. The Colonel has a goodly supply of heavy rifles – among them is “The Child,” which carries a half pound explosive shell. He digs a watch hole near a corn field. Into this they creep. The Natives. The glamorous bodies are so alive with swarms they have to be rinsed with unique ointments. This voice continues for several seconds. There are no more spiral wounds on my lower body. Drubble drubble. Give me the headphones. I want to hear a cheering nation!

Father Voice-Over (*walks steady through demonology*):

I hear a nation cheering but there is an awful anatomical question that has not been answered. The display cases look beautiful in the aftermath. The sexuality is gratuitous. The gunshot performance ends in a brilliant Europe with a plastic bag over my head. The Colonel, shaken as he is, determines to have a night sport and bring in some meat for the pest control. The natives try my leak-organs. Daughter tries silence. A few days later the Colonel appears in camp. Unrecorded convulsion. The Colonel's body is swollen toward the center. Slip knots are made, guns are readied, harpoons prepared. The Colonel's large mouth looks like a beak. His prodigiously large and glaring body is excited.

The Passenger (*trying to shout over the sounds of angry dogs*):

One day the horses discussed whether or not to harvest my sperm or to forbid me to masturbate. “You have to make some sacrifices to become natural,” they said. However, they were in the hurry and had to leave. Judging from the instruments they were carrying in their hands they were heading to the cancer ward. They did not come back. Today I saw them on the movie screen.

Hollywood (*played by a heap of dead horses*):

We are speaking to you from the umbilical site that sounds like a series of gunshots. The site where amusements can make out of a drive-by shooting something akin to a trinket or a rash. We are shooting you in the umbilical site where you first found out what your love looked like underwater. It looked laughable but you were alive. Alive was the image of a horse's head, viewed from a passing car window. From reading various articles one might have the sense that our puncture wounds were redundant; that our images have corrupted an otherwise beautiful and perfectly natural body; that before our gasmasks people spoke to each other in a natural language. But nobody loves a heap of dead horses. A lot of people try but only a few can be properly smeared in. Mostly people buy our trinkets and hope to do the plug-ugly in the backseat. Here come the news cameras.

The Promoter:

My star power is autistic. I may not be able to find a cattle-trader interest in this hullabaloo, but I am confident that the cuckoo mouth will go for a large amount. Perhaps a half hour of camera flashes will cure my infection. Perhaps I can strike a glamorous pose and convince some cattle-trader that I have a heart acrawl with insects. Either that or that I have a cunt. Deaf people buy it, so why not the cattle-traders. They don't understand a word I scream anyway, alarmed as they are in the operating rooms.

A Looted Model Speaks Out Against Symbolism:

I remain fashionably colonial like the taxidermy-daughter. That's a pop song. I've rigged a woman's glamour-body. I have a fluid cinema and a cabinet where I keep shells. My eyes are not spit upon but they open slowly like a landscape paintings and all my gauzes are lamb.

The Visual (*played in drag*):

An immune system is a collection of mechanisms within an organism that protects against disease by identifying and killing pathogens and tumor cells. It detects a wide variety of agents, from viruses to parasitic worms, and needs to distinguish them from the organism's own healthy cells and tissues in order to function properly. Detection is complicated as pathogens adapt and evolve new ways to successfully infect the host organism.

Mother Rearguard (*speaking in a close-up while cutting a nightingale*):

My daughter writhes while I work on corrugated metal in snow. The Colonel is silent and monotonous. The mules and horses seem alarmed. The natives no longer erect their signs. They make harsh and grating sounds. My daughter has a spasm she describes as if they were part of an electric organism. She is eyeball wild and the perfection of beauty. My daughter knows nothing about the rest of the eel species. It is finely marked on her body. The drumming sounds like it was twenty feet beneath the surface. It is as audible as fishes. One more instance must suffice.

Daughter:

I love carnations because they are shaped like the organs of a fetus. The Colonel wears them in his holes. I feed him nightingales but he cannot eat too much for his mouth is damaged. I continue to feed him and his sounds are repulsive. It's spring. If I had not crammed the swans into the debris, the Colonel would still be symbolic. As it is now he is paranoid. When I interview him about his fashion statements I tell him about the fetus. He does not understand a word I speak and I barge.

Father Machine-Gun (*speaking to a rioting crowd*):

I feel I must portray the landscape we evacuated, applying the make up with a blunted knife. I puncture a canvas. My daughter has a stroke. An enthusiasm. For a remarkable body on horseback. Many of my teeth should be displayed. Our promoter is brutally dead. In one photograph I am exploring electricity. And magnesium. I have rabies in my eyes but the birds are clean. It's hard to tell from the photograph but I have just retraced my expensive arms. One moment later. I collapse in the flowery kingdom.

The Daughter (*birds bursting out of her dress*):

In the flowery kingdom the female is born without eyes but with a profoundly bluish tint. The mouthpieces we found in the snow are infected. A staggering number of films have been made about them. I saw one in the cancer ward. I etched my name in a 500,000-year-old skull on display. Deportation, I wrote. Gilded in gasoline, I sang to my father with my paper voice. I have three types of rib in my ribcage. The yellow one breaks first. I am fat, read the note in the ornithological theater. Gravity, read the caption under the naked body.

The Passenger:

After my head was shaved, the naturalization officers commented on the cysts. The cuts stung a bit but I did not for a moment hesitate. I continued to say No to everything I was asked. Are recovering addicts allowed to use chalk? Was the dummy created to function with a single pump? Is there anything more powerful than an off-screen voice? No, no, no.

The Ghost of The Repulsive Man (*pulling the leg of a slaughtered pig*):

I put on my American Teeth.

Hello, I have traced my nerves with pencils and I know how to conduct a homelessness.

I appreciate your efforts with the X-ray.

If I finish the book I am the killer.

The Natives:

1. What is the best way to emulsify a knife?
2. How many bones are there in a ribcage?
3. How many sacks are there in a human lung?
4. What is the purpose of the spongy material?
5. What is the best way to emulsify a lung?
6. Do you know how to write a sonnet?

Daughter:

I've grown fond of the cold and glittering cancer ward. Through the gauze I can make out viscous and fatty matter. There are other fascinating forms visible on the surface, but nothing is more fantastic than the tiny shells mingled with sea-weed on the limestone beds. The walls of Paris are built with these but I am repulsed by the bracelet on my graphic arm. I'm merely a visitor. A flammable daughter digging through the debris. Searching for Ground Zero of Symbolism. I think I have found it. It's instantaneous.

The Colonel's Widow:

The natives build with their carcasses. They are admirable workmen. Your marvelous shores are less fertile and more ruinous. Yet you are more fondled than mute. More vivid. The lesion is close to the base of the brain. Every bullet is a source of light and at the right altitude your pupils become luxuriant. Splendid forms composed almost wholly of animal matter proliferate. Nobody has tried to interfere with the microscopic animals. We have already spoken of fists. Inside elevators we reproduce moths for the wreck. We have already spoken of fists. They are sign language when you touch me.

The Colonel (*replies to his widow as if in a voice lesson*):

There is so much to be disgusted about, most of all your neck. Your gasmask. I have traded for beads and crystal. I have invented the breathing horse. Flinch. Your forgery was the reason I famished in the frontiers. Your photograph is blurry. Is that me under water? I was rescued by money. I am buying a new widow and I will pig and pig that girl collapse. A throbbing gazelle is what she will be in thinner. An auction she will be with cuts. I will make a fortune in the stadium. Cheer. I will make an insect-like crown for you. She has a delicate bone structure.

Mother Ruin (*ruined*):

My daughter wore a nightingale to the colonial exhibition. She wore out your trilobite before that. She had a magnificent turret in her body. She had a sea anemone when I saw her watching movies for the blind. She was absorbed. A vulture in burning. The hole in the martyr was used as a cock-ring. This was not evident before the audience came into the idealized room. When the soldiers embraced a magnificent vessel I could tell that they had flexible arms. I could tell that my daughter knew a lot of information about statues. It was snowing. That is what my daughter told me about the last outbreak.

Father Nervous System:

The Colonel's physical condition is still a mystery. Even in this, the coldest winter. During the last stages of exhaustion, he begins to call for lemur bodies to be brought in and skinned. There are many theories of the origin of his disease. Most believe it is a New World Disease. The first well-recorded outbreak occurred in Turkish troops. During a siege of Abyssinia, the Colonel's ejaculations slowed to a trickle. A spiral-shaped organism is believed to be the cause of the condition. I believe it is the limestone. Its mucus is alive with invisible animalcules. Thorny-headed organisms which can be transmitted and multiply in the body cavity.

Father Firing Line:

I used to wear a comatose mask but now that that has been classified as subjectivity I wear a mask that looks like Nixon. Nobody needed to teach me how to do the plug-ugly. That came naturally to my ki-ko-pe body. Anybody can holler like a native but who among you knows what convulsions are natural and which ones are induced by a peculiar holiday? I may not be the last man standing but I am repulsive with glitter. I have perfected the tendrils in a horse's heart. Most children are too old to learn this lesson. They've watched it on TV. That's me, they say, the one with the hole.

The Passenger:

This is how a murderer confesses, with pigs and ammunition.

But I love pussy and I love eels.

The Passenger:

I was accepted as a bogus inmate, but I was not photogenic. I joined the firing line but I could not tell which nude was the real Ulrike Meinhoff. "This is a set-up," they all screamed. "I am the real Ulrike Meinhoff. This is a set-up." The nudes are still repeating those lines, but the firing lines have been cut out. For my next role, I wore a gas-mask that did not work. The effect was brilliant, but the beak scarred my face.

The Colored-In Father:

My daughter is emaciated and she's difficult to find, even in a jail that smells of feces. She loves to play with the hooks and I keep seeing ghosts in the photographs. That's how spirituality was invented in the 19th century and now it is how I am putting the clues together in a remake of a famous movie scene (blown up). Find the corpse in this disco-bright collapse.

The Parasites (*wearing kissing faces and murder victims, speaking out of unison like school children*):

They're coming to take us away. Now. What we want we will never have. We're on the highway. With your gun. And your cattle bones. We've made a doll out of them but we surrender. We're lost. Didn't we see that dirty blonde 15 years ago? Our Occupation God is holding on at a piano recital. No. He is damaged in the forehead. You know that they are coming to take us away. But before we drown let us tell you that we saw your son yesterday at the end of the block. He was naked except for a shirt. He didn't seem to know who he was. He was Miss World.

Miss World (*wearing a crown and a rat*):

They want to wash my hair in pearls. I can tell from the way my shoulders are wrapped in cellophane. Someday I will carry a cello into the Japanese room. I wear my infection with style. My lungs have a honey-combed texture. The tissues are intricate. The absorber material is typically impregnated by foam to dissipate any energy that strikes it. There are people who want to put an end to my breed because of our puberty rhythms. I am intrigued by the shape of horses's skulls. I keep nude. Especially for the assassination. I am also frequently anorexic.

The President of the Exhaustion State (*played by Ronald Reagan*):

Postcards are the purest form of documentation. Napalm comes in second. Today the nation is in a state of naturalization. In order to become a citizen of this landscape you need to learn the names of my body parts. Especially the actor and the actress, the organs of sight and reproduction.

The Aftermath:

The sun goes down on the president but his mouth is still colored in. His genitals have become more symbolic for the target audience. He traffics in blackouts and porcelain. Outside the glass snow falls on the streets of Moscow. The display cases are crammed with eel and the star of tonight's show is not happy about venereal diseases. It must be the 1980s. I am using that one soap. You know, the one foreigners use when the party is over. They fondle the real thing.

Father 1980s (*in a state of utter exhaustion*):

The target audience is exhausted in the suburbs and squandered. Their fashion statements can all be paraphrased like this: take everything but leave the chest full of holes. The plaster will peel. Welcome to hate. Welcome to a cheering nation. Today we rinsed a skeleton in the dark. At least that is what we were told afterwards.

The Passenger:

I was more Chinese than slender. My head injury showed and I was going through a peekaboo puberty with megaphones. But I knew how to cut the barbwire fence when I needed to. I led my fiancé out of the inauguration, to the darkened fields. She held me with one hand and a glass of champagne in the other. I don't know if I began to bleed before or after she took off my costume. A parasite grows in my iris, she told me to explain what she was doing to my legs. She was preparing them for our vacation.

Mother Crowd Disorder:

That hare-headed child in kimono: my LSD-daughter.

That night we spent in the foxholes: bloodletting.

Father Forgiveness:

The cancer ward was videotaped. It was the worst place to carry around insect on my skin but you did it anyway. Everything had a casing. Mine was made of skin. Yours was obscene. We had to sterilize the hands first.

The Aftermath:

The soldiers are marching around with blood on their genitals. The crowd in the stadium is trying to trace each other's arms. The crowd-bodies are so photogenic. The surveillance equipment does not work and I have nosebleed. One solution is to muzzle the velocity of the cartridge. You have two hours to white out the exhibition in which we are all made of paper. The turned-on cities: that's the voice of reason. The full-blown evacuation: that's the modernist allegory. Our US will be set ablaze and a temple will be built on top of it. A whiteout temple stimulated repeatedly by speed. We are building another city. We are modeling it on the insides of birds.

The Parasites (*still housing the most critical organs*):

When we wake up in our make up ten thousand horses are slaughtered and your only son is naked in the middle of the street. Muddled in the middle of the street. Cakey. The show has been sold out for two days. That's the sensation we get from photographing inmates. We use our wrists expertly. You could break them with a rifle. We could break them with a burn victim.

The Natives:

1. Which object belongs to the nurse: Is it the projector or the cutting tool?
2. Which object belongs to the guard: The display window or the shell?
3. Which object belongs to the cinematographer: The body or the bell?
4. Which object is used for penetration?
5. Which art work hangs in the lobby of a hospital?
6. Is stuttering caused by a mental, physical or spiritual disorder?

The Passenger:

Of course my disease is a kissing disease and the scorpion disappears into a woman's hair. I know that hair. I photographed it with upholstery hammers. There were underage girls in the crowd. I brushed my teeth. My fiancé used a scissor in a way that frightened me. Let them eat cake, she told me. Leave the cigarette burns. They're authentic, she told me. We need more anorexia for the production, she told me before she drank champagne from my body. She had cleaned my body properly with thinner. She was nothing if not hygienic. Once I saw her pretend that wasps were made of paper. Pork.

The Colonel (*still played by a TV-star, who by now is in the first stages of pregnancy*):

The motive for the crime is mundane. Hey shut up. There is only one kind of meat served. There is only one kind of bleed-out. The thousand-foxes are infected and the confetti is everywhere. I have tried to rinse Miss World while listening to the helicopters on the television. But he is a star. He deserves a red-alert treatment. By the time I used the strychnine my chest was prepared for the worst kind of minute. The off-screen president called for a more intricate organ. I performed an exoskeleton with an open mouth. It was my mouth.

Miss World of Carnations and Exoskeletons:

I've had a shrapnel-wound since I was 17 years old. A photographer forgot to cut his eye out after he saw my sign language. I made the sign for paranoia. The miscarriage was my dance-out craze. Nobody understands the American Dream like I understand assaults and blossoms surround in China. I was harmed. Hammered. The pig was me. Now I pilfer a garbled spectator and rehearse meat aura cinema. In the final scene I am groaning and complete like a retina. The flatbed is decorated with rosy hues and my nudity is decorated with 47 billion dollars of contaminated blankets. I'm Miss World and I'm more dissected than fetal.

Daughter (*stripped and ready in a hyacinth pose*):

I don't need permission to rinse the swans. I just want to use the nails and sternum in a more media-saturated way. I know how to drink champagne out of a worn mask. It's the coma mask. The car-crash-hammered face I use for seizures. I shouldn't have kept you waiting in the strip mall. You must stammer. You must strike a soundproof pose for the soldiers. Knock knock knock. It's time for makeup. Look at my face. Mimesis.

The Parasites:

Lets have a break-through actor who knows how to work with metal in a snow-whirl. He tastes like candy. His lacerations are immature, pig-like. His circulatory system is as beautiful as his nails. How can kidnappers cure the shakes? How do they sell out to girls with such muscular spasms? How can we shoot him in absolutely crashbrilliant close-ups. There is no place for the kind of shoulders we've been trafficking to infant our mouths. To image our crammed adolscence seance. This is a poem for girls.

Miss World (*Mammalian*):

You correct the hide-and-seeK adolescence of the suburbs with conspicuous objects. And the girls with the asymmetrical pelvises. They get what they want from the stampede. Soldiers are disordered with necklaces. Chicken are alive in the stroke. Varnish goes with anything golden. Amethysts goes with the intricate torso in the distance. The off-screen voice tells me to be more precise, that I take everything mammalian to the electroshock treatment. My God how I break up with girls that are sosilverexposed in cocaine. Soldiers adrenaline while I get disfigured and sparrowed. There is nothing softer than the body parts. Especially the actress-part. That is the part the president owns.

We (played by the Natives):

Disfigure props. Velour in nudie shows. The hygiene is blatant. Ballistic. The instruction manuals are hard to read. Who is standing so soft in the shower? You don't have to get asylum-theological just because the age of meat has passed. It's time for the rat-out physical and I am barely legal. I am merely trying to keep my hands clean and the dental instruments sharp. The scorpion is my sign. I wear it on my meats and prod it into orifices. I miss Miss World and his plastic bags. His precision. But I still have secretions.

The Passenger:

Of all the objects of study I am mainly drawn to the black shell. I suspect it comes from my native home. At night I curl up into its shape and imagine oceanic sounds. When I tell another student, she tells me this shell does not come from the ocean but the cancer ward.

The Parasites:

We are the girls who can't look in the movie theater but Miss World has a smeared face. A dazed eye. A stark body. We found Miss World walking in the middle of the road. He was in the suburbs. He is home. He has its blood on his hands. He is next to cleanliness. The authorities are coming to take him away. We were born while that cattle was covered up in the swimming pool. We know where to find his scissors and paper cuts. We have written a hit song in which we play the part of the lurking threat outside of town. The video stars Miss World. The age stars the president. The afterlife stars a legionnaire's disease.

The President:

Me and my cutting disorders. I live inside this window with a gun, even though I need a sharper object. I could use pneumonia. My voice has a sing-song quality on the loud speaker: Dear students please return the wedding dress to the rabble. Return to your voice lessons. Cars are burning as we speak. Immigrants can't undo their stitches. Help them crawl out. Show them how to sing. Like this. With the body colored in. Colored out. Heart-attack.

Miss World of Bleeconomies:

In the saturation I wear eyeliner for the family. In the crowd I am sold out for days. For I am attributed to felons but my father runs this place to the ground. The meat I am attributed to in the display case seems like popular culture. When the air is removed the circulatory system begins to show through. The entrance wound has been purchased. Traded in for a thousand bleeding foxes. My father is putting on a show for all the natives to see themselves in our white white skin. If you look carefully at my wrist you can see that I am thrilled. I weigh 97 pounds right now. If I look foreign in my little jersey it is only because I have parasites.

Soldier (*wear mascara to the lapdance*):

I must be ballistic and doll-doll at the bonfire. And I bring shovels to teach you how to kiss and tell. The strychnine in my cabinet of wonder makes a rancid pulse and a pretty devastation. My cabinet is cracked. The china rattles every time I slam the camera. The models giggle every time I slam the camera in public. In public we are virgins like hooks. Embroidered like a massacre. We speak of golden texts and our pearly horses evoke a detailed past. The megaphone evokes concussions with its public voice. It says: go for the fuck-eye. It says: examine the president's interior for traces of the president. Examine the butterfly collection for traces of carbon monoxide. It never refers to Miss World directly. It says: Gazelle gazelle. It says: Write it in lipstick. On the nativity scene. The president doesn't seem to care that it is not a nativity scene. Or that a megaphone is not a child.

The President (*played by as many people as you can fit into a board room*):

What we have here is a nativity scene that needs to be corrected with lipstick. The child told me so. The public begged me to cover up the bodies in the public schools. We used gauze for the mammalian props. There is a burn I cover up with my right hand. I say this as a man who has always been glamorous with moths yet authoritative with pets. I say this while my other hand fingers a glossy shell. I found the shell while investigating the rococo texture of bodies. I concluded that they are similar to microphones. They are always so slippery and puncture easily. One should not abuse microphones or perform stunts.

The Natives:

1. Please define the word “surge.”
2. Please use it in a sentence.
3. Is poetry beautiful?
4. Is protrusions OK?
5. What is a host?
6. Have you ever used a riot hose?
7. What is a “wound colonization”?
8. Would you know how to do it?

The Daughter (*plays with live species at the inauguration*):

Play hide-and-seek with a soldier and call it shardhood. Scrape my iris clean for the wedding bouquet. Modify the texture of mother's skin. It's not enough for my retina to give up the surveillance footage. During my seizure we will speak about eels. The eye is an organ to detect light. You would know this if you were a carnivore, which you are. You are a carnivore with many patients. The way you apply mascara makes me think you are too conscious of my seizure, my glorified descent into sepulchral chambers. But you have not heard a single word I have spoken to my president. You are mute and deaf and you are supposed to be in charge of the foxes at the inauguration.

Miss World of Hammered Soldiers:

It would be too easy to blame the soldiers for the molested parade. I am ready to make it big with a duct-tape over my mouth. Infants cannot speak and part of the flower is called seed. My pelvic bone protrudes. The stampedes should be blotted out. Hosed off. We must leave no trace of the implements for the next wilding. I have a famous shrapnel which you can see but not touch. It's in the pork. It's slippery. For the next convulsion I want to be in a modern city with modern tissue and modern cigarette burns. The rats would be attracted to the iris in my chest and the adrenaline in my upholstery. The taste in my mouth is chalky.

The Scorpion Passenger (*with an immature pig in his arms and a variety of other implements*):

The cake is a cheap copy, but lets pretend we can see with a thousand eyes. That we can see the interior of the modern home. The kidnap victim. The immature pig we've been trying to avoid in this age of golden meat and evacuation drills. The cut must be precise. The winner's mouth is stuffed. The retina is rarely damaged. The surrounding tissue is rarely scraped clean within improper implements. The soft spot is saturated with images. Of the underage fans. Of the kissing disease. Of the protruding pelvis. The collision. I have a scorpion in my bob.

Miss World (*hosed off and flinching for the camera*):

I am ballistic and bleach. Powdered in the talkie that was prohibited in our elementary school. Can you recognize my feet? My undulating fans? Soldiers with shells? Head injuries? Shovel anatomy? Carnation walk? It is important to be able to tease out my proper anatomy from a crowd of burn victims. Bang bang bang. That is my cue to begin with the suppressors. To remove the insect from my fingernail. It's a free world in this thousand exchange. The most critical organs are housed in the torso. Mild head injuries, such as concussion, are a common cause of hospital visits. Lets see what we can do in the necklace factory. With moths.

Father Chalk Torso:

Due to Miss World's dazed escape. Due to her crossed-out arms. Her hyped skin. Her stuffed fox. Her kissing disease. Cake. Tubes. This performance will have to take place in Sunflower County, Mississippi. We'll have to wear rubber gloves. There are more than 20 types of seizure and each one involves the contractions of a muscle or a hollow organ. The effects are very similar to that of a regular burn. There are three silent versions of Miss World. In one, the reverse peekaboo is an emblem of puberty. The one we are working with likes to touch the vagina. She wants to kill a tiger. I will wipe the nosebleed off her face. Blink blink. She is beginning to look grainy. Perhaps we will use exit lights.

Flammable Mothers (*sing this song every day until the girls come back*):

Drape our sister the shovel in a sterilization clinic. We haven't seen her since she became an image. Since they added the beaks and the broken arm. Now she lives horse deaths in architecture. Soiled in hymnbooks. We hate her like we hate to cork our own faces black. But the atrocity must go on and we must carry cameras through the bleeding. The agriculture. We must barge through a billboard: Adventures in skin-adorations. It used to say. Now it says resin kino. The hullabaloo involves male parts and alarmed parts. I do the male part like insects. I do do do.

Miss Invaded World:

When they told me everything has to be exhibited I complied and insects killed me in my toy. I knew things were going to go badly when they asked me to pose for my photograph carrying an explosive device in my hands. They said it was called “Childhood,” that they made all the nostalgics pose like that – down on my knees, the insects still killing me in my toy. Everything has to be exhibited with voice-overs said the voice-over when it thought I was exhausted. The officers were videotaping my scars for the awards ceremony. This is a machine for lighting cigarettes they told me as I entered the clangorous game with a vagina made of felt. It was the same kind of felt they make hats out of, or blankets used to recover victims from plane crashes.

The Passenger:

I often discuss “shine” in matters relating to women’s bodies and how they traumatize like actresses. The actress is the proper organ of sight. It is the first to be removed in front of the audience. The result is a blurring of male and female organs. The result is a crashing of furry bodies. I have a natural body, I protested to the schizo-erotic voice-over. You have a contaminated doll, said the voice-over. An epilepsy of cadaver said the rudimentary mouth with a moan. And then we traced my steps back to the hijacking.

The Natives:

1. How does a pathogen gain entry to the host body?
2. Are most infections systemic?
3. What happens to the parasitoid when it kills the host?
4. Have you ever played the game “Parasite-Host” at school?
5. Can you give an example of a breeding male?
6. Have you ever played “breeding male” in a school production?

Obscene Father (*speaking through an inhaler*):

I am also violent in this crawl. I use a megaphone and the result on a million pigs is a visual concussion. I can see them but they are twitching and ill-shapen. There is an evil in my daughter that the pigs cannot reach even with their clubs and cuts and crayfish scraping up my chest. We have to lock the cabinets thoroughly I tell my daughter through the tube. She does not know language. That's what makes her evil. That and the fact that she is mine.

Daughter:

I am also violent when I can see the cheering nation from the empty swimming pool. I faint with glitterglitter in that pool while officers video-tape-up the napalm body I built today in school. I held a rose in my garbled hand. Every time I make something for the President it turns to shrapnel. My father is still being taped in asylumjanuary. It is because he has an unnatural insect frequency that only I hear. I tell on him. I tell the officers, Right now my father is headless and impregnated. Right now he has stuns in his vertebrae. They fall for it every time. I am the Daughter of Revolution.

The Revolution:

I am also violent when working on the martyr exhibition. The sun is rotten and I have to bruise easily during car alarms. But most of all I need to hollywood some Africans for the final room, the Congo. That's where I get my aura. That's where I abuse gasoline. Please come down to see me on the surveillance camera. It's the newest economy. It's an economy of inside/outside where I am always the outside inside the camera. You might not understand how I can faint every time. It's easy. Write a receipt for USA and I will show you how to rip off the primal scene.

The Passenger (*played by Adolf Loos*):

I am also violent because I am adorned in all of the jitterbugs that should be outlawed. The ornaments on the walls are falling into the street as tanks drive by. The ornaments from the lynching fall down while newscameras flash. I felt rubbed in the swans when I saw the correct woman for the part. All through the entire series of unrealistic events, as buildings and people were cleaned off, I had not idea that there was a correct woman for the part. The part of course was to play a host for the invasion allegory. Not a stare for gunshots. That was my part and I must have been next.

The Natives:

1. Why is it so cold in here?

Father Criminal:

Now I have a billion-dollar hygiene to fake at the shooting. In the wound I could see the most beautiful butterflies reverberate. I had never seen butterflies before. I had never seen snow before. I came from crib death into crowd auction and my instructions were written with a felt-tipped pen on my slow-motion body. I could hardly make out the last word; it was prevent.

Father Candidate (*played realistically without the need for punishment by John McCain in an evacuation drill*):

We will pursue mouths. I will not rest until the emasculated horse has been removed from our national orgy. The visual is evil because it entralls us. The fag is evil because he is thorned up on a fence. Erase that. Forget that. I amplified his body and the results were poetical. The fag body is evil because it is loud like pigeons being shot. A woman's body must be believed to be seen. I see women's body on the screen, here, with the Egyptian darkness all around me, and I want to love it like I have a melodrama. I served as a pilot in the dark. Nobody survived. The natives revived me in felt and fat. They were faggots with their hands and I have not returned. The lye smells good. It smells like victory over my lugubrious cancer. Forget about the faggot. Concentrate.

The Martyr (*played by a skinny man – and when I say skinny I mean as in photographs of mass graves – who is punished for the crimes of the nation in a disgusting posture*):

In placental mammals, the umbilical cord (also called the birth cord or funiculus umbilicalis) is the connecting cord from the developing embryo or fetus to the placenta. Developed from the same zygote as the fetus, the umbilical cord normally contains two arteries (the umbilical arteries) and one vein (the umbilical vein), buried within Wharton's jelly. The umbilical vein supplies the fetus with oxygenated, nutrient-rich blood from the placenta. Conversely, the umbilical arteries return the deoxygenated, nutrient-depleted blood.

Hollywood (*this time a child who is prevented from obscenity and persecution through the discrete use of tourist trinkets*):

You may know me from such roles as the colonial war in the jungle and the place where the president was shot in the head. You may know me from such romps without knowing exactly where the bullets landed and how the face shattered. Of all the widows that I love I love the widow who speaks into a tape-player the most. The cut-up widow I call her when I speak to her like I speak to her now. Cut-up widow, you may know me from such roles as the leading killer of people below the age of 45 or the trailer for a war that was more like a pilgrimage. The potential for bleeding was great and the divas were crowned in idealism. Their voices caused shock waves to propagate through the tissue.

The Locked-In Syndrome (*played by the Hollywood-child in the midst of the Hollywood horses*):

The problem with ass-fucking is that someone has to clean the machine afterwards. The problem with insects is not the noise that they make (a sweet noise in which I could survive) but that they will not die in droves large enough to cause a halt. The problem with horse cadaver is not that they bleed or stink but that they can be turned into theater. The problem with my femur is not that it breaks (which it does quite easily, quite gracefully, repeatedly) but that you will not know unless I make a fool out of myself, as I undoubtedly have done here, tonight, in front of a cheering nation of burn-victims.

The Dream Weapon:

The daughter possesses a segmented body supported by the latest and hardest fashion objects. The segments of the body are organized into three distinctive but interconnected units: the foul head, the faintly flowery mouthpart and the abdominal region. The head has a colorful mouthpart decorated with ovule-like organisms. Her abdomen may be capable of feeling pain due to the presence of nociceptors. The doll parts are insected with cake. The reproductive structures are fused with ganglia. The lungs are perforated slightly to allow for a gradual reduction of oxygen in the circulatory system. A daughter is an object that represents a baby. It is anatomically correct for nervous disorders. The baby's wound is covered with flickering bodies of small insects with twitchy wings. In Hollywood we say that she is born again.

History (*played straight with her arms tied behind her back*):

During courtship, the girl will form a doll of sorts by fusing the thorax which was removed from her optic tract when she was born to various less valuable materials, such as the inner whorl and other organisms associated with the breathing process or one of her floral tubes. She will fasten several gem-like organisms to the boy's target area. Depending on his age – which may be anywhere from 6 to 12 – he may have to have his target area treated with various fluids to avoid infection. Often the process will have minor effects on the excretory functions, but he will survive. His nervous system is divided into a brain and a ventral nerve cord. The head capsule (made up of six fused segments) has six pairs of ganglia. Of these four can be removed without any major repercussions and attached to the doll should he accept the courtship offer.

Miss World:

Nobody kills me when I am bright. I have a ha-meaning when I black out rotten on beds. A rotten bed is a bed with the consistency of beautiful candy and children's arms. A rotten bed is also called a rancid bed when there are teeth involved. When you pronounce rancid you have to show your teeth. A rotten bed is a spectacle for the folk marching through an infested body. Watch me when I am inserted and pilfered with in the crowd. I will not break. In Japanese my hand method is called "tebori." It has to do with riots and girl parts. Watch me pronounce the word. My lips look like a tulip. All the sensory antennae vibrate. When I wake up the make up has been wiped off and the fists are sprinkled with gunpowder. Come on, emerge as imago.

The Natives:

1. Why is it so cold in here?

The President Speaks Of Love (*alone in the woods*):

I have had my face remade. I am writing a letter to God for a talent show. I mention napalm only to justify the actions against my body, that flagrant heap of ants which we must all do our best to eradicate.

The Welfare State:

Don't lock the door. You have nothing to be ashamed of.

Trauma:

There must be a clearance sale on fur in the welfare state. I am sweating profusely and the animals are not hygienic. There must be a riot in the exhausted state because I cannot get through. In the case of an impasse like this, it is important to use the ganglia to take care of the inflamed hole. You must not allow the insects to enter the ovule. If they do you must immediately extinguish it with felt and fat. A ribcage can always be salvaged but a nest is hard to eliminate. You have nothing to be ashamed of. You have nothing. Allow me to gently sterilize the fur.

Trauma:

This blubbery body has had too much insect material stuffed in its asshole. Who is going to clean the ovules? Who will sterilize the machinery before it turns into yet another crawl-heap in the televised horny? This is an acute case of audiophilia: the unrigorous love of swarming-through sounds. Every infection sounds too much in this black-twitched body bloated with insects. In order to restore silence to the pageant we must eliminate the fat. We must eliminate several kinds of cancer, the worst of which are butter cancer and screw cancer. You can see the ovule protracting. You can feel the ganglia throb. You may wonder who will have to clean the machine when the operation is over. I will have to infect the machine. I who hate fecal matter and I who am afraid of larvae. It is I who will use thinner on the holes and ploys. It will leave a varnish-like layer on top of my hands.

Miss World:

In the Welfare State the sun has out-ruined all the nocturnal mouthpieces. The sun-out has obliterated all the rancid petals and turned the protrusion dulled. They will all be exhibited in the Natural Museum together with the rest of my assemblage: the polished abdomen, the gleaming ganglia and the disinfected holes. I have drawn a picture of a horse. The captions says: This way.

Trauma:

In the Rampant State, nobody understands how to clean the ganglia. Nobody knows how to thread it, how to abuse it, how to interrogate prisoners with it. In the Rampant State all the torture devices involve drowning or lynching. The General wants to lynch all the black male bodies with moths. He uses obvious innuendoes, to make sure his base understand him, but he cannot say it openly. To do so would be to offend the refined tastes of his base. If anybody accuses him of racism, he replies that the accusers are “playing the race card.” I am playing the race card with a revolver pointing to my head. The revolver has an autonomic system. It is loaded with two silver bullets: one for my black brain and one for my insect nerve.

The Trauma:

The fat body must be worked out. I want to see muscles where now I see lemurs climb; veins
where now I begin to white out.

Passenger (*wakes up, staggers out and addresses the impatient crowd from the center of the stage.*):

I didn't know this was a slaughterhouse.

[Blackout]

[Sinead dances with her hare-head for approximately 2 minutes]

THE END