Framing Dionysus: The Gutter Dandy in Western Culture from Diogenes to Lou Reed

by

John V. Walker

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of English
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Abstract

The gutter-dandy is an oppositional figure who appears from time to time throughout Western culture, an elusive figure who can be termed a philosopher-sage for whom the term philosophy, the *philosophia*, is something to be *lived out*, not merely gleaned and digested in an abstract sense from learned scholars and their texts. In fact, the philosopher's real function is not only to attempt to live a sovereign, singular, *atopos* existence, as seen in the life of Diogenes , but also, through his own spectacular form of self-presentation and his stylized mode of being, to *convert* others to this way of life as well.

The roots of gutter-dandyism are found in historical figures who bravely defied the conventions of their times and cultures and paid for it dearly, sometimes with their freedom, as in the Marquis de Sade, sometimes with their lives, as in Loy Pruystinck and John of Leyden, both Brethren of the Free Spirit. These figures keep the underground strain of gutter-dandyism alive, which decedent European artists of the nineteenth century, such as Baudelaire, Huysmans, Rimbaud, and Genet mutate and develop, the *philosophia* finally making its way to America via Henry Miller, who enacts it democratically, minus

the aristocratic hangover of European culture.

It is in Miller's work that Foucault might have found the key to the neo-dandyism he seeks in his last works, especially "What Is Enlightenment?," where he states, in millenarian fashion, that the public at large must seize control of and "experience" the "author-function," imploding the line between art and life for themselves, fashioning their own lives creatively, in the manner of those who make houses or table lamps. What is necessarily invoked here is the three-fold process of *destructuralism*, where the socially imposed self is discarded, contact with "true nature," the void, established, and a "new," authentic self rebuilt. In the latter half of the twentieth century, this process is taken up within popular culture, where sovereigns such as Elvis Presley, Miles Davis, and Lou Reed become main proponents of neo- or gutter-dandyism, the ascendent mass media allowing them the opportunity for mass conversion.

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And If I'm acting like a king
Well that's cos I'm a human being,
And if I want too many things
Don't you know, well,
I'm a human being
And If I've got to dream
Baby, baby, I'm a human being,
And when it gets a bit obscene
Whoaa, I'm a human being. . . ."

–The New York Dolls

FRAMING DIONYSUS: THE GUTTER-DANDY IN WESTERN CULTURE FROM DIOGENES TO LOU REED

A POLEMICAL INTRODUCTION: PART A--THE DIAGNOSIS

The poet makes himself a seer by a long, gigantic and rational derangement of all the senses. All forms of love, suffering and madness. He searches himself. He exhausts all poisons in himself and keeps only their quintessences. . . . he becomes among all men the great patient, the great criminal, the one accursed--and the supreme Scholar!--Because he reaches the unknown! . . . Let him die as he leaps through unheard of and unnameable things: other horrible workers will come; they will begin from the horizons where the other one collapsed!

--Arthur Rimbaud

****

For art to exist, for any sort of aesthetic activity or perception to exist, a certain physiological precondition is indispensable: intoxication. . . . All kinds of intoxication, however different their origin, have the power to do this. . . . The essence of intoxication is the feeling of plenitude and increased energy. From out of this feeling one gives to things, one compels them to take, one rapes them--one calls this procedure idealizing [which] does not consist . . . in a subtracting or deducting of the petty and secondary [but in] a tremendous expulsion of the principal features . . . so that thereupon the others too disappear.

--Nietzsche, *Twilight Of The Idols*

Neo-dandyism, notably as theorized by Michel Foucault in the later stages of his career, is a philosophical/literary/mystical/psychological/sexual theory-praxis which runs counter to the ultra-rationalism of (post)Enlightenment man. "A totality of life has little to do with a collection of abilities and areas of expertise" says Georges Bataille, whose work is a major influence on Foucault's. "One can no more cut it into pieces than one can cut up a living body." For Bataille, "life is the virile unity of the pieces that go to make it up," to be lived as a work of art (*Visions* 227). This contemporary Western dandyism is

an intuitive, creative, continuing process impelled by what Alexander Trocchi calls "transcategorical inspiration," (*Invisible* 195), in opposition to the world of "specialized" knowledge and its progeny, bourgeois "experts." In contrast to recent "critical theory" movements of the Saussure-derived variety, neo-dandyism insists, as we see in Rimbaud's exhortation, on the existence of a corporeal world outside the symbolic, and on total involvement--i.e., *experience*--on the part of its practitioners: "theory" is thus wed to a polymorphous praxis involving all of the sensory realms. "The essence of being radical," as Foucault puts it, "is *physical*. The essence of being radical is the radicalness of existence itself" (qtd. in J. Miller, *Passion* 182).

Gutter-dandyism, which has its roots in antiquity, develops in certain medieval mystical sects, such as The Cult of the Free Spirit, and eventually coheres in the work of Jean Genet and Henry Miller, eventually dominates dandyism in the twentieth century, appropriating and subverting the mechanics of a repressive urban/corporate order which requires the utilitarian management of docile subjects to ensure the smooth hum of the machine. *Passivity versus Action*: you can remain submissive, letting technology be used by outside forces to mold you into the perfect corporate citizen/consumer; or you can seize control of the "author-function," and use rational strategies--as advised by Rimbaud--*actively*, to investigate the limits of existence and eventually remake the self. Not mere "theorizing," but a physical *commitment* is called for here.

APOLLO'S REVENGE

Foucault convincingly demonstrates in *Discipline & Punish* that "power" (the operations of order) had previously manifested itself in Western society as a singular Dionysian blood-spectacle witnessed by the undifferentiated mass as an affirmation of the rights of the sovereign (i.e., in public executions), with the eyes of the many gazing upon the spectacular event. In our "modern," urbanized, techno-industrial era, Foucault finds the direction of eye-power reversed, typified by the hidden camera-eye (of governments, of corporations, and so on) which monitors the activity of potentially disruptive units composing the mass. The structure of society thus shifts from--to use Nietzschean terminology--the Dionysian mode of the sovereign and the amorphous mass who gaze

upon the spectacular *image* of power, to the Apollonian mode of capitalism and liberal-humanist "democracy," whose constrictive controls are inscribed in the labyrinthine languages of law and bureaucracy: the "literate" society of *the Word* which forms and "normalizes" a new being called "the individual."

With this development, the previous culture of imagistic blood-spectacle becomes the ultimate *taboo*. As Nietzsche puts it, "labor man," now caught in the Apollonian cultural web of "custom and the social straitjacket," becomes "calculable," a kind of clockwork mechanism (*Birth* 190-1). This more "civilized," superficially benign culture, one dedicated to optimizing the utility of human life through micro-management, seeks to cut off the modern "individual" from the culture of the past, from the festival of cruelty which had not only served to dissuade transgression against the rights of the sovereign, but also--with its close connections to the irrational, Dionysian realm of nature--provided an imagistic source of *pleasure*. According to Nietzsche, we modern "domestic animals" recoil from "imagining clearly to what extent cruelty constituted the collective delight of older mankind, how much it was an ingredient of all their joys. . . . Not so very long ago, a royal wedding or great public celebration would have been incomplete without executions, tortures, or autos da fe," Nietzsche continues. "To behold suffering gives pleasure. . . . There is no feast without cruelty, as man's entire history attests. Punishment, too, has its festive features" (198).

The mass or "popular" festive culture of the previous societal configuration had to be eradicated if the new order was to function smoothly: such a strange confluence of intoxicating pleasure and pain could only be a threat to forces bent on spinning ever-finer Apollonian webs of societal control. But "eradication" of phenomena so deeply imprinted upon the human psyche proves impossible; instead, what develops is the "progressive sublimation and apotheosis of cruelty which not only characterizes the whole history of higher culture, but in a sense constitutes it" (198). On the level of "the individual," this manifests itself in Nietzsche's "bad conscience" (analogous to Freud's policing *superego*): the "interiorization" of the guilty subject--or the "soul"--which then manifests itself externally in "the fitting of the hitherto unrestrained and shapeless populace into a tight

mold" (217-19). But this sublimation also produces something else: "Bad conscience," Nietzsche asks, "has it not given birth to beauty itself? Would beauty exist if ugliness had not first taken cognizance of itself, not said to itself, 'I am ugly'"? (221). Here, Nietzsche identifies the emergence of present-day "high" and "low" art/culture as a by-product of the dominant capitalist/bourgeois, middle-class order.

UP THE DOWN STAIRCASE

> **The way up and the way down is one and the same, and God is day night, summer winter, war peace, satiety hunger.**
>
> **--Heraclitus of Ephesus**

What we discover here is that, as Norman O. Brown points out, "there is no aspect of higher culture uncontaminated by connections with anality" (*Life* 199). Like Brown, the contemporary Western gutter-dandy rejects a strict high/low binary division based on the repression and denial of the Dionysian continuum of polymorphous pleasure/pain, and seeks to restore the originary nexus between the high and the low before it was severed by the censorious middle. Gutter-dandies are *holistic*: quite often, as seen in the writings of Jean Genet and Henry Miller, they juxtapose and intertwine high-sounding "literary" passages with explicit "pornographic" imagery, explicitly (re)affirming the ineradicable connection between the two forms. This refusal to dismiss the "low" as alien, distasteful, and unworthy of exploration has in part led to the semi-exclusion of (post)modern dandyism and its attendant literature from the classrooms of the West, especially in North America.

BORN IN THE U.S.A.

America itself is the prime site for a study of the evolution of the dandy in the twentieth century. The birthplace of mass media and pop culture, including rock and roll, it spawned the "no limits" Mega-Capitalist and the "rugged individualist," both of which feed the American dream of fluid movement across class boundaries exemplified by Elvis Presley's "rags to riches" mythology. It is also the site of religious fundamentalism, with its emphasis on literal interpretations of scripture; of the "just say no" neo-Puritanism of right-wingers like anti-drug crusader Nancy Reagan; of the prim, anti-porn, anti-masculine

politics of "leftist" liberal-humanist feminists like Catherine MacKinnon, whose maxim "to say it is to do it" sounds like a twisted secular version of literalist fundamentalism. Yet there exists a less easily classifiable line of cultural figures operating in the American context, equally offensive to the guardians of the left and the right: a beautifully ravaged gutter-dandy like Jim Morrison, for instance, consuming vast quantities of Rimbaud's "poisons" in a Dionysiac frenzy whilst exposing his penis to teenage girls and boys, is surely as unacceptable a role-model to Reagan as to MacKinnon.

The application of political terminology like "left" and "right" to people like MacKinnon and Reagan and their successors is now passé. As Bruce Benderson points out, both left and right wing politics in Supercapitalistic America have now been subsumed by "normalizing" bourgeois management culture, with its need to identify, and then expel or re-form, all unstable, unruly, and truly "heterogeneous" elements which threaten the smooth hum of the capitalist machine, its *raison d'être*. These "two absurd agendas from the Right and from the Left," Benderson notes,

> are the product of a new conspiracy between two former enemies. Each had its grievances against the other, yet each agreed about the need to promote certain community standards. . . . Today we live the full flowering of that centrist paradise. Though nobody admits it, it is the utopic dream of a very specific class. . . . The middle classes of the Left and Right have conspired to strangle libido, aestheticism, and lower class expression. Because political correctness neglects the embarrassing subject of class, it has been able to become the voice of one ruling class--the homogenized suburban bourgeoisie. ("Degenerate Narrative" n. pag.)

As capitalism has become the *de facto* new religion, with even God being forced to shave and put on a suit, the underlying Puritan heritage of white/right America (work, guns and Jesus), and the bland Rousseauian utopianism of the left (whose basic drive now seems to be the legislation of "niceness" as a secular religion), have neatly dovetailed to create a New World (read: *American*) Order, as it was once described by former U.S. President George Bush.

A BAD CASE OF DEMOCRACY

> **Their most successful disguise is compassion. How tender they can become! How considerate! How touchingly sympathetic! But if you could ever get a look at them, what a pretty egomaniac you would see. They bleed with every bleeding soul in the universe--but they never fall apart. At the crucifixion they hold your hand and slake your thirst, weep like drunken cows. They are professional mourners from time immemorial. . . . Misery and suffering is their habitat, and at the equinox they bring the whole kaleidoscopic pattern of life to a glaucous glue. . . .**
>
> **--Henry Miller**

Particularly troubling and blackly humourous in the "postmodern" epoch has been the intellectual left's response to the triumph of American-styled capitalism and political rationalism in the West. The words "democracy" and "equality" have recently been repeated like a mantra by politically correct American culture theorists like Henry Giroux and bell hooks,[1] as if the levelling and reduction of individual styles, freedoms and choices to a uniform herd-level of bland non-hierarchical "goodness" envisioned by--them, who else?--presents some kind of "challenge" to "hegemonic" and "elitist" right/white corporate oppression. This view, negatively depicted by Foucault as "the Rousseauist dream" of many "revolutionaries" past and present, envisions "a transparent society, visible and legible in each of its parts," in which there are "no longer existing any zones of darkness . . . or . . . zones of disorder." Here, he continues in an unmistakably sarcastic tone, "each individual," of whatever social position "might be able to see the whole of society," communicating with an open heart and a "vision unobstructed by obstacles." Most importantly in this paradigm, "the opinion of all should reign over each." Foucault rightly sees such a scenario, which has unfortunately gained "hegemony" among the aforementioned societal progressives, not as utopia, but nightmare (*Power* 152).

Ironically, the ideologies espoused by these "Improvers of Mankind," as Nietzsche calls them, fit right into the corporate scheme of things. The Rousseauist philosophy, Foucault explains, actually meshes with the panoptic, Apollonian techniques of surveillance

associated with Jeremy Bentham, which he maligns in *Discipline and Punish* (152). This version of "liberal-humanism," as opposed to more traditional versions of liberalism or humanism, functions in reality as a pseudo-hip Puritanism, covert conservatism for those who detest the term. "Multiculturalists" and "politically correct" types, Camille Paglia notes, "are not radicals at all," but instead "represent a continuation of the genteel tradition of respectability and conformity," which covets above all the institutionalization of "American *niceness*" (*Vamps* 98). This code of niceness, however, fails to extend to those who may disagree with the political positions of its adherents, who are often characterized in a knee-jerk fashion with the by-now overly familiar labels meant to function like Hawthorne's scarlet letter: "sexist," "racist," and the like, as if the mere uttering of such words instantly damned the recipient(s). As a result of all this, both ultra-right American fundamentalists and ultra-left American feminists--such as MacKinnon and her ally Andrea Dworkin--have in various instances become strange and uncomfortable bedfellows, seen for instance in their joint "war against pornography." "It used to be," says John Fekete, "the right-wing fringe groups" who were the energizing force behind censorship campaigns, these efforts finding strong opposition among members of the traditional left. However, he notes, the "censorship impulse" is emanating more strongly "from the left, from feminists," with a much higher rate of success. Ironically, "it's even the same passages that get censored, the same books, the same kind of sexuality" which causes a moral uproar (K12). Here again is the bourgeois fear of Nietzsche's cruel festival--the messy Dionysian reality of nature and the suffering body--in full hysterical flight: not only to say "it," but to even think "it," is "evil." *Doing it* is out of the question.

WEEP FOR ME, OEDIPUS

> **Without a profound complicity with natural forces such as violent death, gushing blood, sudden catastrophes . . . the fall into stinking filth of what had been elevated--without a sadistic understanding of an incontestably thundering and torrential nature, there could be no revolutionaries, there could only be a revolting utopian sentimentality.**
>
> **--Bataille**

****

What we have to find is the possibility of a community of shattered egos. . . . The question is: how can we genuinely shatter the iron collar of group formations which demand conformity and uniformity? . . . How can depropriation (not being identical to others, or even self-identical) become a politically powerful and compelling force?

—Avital Ronell

****

All in all it's just another brick in the wall
All in all you're just another brick in the wall

—Pink Floyd, "Another Brick In The Wall Pt. 2"

Concurrent with the development of the previously described strain of "liberal-humanism" has been an emphasis, especially by neo-leftist educators and feminists, on "therapy" and ego psychology, i.e., the normalization of the deformed and wounded (by the aforementioned villains) ego as the answer to problems of "self-esteem." Benderson points out that in America, leftist sixties political activism metamophosed into seventies "new historico-political criticism," and finally, in the eighties, into no "kind of activism at all," having begun with "the aim of liberation," only to end "trapped in dusty Anglo-Saxon exigencies." All the while, as even French theory was being farcically transformed into unrecognizable, sentimentalized Americana, "the [middle-class] id was being boiler-plated and the superego strengthened" ("Degenerate Narrative" n. pag.).

These developments on the left mesh perfectly into the schematics of capitalist / bourgeois order. Locate and zealously protect your assigned territory within the grid or be "damned": the oedipal structure of the Holy Nuclear Family (daddy-mommy-me), which the middle-class sees as "the basic linchpin of the social order" (Benderson, "Degenerate Narrative" n. pag.) thus expands outward, incorporating racial, gender and sexual groups collectively seeking states of "equality" and "normality," these delimiting categories finally fusing with the Apollonian structures of socio-political order, Deleuze and Guatarri's "despotic machine."[2] These "subaggregates" then "assume precisely [the]

form of bricks that ensures their integration into the higher unity . . . consonant with the great collective designs of this same unity: major work projects, extortion of surplus value, tributes, generalized servitude" (*Anti* 199).

As essayist Pete Hammill has correctly pointed out, this kind of thinking has led America into a cultural "endgame," where identities are not the result of existential self-fashioning, but are instead determined by "membership in groups." The subjects of such liberal-humanist dogma "are not individuals but components of categories, those slots and pigeonholes beloved of sociologists, pollsters, and the U.S. Census Bureau. And such categories, they believe, are destiny" (89). Reducing itself to the component of a grid, mere dots in the omnipresent and blighted mediascape, the liberal-humanist subject has *always already* submitted to its neutering and containment, accepting what Hamill accurately calls "a social worker's version of predestination," or Calvinism with a smile. Made a mere pawn within the abstract historical currents of gender, race, class, and so on, the Western subject, far from being "empowered," becomes infantilized.

THE BLAME GAME

With the utopian state of "normality" now elevated to the status of secular paranirvana, to be *ab*-normal, to incur "hurt feelings," now equates to the worst kind of horror. The fight for "equality" becomes aligned here to the ability to recover that "natural" nature-state of harmony and equilibrium described in *The Social Contract*, preceeding the subject's deformation by the hierarchical, tyrannical structures of "civilization." Yet, paradoxically, this effort to turn schools and other social agencies into group therapy centers has not created an atmosphere of equanimity, but instead has produced subjects who "come out of the process seething with bitterness . . . followed by the need to blame" (Hamill 90). North American culture has as a result currently splintered into proliferating, monad-like groups--defined by race, gender, sexual preference, what have you--battling over predefined territory. The peaceful, benign utopia envisioned by the intellectual leftists who promoted this ego-centered psycho-philosophy has instead manifested itself as a hothouse of hysteria, a raging babble-on where inflamed victim rhetoric has become the seeming key to "power."

TALK IS CHEAP

So it is not enough to say that the subject is constituted in a symbolic system. It is not just in the play of symbols that the subject is constituted. It is constituted in real practices. . . .

--Foucault

****

I shall never forget the wonder and violence of the determination to open my eyes, to look straight at what is happening, at what is. And I should not know what is happening if I knew nothing about extreme pleasure and extreme pain.

--Bataille

The ominous developments we have just examined can be at least partially attributed to the aforementioned belief in a logocentric world composed of logocentric subjects, mediated by the typically bourgeois fear of experience. As Brown explains, the belief in confessional therapy is based on the Freud's wishful notion that "talk can cure," when in fact "it is easy to demonstrate, with the aid of Freud, that words have no such power" (*Life* 149). Brown points out that Freud himself has shown that "words are only one class of the sets of symbols that make up human culture," and that they alone provide no access to the repressed realm of the id, Freud's psychological term for Nietzsche's Dionysian realm of flux and chaos. Today's millennial victim-hysteria thus issues from the repression of memories far deeper than parental spankings received at the age of four. These are "not the ordinary kind of memories that can be revived through word associations" but those "which belonged to the primary process in the id, and never were in consciousness; hence, they were never forgotten" (149). If MacKinnon's "to say it is to do it" victim-maxim were valid, then surely word-based therapy would have a much higher rate of success!

What simultaneously repels and attracts a bourgeois culture which has been taught to covet normality above all else, then, are *limit-impulses* which threaten to overflow into physical experience. Apollonian art forms both high and low, such as "the literary text . . . surrealist art . . . advertisement(s) . . . a pop festival or jazz concert" are *displacements* by

which outbreaks of the Dionysian are delimited on a mass level (Stallybrass and White 178, 181). Such controlled catharsis is acceptable to the status quo as a safety valve for the resultant tensions of societal repression. As society becomes ever more encased within constrictive corporate strictures, however, the field of "entertainment" has expanded and intensified to keep pace; hence, popular culture's mutation into an electronic/media culture which mocks the corporate "bored- room" world from which it springs, powered by an ever-expanding and potentially uncontrollable technology. The Internet, originally developed as a tool of the power-complex critiqued by Foucault (here, the U.S. military), provides an example of how the technologies of Apollonian control (including, of course, words themselves), can be can be appropriated and utilized by the populace for pleasurable, Dionysian purposes (the "Net" is now rife with downloadable rock music, not to mention pornographic text and images). Clearly, the *potential*, still largely untapped, exists somewhere in this formula for subversive action on a mass level.

I AM CURIOUS--YELLOW

I recognize the symptoms
but I don't ever listen
to such morbid hysteria.

--The Only Ones, "As My Wife Says"

****

I remember thinking that only in America could such hysteria be. Only where the urge to conform had become a faceless president reading a meaningless speech to a huge faceless people, only where machinery had impressed its forms deep into the fibres of the human brain so as to make efficiency and the willingness to cooperate the only flags of value . . . only here could such hysteria be.

--Alexander Trocchi

Andrew Klavan writes, "the instinct to censor is the tragic flaw of utopian minds . . . because the perfectibility of human society is a fiction itself, it comes under threat from other, more believable fictions, especially those that document and imply the cruel, the chaotic, the Dionysian for their thrills" (*Utne* 96). The "experts" whose lives are most

intricately tied up with the contemporary corporate machine--the aforementioned representatives of both "left" and "right" wing societal configurations--are thus most threatened by the Dionysian *potential* of electric media culture: rock and roll, Hollywood, and pornography. American popular culture, which as Paglia correctly points out has conquered the Western world, has evolved into such a powerful force exactly *because* the U.S.A. has also been the prime breeding ground of the repressive corporate capitalism and attendant business "realities" to which we all, from writer to rocker to academic, now must pay lipservice. Thus, both Foucault's analysis of an emerging techno-corporate Western society of hidden power and repressive controls, and Paglia's critique of American popular culture as a contemporary pagan spectacle, though seemingly antipathetic, are accurate. The explosion of popular culture and electronic media is a Dionysian reaction to increasing Apollonian compression, and as such attempts to reverse the direction of eye power, with the eyes of the mass turned back upon the spectacular event.

The problem which arises here hearkens back to my previous formulation: *Action versus Passivity*. As we have seen, the Western--and especially American--subject is caught in a double-bind, "where sex is sin and yet sex is paradise" as Norman Mailer puts it, pulled in opposite directions between the increasingly complex technological demands of the working world (with its Calvinistic undercurrent of hard work=spiritual election dogma) it must navigate to survive, and by the Pop-media spectacle constantly ready to fill the void of its "leisure" time.

This situation has led to a kind of polymorphic paralysis. Too often, the subject's learned docility in the work place transfers itself to the home, where the role of "passive spectator gazing upon the electronic pagan shrine" merely titillates, and ultimately fails to re-connect with the Dionysian. A general ennui develops. The subject is reduced to the dual modes of worker drone and mindless consumer: *life*, it seems, is taking place elsewhere. To step outside these prescribed and imposed roles indicates a malfunctioning ego, and constitutes a violation of the communal code of "normality": it's *normal* to want to work and work, to want to buy and buy, to produce more and more drones for the

machine, *ad infinitum*. Yet the nagging feeling persists, to quote Elvis Costello, that "there's no action."

Hence, societal neurosis, a state of mass inertia punctuated by outbursts of random, seemingly senseless, violence, and general cultural paranoia. William Irwin Thompson perceptively pinpoints the dangers of this development, which he labels the creation of an "electropeasantry in the state of Entertainment." Typified by a troubling "new passivity," the subjects of this new State of "mediocracy--a society of the mediocre bonded together by the entertainment media," dissolve into a collectivist illusion of "fantasy participation in the electronic state" (31). The end result of this phenomenon is a public which lacks the ability to think critically, and thus becomes easy prey for the facile emotional appeals of the left/right wing spokesmen we have already discussed here. "In this world of emotional signaling," Thompson explains,

> it is more important to protect the flag than civil liberties. The flag is not a symbol of a revolution fought to achieve civil liberties from kings and cardinals; it is a symbol, not of individuation, but of collectivization, of the electropeasant's bond to the body politic. If the flag is burned, then he or she is burned . . . electropeasants [thus] ignite in rage at their own disfigurement. (33-4)

Thompson's critique brings out the important point that the rational, Apollonian principle must be retained in any form of practical critique of Western society, as in Rimbaud's *rational* derangement of the senses. Even someone as generally favourable to electronic culture as Paglia concurs with Thompson's view; for her, the result of large-scale passive immersion in the electronic spectacle is mass hysteria. Such people, lacking the critical skills that come with the development of Apollonian skills such as reading and writing, "become very susceptible to someone's ideology. The longing for something structured . . . that gives them a world-view is so intense that whatever comes along, whether it's fascist or feminist ideology . . . they'll glom on to it and they can't critique it" ("Scream" 54). The question, then, is not how to discard the Apollonian operations of order/power, but instead how to obtain active control of them on the level of individual: how to "frame Dionysus."

PART B: THE PRESCRIPTION--*DESTRUCTURALIST* THERAPY

True sanity entails in one way or another the dissolution of the normal ego.

--R. D. Laing

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Anyone who loves art knows that psychoanalysis has no monopoly on the power to heal. What the times call for is . . . the beginning of the co-operation of the two in the work of therapy and in the task of making the unconscious conscious.

--Norman O. Brown

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To confess, to whine, to commiserate, always demands a toll. To sing, it doesn't cost you a penny. Not only does it cost you nothing--you actually enrich others.

--Henry Miller

The poetics of contemporary neo-dandyism, whose most prominent contemporary manifestation is the gutter-dandy, provide true therapy for a repressive, static culture by engaging, in both theory *and* praxis, and encouraging others to engage in, a spiralling process of individual *depowerment*[3] and *re-construction* I call *destructuralism*. As Brown decrees, "the human ego must face the Dionysian reality, and therefore a great work of self-transformation lies ahead of it. . . . the problem is the construction of a Dionysian ego" (*Life* 175), not a *discarding* of Apollonian order and structure, but rather a different *use* of it than we have today. Like the aforementioned liberal-humanist "experts," the practitioners of neo-dandyism also see "civilization" as the enemy, but for diametrically opposed reasons. Whereas the former see the originary subject as a benign, neutral entity impinged upon by tyrannical and hierarchical societal structures, the latter embrace the full implications of the raging Dionysian id (the interior [human] nature), and see societal structures as impeding access to it, crucial if one is to throw off the yoke of societal power and re-create the self from the inside-out.

In contemporary neo-dandyism, words are not elevated to the status of a magic

curative elixir or linguistic snake-oil "Truth," as in traditional modes of "literature" or confessional "therapy," but are instead *rhetorical*, part of an ongoing process emanating from the artist's individual experience while at the same time open to all. The "experience book" is just that: a book of experience, both its seed and its fruit. As such, it transcends facile categorization: fiction, autobiography, philosophy, pornography, it is all of these things and more--an "inventory," as gutter-dandy Alexander Trocchi puts it (*Cain's* 232). Functioning both as an "invitation" to intense living and as a Dionysian experience-in-itself which allows the reader "to be borne along, within it, and by it, a happy wreck" (Foucault, *Archaeology* 216), the experience-book is a book of breakdown--of breaking down--Apollonian boundaries. Instead of aligning themselves to the Judeo-Christian cult of metaphoric Holy Word, gutter-dandies generally take their cue from the older, pagan tradition, placing the bold, often shocking *image* at the center of their work, often provoking the label "pornographic" from liberals and conservatives alike, a label they make little effort to evade. Foucault himself "confesses" his obsession with the image of the "upturned eye" in the erotic writings of Bataille, which, he stresses, does not function as a metaphor, as it "has no meaning," but instead as a "nondialectical form of philosophical language" (*Language* 48). For Foucault, the image is thus *rhetorical* in nature, leading both author and reader toward "the essential emptiness" of "being at the limit" (48-9).[4]

"Intertextuality" is too weak and limited a term for this phenomenon, indicating once again only a *word*-world, a subject made of only *words*, *words* as the singular cure for a diseased Apollonian order. Poststructuralist emphasis on "intertextuality" really amounts to more bourgeois censorship, a way to take the body and nature out of the debate and thus keep everything in the much cleaner, more manageable and passive abstract. The stakes here are much higher than those suggested by Roland Barthes' onanistic and ultimately ineffectual "jouissance" world of purely textual bliss.[5] Barthes is symptomatic of the "theorists" Brown describes as being "completely taken in by the inhuman abstractions of the path of sublimation" while avoiding "contact with concrete human beings, with their concrete bodies" (*Life* 318). In his poem "Bubonics," Trocchi responds

to such writing: "Literature is that body of doctrine / whose carnality is metaphorical / whose pretension is categorical / and which, incidentally / is worth bugger-all," he writes (*Leisure* 13). The "writerly" text as promoted by Barthes, which revels in its status as pure undecidable abstraction, is thus an anathema to a neo-dandyism, which, like Zen Buddhism, originates with the experience of the individual—where the problem starts—but whose very premises posit societal transformation: a community of transformed *individuals*. R. D. Laing's term, ***interexperience***, is neo-dandyism's answer to poststructuralist intertextuality. In this view, the ineradicable relationship between *experience* and ***behaviour*** is made explicit, as "only through action can our experience be transformed" (Laing 23). Behaviour *as* an art: from Diogenes to Lou Reed, a defining characteristic of the gutter-dandy.

As opposed to the liberal-humanist legacy of the 1960s, with its naive, neo-moralistic faith in a utopic Rousseauian pastorality, neo-dandyism is not blind to the underlying chaotic "reality" of nature, whether internal or external. As Paglia points out, "Dionysus, trivialized by Sixties polemicists, is not pleasure but pleasure-pain, the gross continuum of nature, the subordination of all living things to biological necessity" (*Sex, Art* 105). Immersion in and experiential knowledge of the chaos, desire and violence of chaotic [human] nature is instead seen by gutter-dandies as a necessary initial step in the eventual reconstruction of the subject, first, and society, second.[6] Thus, Foucault's "invitation" to slip into the state of the "happy wreck" should be understood in the light of one of his most pervasive, and subversive, influences, the Marquis de Sade, who valorizes "those perverse writers" whose

> corruption is so dangerous, so *active*, that their single aim is, by causing their appalling doctrines to be printed, to immortalize the sum of their crimes after their own live are at an end; they themselves can do no more, but their accursed writings will instigate the commission of crimes, and they carry this sweet idea with them to their graves. . . . (italics mine, *Justine* 611)

It is no coincidence that Trocchi chooses this Sadean quotation to lead off his masterwork, or "mastercrime," as James Campbell calls *Cain's Book*. The novel, a

definitive text of gutter-dandyism, is "a novel to give to minors, a book to corrupt young people," writes Campbell (458). Again, the key here is the word "active." The experience-book (a term coined by Foucault) functions as an *active* rhetorical agent, "a unit force whose power is exerted upon the world in a particular direction" (Tompkins 204). As such, it is diametrically opposed to contemporary critical notions that "the first requirement of a work of art in the twentieth century is that it should do nothing," but merely exist as an end in itself, as an "object," a work of "Art," something to be merely "admired" for its fine craftsmanship (210). "This eternal art will be functional," states Rimbaud, and its poetics "will no longer give rhythm to action; it *will be in advance*" (103). The gutter-dandy appropriates and recuperates a poetic language which has become harnessed to the operations of power and the needs of the state, an especially heinous state of affairs in the current era of "scientific" rationality, but one dating as far back as the classical period, where Plato, the original censor, argued for the exclusion of poetry from the ideal state because of its potentially disruptive influence.

INTO THE VOID

Friar hermit stumbles over
the cloudy borderline.
Frozen warnings,
close to mine
close to the
frozen borderline.

--Nico

"Nothing": the title of the final chapter of Brown's *Love's Body*. "Admit the void; accept loss forever," says Brown (260). The journey which must be taken is toward the true democracy of the Void, where the competing multinarratives of worldly ego are united in silence, as opposed to psychotherapy, "where nothing happens but an exchange of words." "To be reborn," writes Brown, "words have to pass through death, the silence of the grave" (263). The emptying out of these inert, passive, obedient bodies prefigures their rebirth as *active* rhetorical figures. The praxis of Rimbaud's supreme "Scholar," which is the blueprint for the neo-dandy as identified by Foucault, initially entails this realization of a state of nothingness. *Depowerment* means the wholesale voiding of the

subject, "a whole scouring of the unconscious, a complete curettage" (Deleuze and Guattari 311). "I often wondered how far out a man could go without being obliterated," wonders heroin addict "Joe Necchi," the thinly-veiled autobiographical narrator of *Cain's Book*; "to exist simply in abeyance, to give up . . . and come naked to apprehension" (11-12).

Perhaps such notions are nothing new for those living in Eastern cultures, where religions such as Buddhism stress similar notions; in Buddhism, as in *destructuralism*, the realization of *sunyata*, (the void, emptiness) is "not the nihilist statement for which it is often taken," but instead signifies the subject's realization that all human concepts and abstractions "are ultimately void," and that *sunyata* is "itself is not a mere state of nothingness, but . . . the very source of all life and the essence of all forms," the fount of creativity (Capra, *Tao* 110). Rock critic Lester Bangs explains the same phenomenon taking place in Velvet Underground singer Nico's remarkable solo album *The Marble Index:* "She's chosen to *de*-create from the surface to decreate again and again until the only message is, 'I'm the life force itself, I'm the will to live'" ("Nico" 55). Western culture, however, with its Calvinist *Weltanschauung*, characterizes the goal of striving for "nothing" as at best inexcusable laziness, at worst a form of insanity. Who wants "nothing"? Yet, according to Bataille, that is *exactly* what the individual who wishes to become sovereign must seek: "I don't want to lose sight of the main thing," he declares. "The main thing is always the same: sovereignty is **NOTHING**" (*Accursed* 3: 430). Bataille's advocacy here of a personal potlach is in opposition to the wishes of the Great Corporate Deity who offers us a plethora of pleasing, purchasable products; for today's neo-Calvinist bourgeois, not to *accumulate* casts severe doubt that you are, indeed, among the Elect.

RATIONALLY DERANGED

> **Prudery may be healthy for backward souls, but those who would be afraid of nude girls or whiskey would have little to do with 'joy before death.'**
>
> **—Bataille**

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They took a path where no one goes
They hold no quarter
They ask no quarter. . . .

--Led Zeppelin (unafraid of whiskey/nude women)

Baudelaire's assertion that *dandysme* is a form of mysticism finds resonance in poetics which posit and promote *systematic* methods toward non-rationality, as in Rimbaud's "rational derangement of all the senses." The "experience-book" of the gutter-dandy thus differs from other avant-garde texts which stress the "unrecuperability" of the signifier in that it functions (covertly or explicitly) as a *book of instruction, and as such aims to communicate with its audience.* This point alone makes it radical within the context of much of the abstract and overly "theoretical" experimental poetics of the twentieth century, which generally promote an attitude of passivity instead of praxis. "If you have to lay yourself bare, then you cannot trifle with words, play with slow-moving sentences," writes Bataille in his "erotic novelette" *Madame Edwarda*. "Should no one unclothe what I have said, then I shall have written in vain. Edwarda is not dream's airy invention; the real sweat of her body soaked my handkerchief. . ." (93).

Colin Falck points out that this "move toward a literature of experience," which I locate as a key tenet of neo-dandyism, "represents a fundamental shift of sensibility" which he sees as truly "post-modern," in the sense of "after modernism." "Our need," says Falck, "is for an art that can engage with, and thereby redeem, the mechanized and de-sacralized world of practical life" (169). In contrast to the "postmodern" artist who is producing a cynical recycling of past styles, the gutter-dandy is perhaps the *true* postmodern figure, collapsing the "great divide" between art and life. While "'radicals' such as Habermas counsel that the desire to abolish symbolic mediation is irrational," John Zerzan argues,

> it is becoming clearer that when we really experience with our hearts and hands the sphere of art is shown to be pitiable. In the transfiguration we must enact the symbolic will be left behind and art refused in favor of the real. Play, creativity, self-expression and authentic experience will recommence at that moment. (139)

ROCK N' ROLL DOCTOR

Doctor, Priest, Mystic, Shaman: all roles appropriated at various times by Rimbaud's "horrible workers": as such, the "postmodern" dandy recognizes no boundaries between either roles or artistic forms. Thus, Cleveland, Ohio's Trent Reznor and his one-man studio band Nine Inch Nails, who metamorphose the intent of the experience-book into the musical arena. Reznor is a gutter-dandy and monstrous priest of *destructuralism*, a self-confessed "control addict" who composes alone in the studio, utilizes Apollonian technology (in the form of computers) to make some of the most intricate, and at the same time most volcanic, Dionysiac rock music yet heard. The "experience-book" here mutates into the "experience-album," *The Downward Spiral*, highlighted by the reverberating synthetic riffs and instructive lyrics of "Closer":

help me tear down my reason,
help me its your sex I can smell
help me you make me perfect,
help me become somebody else
i want to fuck you like an animal
i want to feel you from the inside
i want to fuck you like an animal
my whole existence is flawed
you get me closer to god

Reznor's philosophical stance here is analogous to the "Practice of Joy Before Death" described by Bataille. "While it is appropriate to use the word *mysticism* when speaking of 'joy before death' and its practice," notes Bataille, "this implies no more than an affective resemblance between this practice and those of the religions of Asia or Europe" (*Visions* 236). The "god" Reznor addresses is not the usual metaphysical entity located *outside* or *beyond* (of that entity, Reznor sings "your god is dead / and no one cares" in *The Downward Spiral*'s "Heresy"), but rather *within*: the polymorphous god of the body. Here is the "apotheosis of that which is perishable," the very "ripeness" that Paglia locates throughout *Sexual Personae* as the basis of decadence and decadent art. Through the vehicle of the flesh (itself a technology, a "desiring machine" as named by Deleuze and Guattari) altered by the systematic use of sex, alcohol, drugs, blues, jazz and rock music, and the "experience book" itself, the gutter-dandy (re)discovers a modality of life which

predates "the intrusion of a servile morality," and blows apart the constrictive rules of our current cultural endgame. Through a subversion of Apollonian techniques, the sovereign self is rediscovered in "the animal" within. The result is that the constricted identity-cells of "society" are displaced by a life "glorified from root to summit" (Bataille, *Visions* 237), one which shatters the societal ego-gridlock and "breaks on through" to the realm of polymorphously perverse satisfaction sought in Nine Inch Nails's raucous "I Do Not Want This": "I want to know everything / I want to be everywhere / I want to fuck everyone / I want to do something that matters." As Bataille points out, this true "liberation" can only occur when man "stops behaving like a cripple, glorifying necessary work and letting himself be emasculated by the fear of tomorrow" (*Visions* 237). It is precisely the quest for such "liberation" that (in)forms the gutter-dandy as he develops throughout the history of the West.

Notes

1. See Henry Giroux, "Postmodernism as Border Pedagogy: Redefining the boundaries of Race and Ethnicity," and bell hooks, "Postmodern Blackness," both in Natoli and Hutcheon 452-496 and 510-518.

2. R. D. Laing similarly comments: "The family's function is to repress Eros; to induce a false consciousness of security; to deny death by avoiding life; to cut off transcendence; to believe in God, not to experience the Void; to create, in short, one-dimensional man; to promote respect, conformity, obedience; to con children out of play; to induce a fear of failure; to promote a respect for work; to promote a respect for "respectability." See *The Politics of Experience* 65.

3. The term *depowerment*, analogous to Avital Ronell's *depropriation*, suggested by Wayne Gotts in the unpublished essay, "*Beautiful Losers* after AIDS: William T. Vollman's *Butterfly Stories*" 7.

4. This devaluation of the great Metaphysical Metaphor in favour of the Image has made the gutter-dandy the black sheep of the literary world created and policed by academia. Yet in fact, the image has been "problematic" since antiquity. Foucault points out that, among physicians of the classical era, there was a "general distrust of 'images' (*phantasiai*)" (*Care* 136), which were thought to disturb the equilibrium, the natural balances of bodily appetites required for good health. Images, such as "those which can be seen at the theater; those which are suggested by reading, singing, music and dancing," were thought to "insinuate themselves into the mind without there being anything that corresponds to them in the needs of the body," giving rise in the soul to "empty desires" (137). As time moves on, however, and Judeo-Christianity triumphs over Paganism, the characterization of images, powered by the prohibition against graven images in Exodus 20:4--"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image"--takes on an increasingly *moralistic* tone, and "the struggle against internal or external images" thus becomes "one of the most constant aspects of sexual ethics from antiquity onward" (139).

5. See Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*.

6. The pagan image thus returns us to the primal processes of nature which Judeo-Christianity strives to deny, an unpopular concept among current squeamish bourgeois social thinkers and "politically correct" artists who see "the figure of Man," as Mark Seem notes, "behind every social event," in the same way that the Judeo-Christian God is always imagined to be "looking down upon us." Such thinkers, trapped in rigid Apollonian paradigms, "talk figures and icons and signs," but are willfully blind to the "forces and flows" of the primordial realm, which must necessarily be experienced (xx).

CHAPTER ONE: THEORIZING NEO-DANDYISM

The critical ontology of ourselves has to be considered not, certainly, as a theory, a doctrine, nor even as a permanent body of knowledge that is accumulating; it has to be conceived as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them.

–Michel Foucault

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I formulate infinity / and store it deep inside me

–The Meat Puppets, "Oh Me"

Toward the end of his career (and life), Michel Foucault requested that an essay which he had recently completed entitled "What Is Enlightenment?" occupy a strategically central position in the incipient *Foucault Reader.*[1] The essay is remarkable in its explicit embrace of what Foucault's mentor Pierre Hadot nervously refers to as a "new form of dandyism, a late twentieth-century style" (*Philosophy* 211). Hadot's trepidation is symptomatic of the kind of reception that the figure of the dandy is likely to receive in the often overly sober climate of contemporary academe; the word itself tends to connote something frivolous, problematic, "a culture of the self which is *too* aesthetic," as Hadot puts it (211), the unstated meaning here being "too morally questionable." Yet, for Foucault, the problem being addressed *was* ultimately a political one, a quest shared by classical scholar Hadot in his own work: how does one both create the self and attain wisdom in a world which insists that it can--and indeed must--conduct the former task, and puts little if any value on the latter?

As James Miller points out, Foucault's work has been used in a variety of ways by North American scholars, mostly in the effort to bend his thought, whether or not it truly fits, into the "socially progressive" shapes of their own characteristically secular, liberal-humanist thinking.[2] Conveniently ignored have been the protestations of thinkers such as Gilles Deleuze, who instead sees in Foucault's thought the operations of a *mystic,*[3] which

for the aforementioned liberal-humanists, is a notion which often is tantamount to heresy. Yet, though he may have indeed thrown many off the trail (as was his wont), the culmination of Foucault's thought in the neo-dandyism of "What Is Enlightenment?" extends the notion posited by one of the seminal theorizers of dandyism, Charles Baudelaire, of the dandy as "a weird kind of spiritualist," and dandyism itself, "a kind of religion" (*Painter* 28).

It is appropriate, then, to begin with the latest (until now) major theorizer of dandyism, Foucault, who gives the theory a turn in the direction of the gutter, aided heavily by his direct influences, Bataille and Baudelaire. Having established the tenets of this *neo-dandysme*, we can then go back (in a kind of genealogy-in-reverse) to examine some of the perhaps not-so-obvious roots of the gutter-dandy in history, seen in the state of *atopos* inhabited by classical philosophers, the anti-nature bias of medieval Gnosticism, and the anti-word, pro-image Anabaptism of John of Leyden, all figures and movements obsessed with the key notion of individual sovereignty.

FOUCAULT'S (a) DANDY

It is the quest for an individual sovereignty free from the tyranny of the group, yet at the same time offering itself freely to the subaggregates of the group without discrimination, that animates the thought of the late-period Foucault which culminates in "What Is Enlightenment?" For Foucault, a state of "enlightenment" is one where any individual can "seize power," subverting societal power structures and re-routing them as much as possible back to the control of the subject. As he put it in an interview during this latter phase of his career:

> Relations of power are not something bad in themselves, from which one must free one's self. . . .The problem is not of trying to dissolve (these relations) in the utopia of a perfectly transparent communication, but to give one's self the rules of law, the techniques of management, and also the ethics, the *ethos*, the practice of self, which would allow these games of power to be played with a minimum of domination. (*Final Foucault* 18)

"What Is Enlightenment?" expands on this power-praxis thematic, and posits the figure of

the dandy--as noted, a problematic figure for academics--as its resolution, its vehicle. Foucault's dismissal here of a "utopia of perfectly transparent communication" is a not-so-veiled attack on group politics, identity politics, Rousseauian politics . . . in other words, all the things that Foucault was becoming associated with in North American academic circles at this point in his career.[4] Something "other" than these ideological avenues--which Foucault had consistently been at odds with throughout his career--is proffered instead in "What Is Enlightenment?": a turn *away* "from all projects that claim to be global or radical" (i.e., group causes), toward "work carried out by ourselves upon ourselves as free beings" (*Foucault Reader* 46-7). For Foucault, the most sublime formulation of such "work," in which one becomes the "object of a complex and difficult elaboration," is that which "Baudelaire, in the vocabulary of his day, calls *dandysme*" (41).

This major pronouncement has been given scant attention in academic circles, even though Foucault's final scholarly works, *The Care of the Self* and *The Use of Pleasure*, were his attempts to locate the historical basis for the "arts of existence," identifying the "technologies of the self" where "men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an *oeuvre* that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria" (*Use* 10-11): the same process which Foucault promotes as the very core of a "modern" ethos in "What Is Enlightenment?" Yet it would be a mistake to think that Foucault had only in the final stages of his life and career become intrigued by such notions. For closely linked to *dandysme* is the theme of *sovereignty*, which is explored in early Foucault texts, as well as in works by key Foucault influences such as Hadot, Bataille, Nietzsche and Sade.

THE QUEST FOR SOVEREIGNTY

As early as *Madness and Civilization* (*Histoire de la folie*, 1961), Foucault engages the theme of *sovereignty*,[5] an interest which eventually finds its culmination in his advocation of *neo-dandysme*. In that book's opening chapter, "Stultifera Navis," Foucault almost gleefully delineates the process--which he aptly calls an "inverse

exaltation"--by which societal outcasts become sovereign, even holy. Speaking of the final throes of leprosy in the Middle Ages, for example, Foucault notes that "what doubtless remained longer than leprosy, and would persist when the lazar houses had been empty for years, were the values and images attached to the figure of the leper as well as the meaning of his exclusion, the social importance of that insistent and fearful figure which was not driven off without first being inscribed within a sacred circle" (*Madness* 7). Furthermore, these "hieratic witnesses of evil . . . accomplish their salvation in and by their very exclusion; in a strange reversibility that is the opposite of good works and prayer, they are saved by the hand that is not stretched out" (7). These are strange priests, mystic holy men whose very exclusion empowers them as sacred objects outside the world of men.

Leprosy eventually dies out; the leper becomes a scarcely acknowledged apparition: still, the structures of *inverse exaltation* remain. "Often," Foucault notes, these "formulas of exclusion" by which the leper was cast out, yet strangely made central, "would be repeated" in the coming centuries: "Poor vagabonds, criminals, and deranged minds" would extend the lineage in which that which is excluded paradoxically becomes sacred. Next, Foucault invokes the Renaissance-era's "Ship(s) of Fools," literally boatloads of "vagabond madmen cast adrift" in vessels which "conveyed their insane cargo from town to town" (7-10). In accordance with the notions of sovereignty enunciated by Bataille, these bizarre figures are consecrated through the ritual act of their exclusion, as men whose "departure and embarkation do not assume their entire significance on the plane of social utility or security" (10). "We may call sovereign the enjoyment of possibilities that utility doesn't justify (utility being that whose end is productive activity)" states Bataille. "Life *beyond utility* is the domain of sovereignty" (*Accursed* 3: 198). For Bataille, Foucault, and for those who set them adrift, these madmen become the *Übermenschen of the underworld*, inhabitants of the dark side, the unconfined, chaotic "other" of an increasingly rationalized, ordered society. In them, we witness the destabilizing "manifestation in man of an obscure and aquatic element, a dark disorder, a moving chaos . . . which opposes the mind's luminous and adult stability" (*Madness* 13). Here is the

secret Dionysian element of an Apollonian order that wished forever to exclude it: a futile wish, as what is eventually revealed is that the "other"--this Dionysian, Satanic underbelly--is nothing other than the *same*.[6]

As Foucault's analysis shows, the theme of sovereignty is intertwined with the myths of the dark gods, Dionysus and Satan, rebellious underlords of the respective traditions of antiquity and Judeo-Christianity, grand possessors of forbidden knowledge, the secrets of chaos. The mad crew of the Ship of Fools revels in that which "society" constantly strives to deny: an "animality" which "has escaped domestication by human symbols and values." Paradoxically, this animality also constitutes a "difficult, hermetic, esoteric learning" (21), which--as Foucault develops his line of thinking here--begins to seem closely related to Gnosticism.[7] The madman, "by means of a delusive detachment that enables him to grant himself all the qualities, all the virtues or powers he lacks," transcends the everyday world of utility, becoming a gutter-sovereign: "Poor, he is rich; ugly, he admires himself; with chains on his feet, he takes himself for God" (29). Viewed from the standpoint of the norm, this creation of a "new royalty" (25) through inverse exaltation is a "false happiness" which presages "the diabolical triumph of the Antichrist; it is the End, already at hand" (22-3).

IMAGE OF SATAN

In a revealing but seldom-analysed essay entitled "The Prose of Actaeon," published in the same period as *Histoire de la folie*, Foucault, assessing the work of art-pornographer Pierre Klossowski, clarifies this line of thought and makes explicit his interest in a "harrowing [Nietzschean] vision of a gnosis beyond good and evil, glimpsed at the limits of experience" (J. Miller, *Passion* 459).[8] Foucault praises Klossowski for recovering in his work "a long lost experience" which posits the notion that "the Demon is not the Other, the opposite pole of God . . . but rather something strange and unsettling that leaves one baffled and motionless: the Same, the perfect likeness" ("Prose" xxi). He thus invokes a realm where there is ultimately no subject or object, but only emanations, proliferating images, of the Same, forever flickering into focus and then disappearing into nothingness. "Klossowski's experience lies here," says Foucault, "in a world where reigns

an evil genius who has not found his god, or who might just as well pass himself off as God, or who *might even be God himself*. Such a world is neither Heaven or Hell, nor limbo; it is, quite simply, our own world" (xxiv-xxv). Although, while perhaps *ultimately* existing beyond good and evil, it is also made clear here that whoever would aspire to a state of *individual* sovereignty--who would supplant God--is most commonly identified with evil: Satan, the rebel.

The world (which is our world) summoned up by Klossowski and deciphered by Foucault is thus ultimately a Pagan realm, a realm populated by images which multiply, interact, disperse and re-form. "This is a narrow, numinous region," says Foucault, "where all figures are the sign of something." In this "void," characterized by the absence of a corporeal deity of any kind, the substance of human presence is determined only by "the absence in which it resides, and in which it unrealizes itself through transubstantiation. *Numen quod habitat simulacro*" (xxv-xxvi). The "madman" himself, with a skull that is "already empty," devoid of the habits and patterns of everyday life, is not a cohering subject, possessor of a singular hidden "truth" or "meaning," but instead a repository of multiplying images, the pure reflection of exteriority, a "brilliant surface" where "no enigma is concealed" (16, 25). Such a being is a "useless" object, one with the power not "to teach, but to fascinate" (20): an *objet d' art*, seductive as evil, purveyor of a "fascination that now operates through the images of madness" (21).

This process of transubstantive "unrealization" (central to Foucault's theory of *dandysme*) which lifts the Apollonian veil--(re)mixes and (re)forms subjects and objects in kaleidoscopic fashion--is initially the secret of the madman, the monster, the (as we shall see) *philosopher*; in time, it becomes the secret formula of the gutter-dandy. Klossowski's art-realm is populated not by solid, "profound, continuous beings . . . but with beings consigned, like those of Nietzsche, to a profound forgetfulness, to that oblivion which makes possible, in 're-collection,' the sudden appearance of the Same."[9] Those who would dare enter this Dionysian realm are initially dissociated, torn apart--like Actaeon himself[10]--and, in a spiralling, kaleidoscopic fashion, re-form to project myriad images and *personae*, all individuated emanations of the Same, the Void. "Everything in

them is breaking apart, bursting, presenting itself and then withdrawing in the same instant," perpetuating a "whole game of alternating experiences in which the simulacra flicker" (xxx, xxxii). Dionysus framed, and (re)framed.[11]

The power of the image is located here, in its Dionysian potential for both *dissociation* and *fascination*. Typically, Foucault puns on the nature of Klossowski's imagistic prose of proliferating simulacra when he calls it "The Prose of Actaeon," from which we can also infer "The Prose of Action." The image--whether presented in words or pictures--is always potentially disruptive, threatening to draw subjects into transgressive action through fascination, as first recorded in the Biblical episode of Aaron and the Golden Calf (*Exodus* 32). In "Stultifera Navis," Foucault explains that, in Europe at the end of the sixteenth century, water imagery had obtained a baleful power, "water and madness" having "long been linked in the dreams of European man." In fact, "the very *image* of the great turbulent plain itself" --the sea--could cause a man to "lose faith in God and all his attachment to home; he is then in the hands of the Devil, in the sea of Satan's ruses" (italics mine, *Madness* 12). The ocean is thus the equivalent of the numinous, paradoxical space of Klossowski's art-world, transgressive movement which may lead to the break(ing) down of the subject.

Paradoxically, this loss of coherence also holds the initial key to what becomes for Foucault a central concept--"Power"--the key ingredient in the recipe for sovereignty. As time moves on and the "rational" age of the Enlightenment fully transforms the West, madness, from a sacred phenomenon of the *outer* limits (the isolation of the leper, the madmen at sea), becomes captured, "civilized," driven *inside* to lurk within mental hospitals, and within the human heart. By the seventeenth century, says Foucault, "madness has ceased to be--at the limits of world, man and death--an eschatological figure. . . . Oblivion falls upon the world navigated by the free slaves of the Ship of Fools. Madness will no longer proceed from a point within the world to a point beyond, on its strange voyage. . . . Behold it moored now, made fast among things and men." Dionysus has indeed been framed, encased by an emergent Apollonian societal order: "the classical experience of madness is born" (35). The initial task for s/he who would be

sovereign, then, is to first locate, then liberate, and finally manipulate this nearly-forgotten (because contained, shaped, and neutered by the Apollonian operations of reason from forces *outside*) "power."

THE PROBLEM WITH POWER

"The soul is the prison of the body" (*Discipline* 29). It was with this famous line from his critically lauded 1975 opus *Discipline and Punish* that Michel Foucault solidified his fame among post-Woodstock, Rousseauian-inclined academics in North America. Rousseau's theory, as enunciated in *The Social Contract* and other works, that the human subject was basically an innocent victim of corrupt societal forces, seemed, at least, to dovetail neatly with Foucault's expressed view that, contrary to Christian theology, what was thought of as the human soul was not something "born in sin and subject to punishment," but was rather a phantom imposed from without by "methods of punishment, supervision, and constraint" and thus a key factor "in the mastery that power exercises over the body," or "bio-power" (29). In the Rousseauian/hippie slang of post-1960s radicals, "getting back to the garden" meant isolating and removing these power operations so that the human subject could live in a democratic, mutually caring, "natural" state of equanimity and bliss. "Power" thus became a catch-all phrase for converted Foucauldians, begetting seemingly endless studies isolating the fate of its "victims" within the patriarchal confines of WASP history and literature. Or as Camille Paglia puts it, for many of Foucault's self-proclaimed coterie of social constructionists, "power" becomes a "squishy pink-marshmallow word" which "caroms around picking up lint and dog hair" but ultimately leads nowhere (*Sex, Art* 225).

Paglia's expression of disdain for utopian liberal theories (she calls *Sexual Personae* "a book written against humanism" [*Sex, Art* 106]) is hardly surprising, coming from an unabashed fan of Nietzsche and Sade. Yet her alignment of Foucault (as opposed to some of his followers), who claims the same influences, with such theories is quite puzzling. Take, for instance, Foucault's derisory comment during an interview in 1971: "In short, humanism is everything in Western civilization that restricts the desire for power: it prohibits the desire for power and excludes the possibility of power being

seized" (*Language* 21-2). Humanism is for Foucault "antiquated," an "insipid psychology" whose emphasis on the benign goodness of the originary subject constitutes a trap, fixing the individual within a rigid binary good/evil framework which guarantees nothing but continued subjection, frustrating the all-important quest for personal sovereignty (qtd. in J. Miller 172).

NIETZSCHE, APOLLO, DIONYSUS

At this point, it will be beneficial to examine more fully Nietzsche's concept of the Greek myths of the gods Apollo and Dionysus, central to Foucault's formulation of neo-dandyism.[12] Beginning with *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche organizes existence around two binary drives, the Apollonian and the Dionysian, "formative forces arising directly from nature" which are later depicted by the "human artist" (24). Apollo is for Nietzsche "the god of all plastic powers," the "*principium individuationis*" who fixes the limits of self and culture through the illusion of form, an artificer (21-2). Dionysus, on the other hand, represents the entire chaotic realm of eternal motion and flux which form strives to control, obscure, and deny. Transgression into the Dionysian realm risks the disintegration of the individual subject (a state of "madness") and its subsequent reintegration into the whole: "The mystical jubilation of Dionysus," states Nietzsche, "breaks the spell of individuation and opens a path to the maternal womb of being" (97).

The dichotomy which emerges from Greek culture and continues through the history of the West, then, is a nature/culture opposition: the Apollonian Socrates introduces the "illusion that thought . . . might plumb the farthest abysses of being and even correct it . . . strong in the belief that nature can be fathomed" (93-4). Western art, as a mirror of the human psyche, becomes in part a record of this basic struggle and the differing responses to it in various epochs. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, at least, Nietzsche implies that both drives should unfold in a sort of perpetual cycle or *spiral:* "Only so much of the Dionysian substratum of the universe," he says, "may . . . be dealt with by that Apollonian transfiguration; so that these two prime agencies must develop in strict proportion, conformable to the laws of eternal justice" (145). Later, in response to what he perceives as an imbalance in Apollo's favour originating with the Age of Reason, Nietzsche places

greater emphasis on the Dionysian, identifying it with that most important drive, the *will-to power*; finally, he proclaims himself "the last disciple" of Dionysus before succumbing to madness and silence (*Twilight* 198-9, 111).

James Miller notes Foucault's basic concurrence with Nietzsche's binary thesis that "every human embodies a compound of nature and culture, chaos and order, instinct and reason . . . symbolized . . . by Dionysus and Apollo" (69). Almost all of Foucault's work is concerned on some level with variations on this theme, the Apollonian drive variously identified by the names "limit" (e.g., "Preface To Transgression") and "power" (*Discipline and Punish*). The Apollonian, in contrast to the timeless, immanent realm of the Dionysian, is a historical force, embedded within our culture in a tangled network of conflicting paths "crisscrossed by intrinsic dangers" (*Foucault Reader* 249). Characterized by the use of "reason" and its offspring in the post-Enlightenment era, it actively delimits the chaotic flux of the Dionysian and produces both society, on the macrocosmic level, and personality, or "the subject," on the level of the individual. "I think," says Foucault,

> that the central issue of philosophy and critical thought since the eighteenth century has always been, still is, and will, I hope, remain the question: What is this Reason that we use? What are its historical effects? What are its limits, and its dangers?. . . . If it is extremely dangerous to say that Reason is the enemy that should be eliminated, it is just as dangerous to say that any critical questioning of this rationality risks sending us into irrationality. . . . if critical thought itself has a has a function . . . it is precisely to accept this sort of spiral, this sort of revolving door of rationality that refers us to its necessity . . . and at the same time, to its intrinsic dangers. (*Foucault Reader* 249)

Within our current Western episteme (or historical period), one characterized by a post-Enlightenment faith in reason and concomitant loss of belief in God, Foucault locates sexual experience as the final borderline separating what can be thought from the Dionysian realm of the unknown. He valorizes those writers/philosophers whose lives and works reside at the "limit of madness--astride the line separating reason from

unreason, balanced between the Dionysian and the Apollonian," where it is possible to glean information beyond this binary split and then transmit its dissonant content to others (J. Miller 107). Foucault's "art" thus performs a double-function: it is not merely *end*, *product* or *record*, but also *invitation*, *instruction* and *means*: its function is fully *rhetorical* in nature. The philosopher in this conception of things is cast in the role of the outsider, the *monster*, who transmits his "forbidden" and potentially disruptive Dionysian information back to the everyday world from beyond the Apollonian pale. For the roots of this phenomenon, however, we must turn to classical philosophy, and the work of one of Foucault's own key intellectual influences, Pierre Hadot.

BREAKING DOWN THE SUBJECT

> **Empty is the discourse of the philosopher by which no human passion is attended to.**
>
> **--Epicurus**
>
> **********
>
> **Ancient philosophy proposed to mankind an art of living. By contrast, modern philosophy appears above all as the construction of a technical jargon reserved for specialists.**
>
> **--Pierre Hadot**
>
> **********
>
> **Are You Experienced? Have you ever been experienced? Well, I have.**
>
> **--Jimi Hendrix**

The writings of Pierre Hadot, as Arnold I. Davidson points out, are "of profound importance" for an understanding of Foucault's latter-day investigations into the "arts of existence" (476). As Davidson explains, Hadot's work on the techniques of the self --or "spiritual exercises"-- in ancient philosophy has as its main tenet the notion that "in the ancient schools of thought, philosophy was a way of life." For Hadot, classical philosophy constituted "an invitation to each human being to transform himself" (*Philosophy* 275). Philosophy is thus not a merely abstract, reflective form of thinking, but an *activity*: it is a "conversion, a transformation of one's way of being and living, a

quest for wisdom"(275). Thus, Hadot continually underlines the "distinction . . . between philosophical discourse (or the discourse on philosophy) and philosophy itself" (Davidson 479). As philosophy moves away in modern times from being an *askesis*, a living practice, it becomes a mere "technical language reserved for specialists"--a development whose origins Hadot traces to the Middle Ages, when philosophy becomes exegetical[13]--and loses much of its transformative power, bogging down in the increasingly rarefied world of experts. "*Discourse about philosophy* is not the same thing as *philosophy*," Hadot emphasizes repeatedly. "In philosophy . . . we are not dealing with the mere creation of a work of art; the goal is rather to transform *ourselves*"(*Philosophy* 267-8), and this seems tantamount to saying that one's life must be made a work of art. When philosophy moves strictly into abstract, symbolic areas, what is lost, most importantly, is the former, more accessibly democratic function of philosophy, where "even someone who neither wrote nor taught anything was considered a philosopher," if his life was lived actively as an embodiment of a philosophical ethos (Davidson 479-480).[14]

THE VIEW FROM ABOVE

The journey of the classical philosopher, as Hadot formulates it, contains a seemingly paradoxical element that is also central to Foucault's theory of neo-dandyism: the true classical philosopher, in his view, uses--and issues an *invitation* for others to use--the active process of subject-dispersion (what a Freudian might call *ego-loss*) to achieve a unique kind of sovereignty, to stand apart from (but not to rule--which holds no interest) the rest of humanity and gain "the view from above."[15] Initially, this "invitation" is for Hadot a journey toward *ego-loss*, wherein "the whole of the philosopher's speculative and contemplative work becomes a spiritual exercise, insofar as he raises his thought up to the perspective of the Whole, and liberates it from illusions of individuality" (*Philosophy* 97). In this process, the philosopher learns to see beyond the limited parameters of the self in order to merge his consciousness with the totality of existence, rising from "individual, passionate subjectivity" to the objectivity of the "universal perspective" (97). Such a process constitutes a form of death: "At this stage, it is as though we die to our individuality; in so doing, we accede, on the one hand, to the

interiority of our consciousness, and on the other, to the universality of the All" (99).

There is a dualistic element, then, to the role of the philosopher in antiquity as defined by Hadot. While moving toward "the view from above" (a phrase which itself certainly connotes a "god-like" posture), and liberating himself from the illusions of the lesser self, the philosopher attains a sovereign state; yet, as Hadot describes it, this is hardly a process of canonization, but instead involves a great deal of *risk* on the part of its practitioner, entailing a *withdrawal* from much of the everyday world and its affairs which can have adverse consequences. This peculiar sovereignty "implies a rupture with what skeptics called *bios*, that is, daily life . . . the usual manner of seeing and acting . . . respecting customs and laws, practicing a craft or plying a trade. . . " (56). As a result of this rupture, says Hadot, such philosophers are often seen by society as "bizarre, if not dangerous characters," and "strange, a race apart." Much doubt and suspicion is created by those "whose behavior, without being inspired by religion, nonetheless completely breaks with the customs and habits of most mortals." "By the time of the Platonic dialogues," Hadot continues, "Socrates was called *atopos*, that is 'unclassifiable.' What makes him *atopos* is precisely the fact that he is a 'philo-sopher' in the etymological sense of the word; that is, he is in love with wisdom. For wisdom, says Diotima in Plato's *Symposium*, is not a human state, it is a state of perfection of being and knowledge that can only be divine" (57).

This *atopos* being, today more often termed a "monster," is the root form of the modern-day gutter-dandy, who employs a *deliberate* process of "inverse exaltation," purposely marginalizing himself only to achieve finally a sovereign, even sacred (with all we have seen that this term implies) status.[16] Hadot points to the *Republic*, where Plato declares that for a "philosophical nature" to be attained, "the soul must not contain any hint of servility," but instead must leave the world of "pettiness" in order to "constantly strive to embrace the *universal totality* of things human and divine" (97). Having attained this "view from above," such a being defies the easy categorizations and compartmentalizations of the everyday world, where one is defined by what one does, instead living life as an art. The state of being called *atopia* is thus analogous to modern

day gutter-dandy Alexander Trocchi's ideal state of "transcategorical inspiration":

> Art can have no existential significance for a civilization which draws a line between life and art and collects artifacts like ancestral bones for reverence. Art must inform the living; we envisage a situation in which life is continually renewed by art, a situation imaginatively and passionately constructed to inspire each individual to respond creatively, to bring to whatever act a creative comportment. (*Invisible* 181)

Hadot's descriptions of the state of the "enlightened" philosopher are also strongly reminiscent of Rimbaud's program of a "rational derangement of all the senses" in which one makes the soul into a monster. All is turned *inside-out*: the *atopic* philosopher now recognizes the everyday *bios*-sphere as a state of madness, and the "enlightened" perspective he has attained as sanity. He is thus, Hadot explains, in a permanent state of collision with the everyday world of material affairs, because he

> knows that the normal, natural state of men should be wisdom, for wisdom is nothing more than the vision of things as they are, the vision of the cosmos as it is in the light of reason, and wisdom is nothing more than the mode of being and living that should correspond to this vision. But the philosopher also knows that this wisdom is an ideal state, almost inaccessible. For such a man, daily life, as it is organized and lived by other men, must necessarily appear abnormal, like a state of madness. . . . And nonetheless he must live this life every day, in this world in which he feels himself a stranger and in which others perceive him to be one as well. And it is precisely in this daily life that he must seek to attain that way of life which is utterly foreign to the everyday world. The result is a perpetual conflict between the philosopher's effort to see things as they are from the standpoint of universal nature and the conventional wisdom of things underlying human society, a conflict between the life one should live and the customs and conventions of daily life. This conflict can never be totally resolved. (58)

Robert M. Pirsig, another important theorist/practitioner of the North American strain of neo-dandyism, notes a very similar "inside-out" process which occurs in the peyote-fueled mysticism of North American Indian tribes: "The majority opposition to peyote

among Eurocentric North Americans," he explains, "reflected a cultural bias, the belief, unsupported by scientific or historical evidence, that 'hallucinatory' experience is automatically bad. Since hallucinations are a form of insanity, the term, 'hallucinogen' is clearly pejorative . . . [yet] the Indians who use it as part of their ceremony might with equal accuracy call it a 'de-hallucinogen,' since it's their claim that it removes the hallucinations of contemporary life and reveals the reality buried beneath them" (*Lila* 40).

Foucault links the *atopic* operations of both Hadot's classical philosophers and this form of mystical praxis in his construction of neo-dandyism. Work on the self, the positive investigation of limits, includes "the suppression of taboos and the limitations and divisions imposed on the sexes . . . the loosening of inhibitions with regard to drugs; the breaking of all prohibitions that form and guide the development of a normal individual. *I am referring to all those experiences which have been rejected by our civilization or which it accepts only within literature*" (*Language* 222, italics mine). The italicized section here is of extreme importance for Foucault's eventual advocation of a *neo-dandysme* where life and art merge, becoming one and the Same. He thus advocates a return to Hadot's "philosophy" instead of philosophical "discourse," a theory/praxis of full experiencing where man will discard the "pseudosovereignty" of imposed subjectivity in favour of the *actual* sovereignty achieved initially through the methods of this "desubjectification,"[17] this *rational* experience of *madness à la* Rimbaud (222). The way to true sovereignty lies in this "de-hallucinatory" experience, which the gutter-dandy typically embraces.[18]

Hadot also stresses the oratorical, rhetorical, oral/aural nature of the classical philosopher. "It is an exaggeration to assert, as has still been done recently," he says,

> that Greco-Roman civilization early on became a civilization of writing. . . . For the written works of this period remain closely tied to oral conduct. . . . And they were intended to be read aloud . . . emphasizing the rhythm of the phrase and the sounds of the words, which the author himself had already experienced when he dictated his work The ancients were extremely sensitive to the effects of sound. Few philosophers of [this] period . . . resisted this magic of the spoken word. (*Philosophy* 61-2)

Rock performers/gutter-dandies like Jim Morrison and Iggy Pop can thus be placed in this line of philosophers: the idea is to have an immediate *effect* on the audience--in our current lexicon, what could be called an *interactive* experience--with energy being transmitted in both directions, from performer/philosopher to audience and back. "Doubtless there are occasions when someone was converted by reading a book, but one would then hasten to the philosopher to hear him speak. . . . In matters of philosophical teaching, writing is only an aid to memory, a last resort that will never replace the living word" (Hadot, *Philosophy* 62). In rock and roll as well, this aspect of "performance" has remained crucial; bands are most often ultimately judged on whether they can "cut it" live (see MTV's *Unplugged* program for verification) and those who cannot usually disappear rather quickly. And it is live performance--life as art--that is the theoretical root of the neo-dandyism.[19] Aptly, Nicholas Roeg's film *Performance*, featuring Mick Jagger in a starring role, is perhaps the definitive celluloid treatment of the contemporary dandy and his philosophy.

For Hadot, then, "above all, the classical philosophical work, even if it is apparently theoretical and systematic, is written not so much to inform the reader of a doctrinal element, but to form him, to make him traverse a certain itinerary in the course of which he will make spiritual progress" (64). This idea takes a turn toward the dark, "left-hand" path in Sade, for instance, who explicitly writes to corrupt, and to leave a blueprint for future corruption, an idea that also appeals to Foucault.

DISCOVERING "TRUE NATURE"

Despite the many similarities between them, a crucial difference remains between Hadot and Foucault, a difference alluded to, but left unresolved, by Hadot himself in "Reflections on the Idea of the Cultivation of the Self." [20] The problematic concept is that of *nature*, both human and inorganic.

In reading Foucault, it is crucial to differentiate between the unified subject, the self as an Apollonian construct, and a human nature which, in contrast, is revealed to be part of that limitless realm of form-less essence (or "void") which precedes and follows the material world of bodies (in Eastern mysticism, this essence is called Atman, part of the

larger realm, Brahman). As he points out in his touchstone essay "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," it is the task of the "genealogical historian" to scramble received notions of a "true" self at the base, of a "nature" or "soul" which "pretends unification or . . . fabricates a coherent identity" (81). Through the subject's rational derangement of the senses, or "limit-experience," this "natural self" is revealed to be not a unified, coherent whole, but instead a Dionysian conundrum, a tangled subjectivity; not "a possession that grows and solidifies, [but]. . . an unstable assemblage of faults, fissures, and heterogeneous layers that threaten the fragile inheritor from within and underneath" (82). The body, as "the locus of this dissociated self" and thus inseparable from it, is thus revealed to be "a volume in perpetual disintegration" (83).

Paglia's view of nature basically coincides with Foucault's. What I will–with some irony--call *true nature*, for her the "chthonian," is at base not merely benign, but rather a "grueling erosion of natural force, flecking, dilapidating, grinding down, reducing all matter to fluid, the thick primal soup from which new forces bob, gasping for life" (*Sexual* 30). True nature is the essential non-essential, the fertile muck from which humanity springs and which poses a constant threat for a people who confuse Apollonian, societally constructed identities, or *personae*, constructed in defence, with the flux of Dionysian human "nature." "We speak of falling apart, having a breakdown . . . getting it all together," Paglia says: "Only in the West is there such conviction of the Apollonian unity of personality" (104). In opposition to such a view, "I say that there is neither person, thought, thing, nor art in the brutal chthonian" (73), she concludes. Foucault agrees: for him, this search for "the image of a primordial truthfully adequate to its nature" is burst asunder by the genealogist's revelation that nature not as "a timeless and essential secret, but the secret that [its products] have no essence, or that their essence was fabricated . . . from alien forms" (78). For both Foucault and Paglia, it is this act of fabrication (the "ordering" process which becomes a Foucauldian buzzword: *The Order of Things;* "The Order of Discourse") issuing forth not in an isomorphic relation, but in the line of defense and control versus the unknowable, that informs our problematic Western rationalism.

True nature, the Dionysian reality, is thus identified as the "non-place" of mutation, where rules are formed, transgressed, and re-formed. Embracing the language of Eastern mysticism, Paglia notes that ultimate reality is "the space that holds all that happens. . . . sunyata, voidness" (*Sex, Art* 151). This "void," then, ultimately has no discernible connection to events occurring within it, and its cataclysmic eruptions into the ordered Apollonian sphere are always revolutionary: "Suddenly," says Foucault, "things are no longer perceived or propositions articulated in the same way" (*Foucault Reader* 85). As a result, "only a single drama is ever staged in this 'non-place,' the endlessly repeated play of dominations," which strives to arrest its flux, becoming "fixed, throughout its history, in rituals, in meticulous procedures that impose rights and obligations . . . and gives rise to the universe of rules" (85).

For contemporary thinkers like Foucault and Paglia, then, this is not a question of metaphysics, of uncovering something coherent, eternal and true underlying any given set of rules, for true nature can never be deciphered. Hadot, however, seems to disagree. Although, as we have seen, he is in agreement with the basic idea that the philosopher must shed his societally-constructed self and strive to make contact with what he calls "universal nature," his conception of that nature, informed by Stoical thought, is quite different. "Nature," he says,

> is at the same time the program in conformity with which the events which constitute the universe are necessarily linked to one another, and the programmed sequence which results from them. Thus, it is the *rational order* which presides over the evolution of the visible world. It is this programming and this rationality which give the world its coherence. To act according to nature is therefore to act in a programmed, rational manner, in full awareness of the fact that one is part of the cosmic whole, as well as a part of the whole formed by the city of those beings which share in reason. (*Philosophy* 283, italics mine)

What we have here, then, is an *Apollonian* concept of nature, as opposed to the Dionysian version advanced by both Foucault and Paglia. For Hadot, who looks back to classical models for examples to inspire the present, nature, while vast, is ultimately

coherent: there is a master plan to the universe, which operates as a vast kind of clockwork mechanism, and one must acquire the universal viewpoint by ultimately realizing the self as a constituent part of the larger operation, in the manner which a word subordinates itself to the higher function of the sentence: "to rise to the universal, normative viewpoint of thought, submitting ourselves to the demands of the Logos and the norm of the Good" (Hadot, *Philosophy* 94-5). One finds one's place in "universal nature," in the cosmic whole whose workings dwarf those of the petty, everyday world of man. For Foucault, such a concept amounts to identity politics on a much grander scale, a sure way to defeat the kind of sovereignty that the contemporary dandy must strive toward: in Hadot's conception, the subject is still ultimately reduced to the component of a grid, to an outside "order," albeit a cosmic one, and the proliferating, spiraling image is subordinated to the Logos, the almighty Word. The issue which finally separates Foucault from Hadot, then, is rooted in these conflicting views of nature, admittedly much more camouflaged in Foucault's work than in the forthright writings of Hadot. While Hadot, then, seeks to return to the past to provide examples of the philosophic life for the present, Foucault--in both life and art--follows the genealogical line of "philosophical behaviour"--described by Hadot himself as being taken up by the mystic in the Middle Ages, and I will suggest, by the artist in (post)Enlightenment times–through to its logical current form in the "performance art" of the postmodern neo-dandy.

THE MYSTICAL GUTTER-DANDY

> **The best way to conceive of the fundamental project of human reality is to say that man is the being whose project is to be God. To be man means to reach toward being God. Or if you prefer, man fundamentally is the desire to be God.**
>
> **--Jean-Paul Sartre**

Hadot argues persuasively that *philosophia*, the practice of philosophy as a way of life, is transformed in the Middle Ages into philosophy as a mode of discourse, an exegetical exercise which becomes centered exclusively around language, textual, theoretical, and essentially non-experiential in nature (73, 269-71). Most importantly for the genealogy of

neo-dandyism, he also argues that it is monasticism, rooted in mystical praxis, which initially becomes the vessel for the original form of the *philosophia* during this same period. "The Middle Ages was to inherit the conception of monastic life as Christian philosophy, that is, as a Christian way of life," asserts Hadot, citing Dom Jean Leclerq's assertion that the term *philosophia* "in the monastic Middle Ages designates not a theory . . . but a lived wisdom, a way of living according to reason." The "arts of existence" characteristic of the *atopos* classical philosopher now are "no longer part of philosophy, but find themselves integrated into Christian spirituality," especially in the Christian mystical practices of "such Rhineland Dominicans as Meister Eckhardt" (270).

As Hadot explains, monasticism "came to represent the culmination of Christian perfection," and thus "could be portrayed as a *philosophia*": in fact, monastic life was to be become synonymous with that term "throughout the Middle Ages." Thus, "the importance of this assimilation between Christianity and philosophy cannot be over-emphasized" (129). Outside of this monastic, mystical deployment of *philosophia*, "philosophy in the Middle Ages had become a purely theoretical and abstract activity," leading to the rarefied, hidebound atmosphere of "Scholasticism," where professional scholars merely train others to become professional scholars, a development whose genesis "began to be sketched at the end of antiquity, developed in the Middle Ages, and whose presence is still recognizable in philosophy today" (Hadot 270). Philosophy not as a way of life, but as a theoretical/exegetical exercise.

The *raison d'être* of the classical philosopher had thus migrated as the living praxis of the *philosophia* became textual "philosophy," unable as it was to be contained between the static pages of a mere book. Its new home--the sphere of medieval monastic mysticism--allowed this "free spirit" to flower in unprecedented ways, ways that were to be of crucial importance for the development of twentieth-century manifestations of what poet Gary Snyder calls "The Great Subculture." [21] As Greil Marcus points out in his seminal work, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century*, monastic mystical schools such as the church-sanctioned Franciscans and Dominicans always co-existed uneasily with the official church, which

> administered Europe by means of its monopoly over the meaning of life . . . found in the Christian mysteries, which moved back and forth between two poles of Original Sin, the fact of innate depravity, and the Resurrection, the promise of salvation. Both were principles of authority, for both signified that no one's fate was one's own work. Always containing the seeds of antinomianism, mysticism could not be altogether prohibited. The common will to reach God was too strong. . . . (296)

As the rebellious, *atopos* spirit of the *philosophia* was now residing--however peripherally--within as inherently reactionary an organization as the church, trouble was bound to ensue. Mystical revelation, the individual exercise of arts of existence, inevitably led to ideas far "outside" of the traditional strictures of "official" thinking, especially in the very loose conglomeration of mystics who developed and practiced a form of mysticism called Gnosticism. Most importantly, the metamorphosis from the classical concept of "universal nature" as defined by Hadot, to "true nature" as I have defined it in terms of Foucauldian thought, is first witnessed in Gnostic thought.

Gnosticism, which as Hans Jonas points out, lies "off the main road of historical knowledge," introduces into Western thought "a change in the vision of nature, that is, of the cosmic environment of man," a change which has profound implications for the rise of The Great Subculture. For the first time, the integration of man into the great cosmic whole of "universal nature" is questioned, and finally, rejected. What takes its place is instead "the feeling of an absolute rift between man and that in which he finds himself lodged: the world" (Jonas, "Gnosticism" 121). Nature is not now seen as the creation of God, who is "strictly transmundane . . . not revealed or even indicated by the world . . . the Unknown, the totally Other," but instead as the product of a perverted, ignorant, imperfect lower power, "a lowly Demiurge" (121-2).[22] Man's only connection to the truly *Divine*, then, is his inner self, the *pneuma* or Divine Spirit, which is "not part of the world, of nature's creation and domain, but, within that world, is as totally transcendent . . . as is its transmundane counterpart, the unknown God without" (121).

The results of this change in the vision of nature are truly profound, fueling "outsider" views of the individual within The Great Subculture to the present day. Suddenly, man

stands in a new position in regard to the universe: the classical notion of "the view from above" now takes on its most extreme implications. According to Gnostic thought, "whoever has created the world, man does not owe him allegiance, and neither his creation, though incomprehensibly encompassing man, nor his proclaimed will offers the standards by which man can set his course" (122). It is not then a question of that early version of identity politics, finding one's proper place in the great Cosmic Grid, which is now seen as "an order--but an order with a vengeance . . . for that order is alien to man's aspirations. The blemish of nature lies not in any deficiency of order, but in the all too pervading completeness of it" (122). *Nomos*, the Universal Law, is now a tool of subjugation, both in its mental and physical aspects, which "emanate from the lord of this world as agencies of his power . . . the law of the physical world, the ***heimarmene***, integrates the individual bodies into the general system . . . the moral law integrates the souls, and thus makes them subservient to the demiurgic scheme" (128).

Order as *enemy*, instead of *liberty:* here we begin to move out of Hadot's philosophical realm and into Foucault's. Nature is not now a sensible order, but an *insensible* one, in that it can never be deciphered by man and must therefore remain forever alien to him, "the cosmic *logos*" having been supplanted by "***heimarmene***, oppressive cosmic fate" (122). What follows from this Gnostic assertion of man's alienation is "the awakening of selfhood from the slumber or intoxication of the world," brought about by the realization that the self to this point has been the "involuntary executor of cosmic designs. Knowledge, *gnosis*, might liberate man from this servitude: but since the *cosmos* is contrary to life, the saving knowledge cannot aim at the knower's integration into the cosmic whole, cannot aim at compliance with the laws of the universe. . . . For the Gnostics, man's alienation is not to be overcome, but is to be deepened and pushed to the extreme for the sake of the self's redemption" (123). Here is a philosophical stance strikingly similar to Foucault's "limit-attitude," emerging as a constituent part of what amounts to the subject's revolt against an imposed, objectivist-rationalist order, against the conception of the universe as a meaningfully predetermined grid.

The posture of antagonistic extremity in the face of a hostile, meaningless nature: such

an attitude would have cultural implications stretching as far as the late twentieth century, including the eventual emergence of the gutter-dandy as a central figure of The Great Subculture. For the *sovereign* individual now is one who, rather than fitting into the schemata of the given world, employs mystic *gnosis* to re-make himself and the world around him, repudiating nature at every turn. The role of the Creator is thus appropriated by the individual, who, through various techniques of self-fashioning, becomes his or her own God. The forms of these "spiritual exercises," Jonas explains, "can be either libertinistic or ascetic"; however, these "two seemingly opposite attitudes are really of the same root, and are capable of strange combinations." More tellingly, perhaps, "both are lives outside the law" (128). For the "enlightened" individual (in the Foucauldian sense), the *Nomos*, or Cosmic Law, becomes irrelevant.

THE BIRTH OF THE FREE SPIRIT

> **The spiritual life of the later middle ages was largely dominated by mysticism in a variety of forms [which] shared in the common striving . . . to reach God through an inner movement of the soul. . . . This desire for union with God went together with the need to withdraw from contact with the outer world, in order to devote oneself solely to search for God within. It led to the proliferation of spiritual communities and individuals concerned to detach themselves from the norms of life. Such an attitude, if unregulated, was a threat of the first magnitude to the authority of the church . . . and in the case of the heresy of the Free Spirit did challenge its very *raison d'être*.**
>
> **--Gordon Leff, *Heresy in the Later Middle Ages***

Mystical ascetics of the right-hand path: the Franciscans and the Dominicans, uneasily tolerated by the church. Mystical libertines of the left hand path: The Brethren of Free Spirit. Mercilessly persecuted, these Gnostics--a disparate group [23] whose ranks include the first gutter-dandies in history--emerge around the dawn of the eleventh century, lasting in their original form for over five centuries, with permutations of the sect surviving until the present day. Norman Cohn, the foremost historian of the Free Spirit, locates this millenarian movement squarely within the experiential, limit-testing

tradition of Gnosticism:

> The heresy of the Free Spirit demands a place in any survey of revolutionary eschatology . . . though its adherents were not social revolutionaries and did not find their followers amongst the turbulent masses of the urban poor. They were in fact gnostics intent upon their own *individual* salvation; but the gnosis at which they arrived was a quasi-mystical anarchism--an affirmation of freedom so reckless and unqualified that it amounted to a total denial of every kind of restraint and limitation. These people could be regarded as remote precursors of Bakunin and of Nietzsche--or rather of that bohemian intelligentsia which during the last half-century has been living from ideas once expressed by Bakunin and Nietzsche in their wilder moments. But extreme individualists of that kind can easily turn into social revolutionaries--and effective ones at that--if a potentially revolutionary situation arises. (148-9, italics mine)

With the development of Gnostic sects such as this, classical notions of the *philosophia* and the "view from above" are pushed to the limit, reinterpreted through the hostile Gnostic view of nature and the cosmos. In an alien world created by a demonic spirit--the Old Testament God--what was needed was to realize the *pneuma*, the divine spark within, basically by asserting the *sovereignty* of that spark, and therefore concurrently asserting the *sovereignty* of the God-self. "The Catholic mystics," notes Cohn, "lived their experiences within a tradition sanctioned and perpetuated by a great institutionalized church; and when--as often happened--they criticized that church, their aim was to regenerate it." The Free Spirit mystics of the left-hand path, however, "were intensely subjective, acknowledging no authority at all save their own experiences" (150). Rather than faith, *experience* was now the key to enlightenment, "the Gnostic revelation that God could be fully manifest in human beings, that human beings could be god, that earth could be heaven, that heaven could be fully manifest on earth . . ." (Marcus, *Lipstick* 321). To be sovereign was thus to *experience* sovereignty.

If, as Hadot contends, the *philosophia* during the Middle Ages found a home in the monasteries, in the "spiritual exercises" of mystics such as Meister Eckhardt, then the

Free Spirit brought it back into the world via their own, Gnostic-influenced reading of Eckhardt's thought. As Leff points out, "the seeming *rapport*" between Eckhardt, himself a controversial Dominican, and the Free Spirit, "was not entirely fortuitous. Whatever his intentions, the stress of Eckhardt's mystical teaching was upon the individual." The Brethren of the Free Spirit, then, put into practice the theoretical implications of Eckhardt's theological assertion that the *individual* was the true seat of religious experience, and could become "part of God as Christ was: *words* which sounded perilously pantheistic, which the Free Spirit expressed in *deeds*." Eckhardt "was a portent: he gave voice to the growing desire . . . for personal ascesis," and, wittingly or otherwise, helped to facilitate the "*impasse* between the world of nature and the world of faith," a basic Gnostic tenet (Leff 261-62).[24]

NOTHING IS TRUE; EVERYTHING IS PERMITTED: THE ASSASSINS

As Cohn points out, there was in the initial stages of this movement a cross-current of influence between the Islamic and Christian worlds, the East and the West. Extremely influential were periodic manifestations of the cult known as The Assassins. In 1162, the leadership of the radical Islamic Gnostic sect was taken over by Hassan-I Sabbah II, who, some two and half years later, "in the middle of the fasting month of Ramadam . . . proclaimed the millennium" (Lewis 71). What followed was the demise of Holy Law (*nomos*), "which had served its purpose," and the exaltation of individual sovereignty. Symbolically, Hassan and his subjects turned their backs on Mecca, played music, drank wine, and feasted, in a "solemn and ritual violation of the law," all in recognition that while "in the world to come all is reckoning and there is no action," in this world, "all is action and there is no reckoning" (73). *Action*; *experience*: key words in the genealogy of the gutter-dandy. To be free to remake the self, to attain sovereignty, one must first break the bonds of wor(l)dly order. "This is absolute freedom, the prize seized by the Cathars, the Brethren of the Free Spirit, the Lollards . . . ," writes Marcus (442).

The ranks of the Assassins included one of the first mystical dandies, Rashid al-din Sinan, the spiritual successor to Hassan II. Supposedly the originator of what has

become a favoured maxim of The Great Subculture--"Nothing is true; everything is permitted"[25]--Sinan's behaviour, featuring occultism, a dandified persona, and a keen awareness of the power of the (public) image, makes him a precursor of the media-friendly gutter-dandy of the postmodern era. Edward Burman explains that Sinan

> evidently had a powerful personality which enabled him to exercise authority over his followers . . . but beyond this, he seems to have used what we would describe as "magical" tricks to impress people, using such techniques as telepathy and clairvoyance. This personality was enhanced by deliberate use of spectacular techniques which are reminiscent of television and public relations-influenced politicians today. He practicised statuesque positions and gave the impression of being a superhuman character by speaking very little and never eating in public. (113)

Sinan "ruled by the force of personality, and did not travel with personal troops or bodyguard" (112). Through the power of his cultivated *persona*, he "proceeded to impose a one-man show upon the Syrian esoteric tendencies, permitting some to develop freely when they could support a loyalty to himself, but keeping anything within bounds that threatened the ultimate dissolution of the group" (Hodgson 195). This tension--between democratizing, liberating impulses and authoritarian, elitist ones--embodied in Sinan remains a constant feature of dandyism to the present day, exemplifying the paradoxical figure of what Foucault terms "'*le roi anti-roi*'--'an anti-sovereign sovereign,' a ruler at war with rules" (J. Miller 362).

As the Gnostic phenomenon spread Westward in the thirteenth century, the limits of man's estrangement from nature, the cosmos, and the Old Testament God were sought by what Cohn calls an "invisible empire" of Gnostic heretics (162), who lived out the implications of the notion that "*pneumaticos*, 'spiritual' man, is above the law, beyond good and evil, and a law unto himself in the power of his 'knowledge'"(Jonas 129).[26] The principle of "inverse exaltation," whereby the low and the profane becomes the high and the sacred, was aggressively appropriated by this heretical sect in its anarchic striving toward an individual sovereignty achieved through a seemingly

perverse and radical enactment of the will-to-power. As seen in the Brethren of the Free Spirit, "the first 'false dominicans'" (Marcus 297), the notion of life as a series of sequential submissions which would someday lead to Paradise was replaced by the millenarian proclamation of Paradise Now.

"Whatever is, is God," as Marcus points out, was the unofficial credo of the Free Spirit: "The only question was to know it, the only paradise to live it, the only task to tell it" (298). The worldly "self," a veil identified with the operations of the demiurge, was "wholly liquefied in Eternity," emptied out in the act of embracing the *pneuma*, becoming sovereign, forever one with God, or more accurately, *forever God*.[27] "Such experiences," Cohn explains,

> differ vastly from the *unio mystica* as it was recognized and approved by the Church . . . a momentary illumination, granted only occasionally, perhaps but once in a lifetime. . . . The human being who experienced it did not thereby shed his human condition. . . . The adept of the Free Spirit, on the other hand, felt himself to be utterly transformed; he had not merely been united with god, he was identical with God and would remain so for ever. And even this is an understatement, for often an adept would claim to have surpassed God. (175)

Having attained Gnostic enlightenment through contact with the *God-nature* within, the members of the Free Spirit were set free from the mundane, day-to-day operations of the everyday world as imposed by the demiurge, free to carry out their own *atopos* brand of the *philosophia*. "The heart of the heresy," Cohn explains, "was a passionate desire of certain human beings to surpass the condition of humanity and to become God," a process of "self deification" (174). Therefore, the normal rules were turned upside down, and inside-out: the operations of *inverse exaltation* were deliberately incorporated into Free Spirit doctrine. Poverty was voluntarily embraced by members of the sect, who came from all walks of life, and all social classes.[28] Destitution was an outer display of one's spiritual purity: convenient, because the Free Spirit also held the utmost disdain for work. "Like the real Dominicans, they begged--but where the Dominicans did not work because they sought privation, the adepts of the Free Spirit

refused to work because they placed themselves above it, convinced that the enjoyment of every luxury was theirs by right" (Marcus 297), as they had realized the *pneuma* within. "Whatever the eye sees and covets, let the hand grasp it," ran one Free Spirit oath (Cohn 183). This was an affirmation of sovereignty quite in line with the thought of Georges Bataille, who would write, many centuries later: "How could anything have been more important, *for everyone*, than the certainty, at one point, of attaining a useless splendor, of surpassing at that point the poverty of utility? Nothing sovereign must ever submit to the useful" (*Accursed* 3: 226). Here, the *philosophia* merges with the Gnostic along the Left-Hand path: the "view from above" is paradoxically obtained by going as *low* as possible, a deliberate mystical manipulation of the principle of inverse exaltation.

While the Free Spirit was ostensibly democratic--everyone possessed the *pneuma*, he only had to realize it [29]--there were, as seen previously in Assassin leaders like Sinan, some members of the sect whose personal style set them apart, marking them as leaders. Such was one Loy Pruystinck of Antwerp, "an illiterate young slater" who in the early 1500s established a sect [30] which not only included many members from "the margins of society--thieves, prostitutes and beggars" in its ranks, but also "wealthy merchants, and even the jeweller of the French king Francis I" (Cohn 169-70). Pruystinck had literally developed "the view from above": his method of comportment was enough to cause his followers to fall to their knees in his presence. And although his branch of the sect was inherently democratic--all his followers, however diverse their social status, were expected to "fraternize and embrace one another in public"-- Pruystinck himself developed a remarkable dandiacal style which yoked the high and low, establishing him as a prototypical gutter-dandy. "As though to symbolize at once his vocation of poverty and his claim to supreme dignity," writes Cohn, Pruystinck "dressed in robes cut as rags but also sewn with jewels" (170), a precursor of the glam and punk-rock attire of contemporary rock culture. Pruystinck's personification of *le roi anti-roi* was short-lived, however, as he was burned to death as a heretic in 1544.

Loy Pruystinck's fashion statement was actually quite daring in the context of the Middle Ages, when dress was taken to be a clear indicator of social status. The outward

appearance of the mystical gutter-sovereign was in fact a reflection of the inner transformation which had taken place: "Reborn into a state where conscience ceased to operate and sin was abolished, he felt like some infinitely privileged aristocrat." By mixing styles both high and low, dressing in various combinations of rags, jewels and silk robes, the Free Spirit embraced the semiotic confusion created by yoking these extreme modes of fashion as a form of rebellion, "symbolizing his transformation from the 'lowest of mortals' into a member of an elite which believed itself entitled to dominate the world" (Cohn 179).

What the Brethren of the Free Spirit sought, then, was the state in which the great divide separating the sacral and the sacred, high and low, "Good" and "Evil," was eliminated: these supposed opposites were now seen to be mere emanations of the *Same*: "All things are God, so there is no evil," goes one infamous Free Spirit proverb, "for in every evil is the glory of God made manifest" (Russell 89). *Le roi anti-roi* was no longer required to pay heed to such petty binary distinctions, and was often compelled to go out of his way to flout them. Such was the revelation of Heinrich Suso, a Catholic mystic who had for twenty-two years employed the practices of the right-hand path, meditation and self-mortification. Suso was visited in the midst of a meditation session by an apparation of the Free Spirit called Nameless Wildness, who counselled the astounded monk that true enlightenment equalled "untrammelled freedom . . . when a man lives according to all his caprices without distinguishing between God and himself, and without looking before or after" (177). This libertine ethos anticipates both Bataille's main prescription of *forgetfulness* for the man who would be truly sovereign, and Nietzsche's own sovereignty recipe, *the will-to-power*.

JOHN OF LEYDEN: KING OF THE WORLD AND/OR MUNSTER

> **The poorest among us, who used to be despised as beggars, now go about dressed as finely as the highest and most distinguished. . . . By God's grace they have become as rich as the burgomasters and the richest in the town.**
>
> **--excerpt from a Munster Propaganda letter for Anabaptism.**

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What [formerly] referred to God alone was for the Free Spirit transferred to man in God's name: God's freedom became human freedom and God was made in the image of the free man.

--Gordon Leff, "The Heresy of the Free Spirit"

Cohn's assertion that the "total amoralism" of the Free Spirit, rooted in their defining doctrine that "the proof of salvation was to know nothing of conscience or remorse," is borne out in the notorious (so notorious that it is included even in "standard" history texts) incident of the radical Anabaptist (literally, "Re-Baptist") takeover of the German town of Munster. The emergent leader of this particular cult, one Jan Bockelson--better known as John of Leyden--was the theory of *le roi anti-roi* personified in praxis, a medieval mystical manifestation of the Gnostic *philosophia*. In May, 1534, Bockelson was proclaimed king of Munster, "the New Jerusalem," and as a result, "king of the whole world,"[31] taking the *atopia* of the philosopher/king who is "a race apart" to its ultimate limits, into what Leff terms "a kind of divine libertinism" (312).

Leyden combined a messianic fervour with a well-developed sense of the theatrical, and was drawn toward the polar political extremes of permissiveness and near-fascism, as his Dionysian and Apollonian impulses spiralled wildly. The bastard son of a Dutch mayor, Bockelson had been a failure as a merchant, but

> on the other hand . . . possessed remarkable gifts which were only waiting to deployed. Endowed with extraordinarily good looks and an irresistible eloquence, he had from youth onwards revelled in writing, producing and acting plays. In Munster he was able to shape real life into a play, with himself as its hero and all of Europe for an audience. The denizens of the New Jerusalem were fascinated by him. . . . (Cohn 267-68)

Although Bockelson/Leyden at first maintained some semblance of Anabaptist tradition (i.e., marriage between Anabaptists as the only legal form of sexual contact; adultery and fornication as capital offences), he soon embarked upon a path also "trodden by the Brethren of the Free Spirit," who were his true spiritual kin (269). Leyden therefore

established polygamy, abolished private property and outlawed work, and generally began to micromanage the life of the town, with death as the punishment for the smallest of infractions against the Royal Will. Inevitably, as Munster came under attack from various outside forces--such a threat did it represent to the established order, as highly placed members of Church and State had been divested of titles and properties--Leyden, like Rashid al-din Sinan an early master of media communications, distributed propaganda for his New Jerusalem by firing leaflets from the blockaded city into the enemy camp, luring away some 200 mercenaries toiling under the local Bishop (270).

Overall, however, the Leyden regime featured a heavily anti-word, pro-image bias. Upon taking over Munster, the Anabaptists "sacked the cathedral" and "took particular delight in defiling, tearing up and burning the books and manuscripts of its old library." Finally, all books except the Bible were "brought to the cathedral-square and thrown upon a great bonfire," signifying "a complete break with the past, a total rejection above all of the intellectual legacy of earlier generations" (Cohn 267). Meanwhile, Bockelson, upon taking over the leadership of the Munster Anabaptists, embarks upon a path remarkably similar to that described by Foucault as a transubstantive "unrealization" of the self. In a madman's frenzy, he runs naked through the town, finally collapsing into a speechless, word-less ecstasy lasting three days (268). He emerges from this dissociative experience emptied-out: a repository of kingly simulacra, a sovereign *objet d' art* whose power resides in *fascination*, reflecting images from the Void which is the Same as Himself.

The Logos is thus expelled, as far as possible, from both the King and the town in general, replaced by the living practice of Paradise Now, where thought and action are one: "The Word has become Flesh and dwells in us" became the official motto of Anabaptist Munster. The rest of Leyden's imagistic and paradoxical reign exemplifies Bataille's assertion that "solidarity with everybody else prevents a man from having the sovereign attitude" (*Erotism* 171). The King bestows upon himself and his "court" all the appurtenances of royalty,[32] claiming, "in language worthy of any adept of the Free Spirit . . . that pomp and luxury were permissible for him because he was wholly dead to

the world and to flesh," even though he possessed a harem of fifteen wives, most of them under the age of twenty (Cohn 270, 273). The common people of Munster, suffering increasingly under the strictions of Leyden's idiosyncratic version of communism, were assured "that before long they would be in the same situation, sitting on silver chairs and eating at silver tables, yet holding such things as cheap as mud and stones" (274). However, the spiritual mettle of the general population was never to be put to the test in such a manner.

Leyden's year-long reign was a case study in Gnostic praxis *in extremis*, as the outcast raised himself on high, in the process pushing his alienation from nature, from his fellow man, and from everyday reality, to the point of no return. Cut off from the outside world, the townspeople were eventually brought to their knees by starvation: "Every animal--dog, cat, mouse, rat, hedgehog--was killed and eaten and people began to consume grass and moss, old shoes and the whitewash on the walls, the bodies of the dead" (276). The King's response was to turn to aesthetics in the form of imagistic spectacle:

> True to his first love, the stage, he devised ever more and more fantastic amusements for his subjects. On one occasion the starving population was summoned to take part in three days of dancing, racing and athletics; for such was the will of God. Dramatic performances were staged in the cathedral: an obscene parody of the Mass, a social morality based on the story of Dives and Lazarus. But meanwhile famine was doing its work; death from starvation became so common that the bodies had to be thrown into great communal graves. (Cohn 278)

Perhaps Leyden really *was* "dead to the world and the flesh." The Sadean sovereign, Bataille explains, demonstrates that "all the great libertines who live only for pleasure are great only because they have destroyed in themselves all their capacity for pleasure. That is why they go in for frightful anomalies, for otherwise the mediocrity of ordinary sensuality would be enough for them" (*Erotism* 173). The final Munster spectacles were obviously solely intended for the King's pleasure: the escalating waste of his most precious resource--his subjects, the townspeople, without whom his kingship would fail

to exist--was a Gnostic form of *potlatch*, a way to measure his distance from the civilized world of order, of *nomos* and *heimarmene*, the laws of the demiurge. Finally, in June 1535, Jan Bockelson's reign was over: *le roi anti-roi* was arrested and exhibited throughout the countryside on a chain, in the manner of a performing bear, then executed, unrepentant.

"So much for one true Christ, for one true Antichrist," writes Marcus (93). For the better part of a year, Jan Bockelson, aka John of Leyden, aka King of Munster, aka Ruler of the New Jerusalem and the World, had established a sovereign realm beyond the world of utility, beyond even good and evil: "a world where reigns an evil genius who has not found his god, or who might just as well pass himself off as God, or who might even be God himself . . . quite simply, our own world." Leyden was dead, but his image would live on, flickering in the shadows of the oncoming rationalist revolution, the Enlightenment.

Notes

1. James Miller explains that "What Is Enlightenment?" derives from a lecture given by Foucault in the fall of 1983 at Berkeley. According to Miller, Paul Rabinow, editor of *The Foucault Reader*, worked closely with Foucault on the texts which were to be included in this important book, and "Foucault gave him the text of 'What Is Enlightenment?' expressly for inclusion in this volume." See *The Passion of Michel Foucault*, 455-6, 41n. Tellingly, the essay in question leads off the book.

2. "During the 1980s," Miller writes, " a number of Americans working in a university setting enshrined Foucault as a kind of patron saint, a canonic figure whose authority they routinely invoked in order to legitimate, in properly academic terms, their own brand of 'progressive' politics. Most of these latter-day American Foucauldians are high-minded democrats; they are committed to forging a more diverse society in which whites and people of color, straights and gays, men and women, their various ethnic and gender 'differences' intact, can nevertheless all live together in compassionate harmony--an appealing if difficult goal, with deep roots in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Unfortunately, Foucault's lifework . . . is far more unconventional--and far more discomfiting--than some of his 'progressive' admirers seem ready to admit. Unless I am badly mistaken, Foucault issued a brave and basic challenge to nearly everything that passes for 'right' in Western culture--including nearly everything that passes for 'right' among a great many of America's left-wing academics." See *Passion* 384. As I hope this study makes clear, I not only agree wholeheartedly with Miller, but wish to use his assertion as the starting point for an examination of a contemporary neo-dandyism via Foucault, which fulfills the "total contestation" of Western cultural assumptions--especially those of some politically correct academicians--identified here by Miller.

3. Paul Bové writes: "To associate Foucault with some prophetic visionary capacity . . . is, I think, Deleuze's aim." See "Foreword" xxxii.

4. Foucault goes so far as to deride "the Rousseauist dream" as being--in its insistence on an ordered, levelled society where sovereignty of any kind is abolished--a complementary ideology to the modern state of surveillance and controls that he vilifies in *Discipline & Punish*, stating that this is "the dream of a transparent society, visible and legible in each of its parts, the dream of there no longer existing any zones of darkness, zones established by the privileges of royal power or the prerogatives of some corporation, zones of disorder. It was the dream that each individual, whatever position he occupied, might be able to see the whole of society, that men's heart's should communicate, their vision be unobstructed by obstacles, and the opinion of all reign over each." See *Power Knowledge* 152. One may plainly see the roots of the present-day "political correctness" phenomenon in such thinking, adhered to by many of the "Foucauldian"persuasion in North American academics to this day. Ironically, Foucault himself found this thinking deplorable and nightmarish.

5. In this, Foucault was heavily influenced by Georges Bataille, for whom the notion of sovereignty was of utmost importance. For Bataille, sovereignty was part of an *individual* quest: "The sovereignty I speak of has little to do with the sovereignty of States, as international law defines it. I speak in general of an aspect that is opposed to the servile and subordinate . . . it belongs essentially to *all men* who have never entirely lost the value that is attributed to gods and 'dignitaries.'" Most importantly for this study, Bataille envisions this state as equally available (if not more so) to the low as to the high (the middle opting out): "I shall always be concerned . . . with the apparently lost sovereignty of which the beggar can sometimes be as close as the great nobleman, and from which, as a rule, the bourgeois is voluntarily the most removed." See *The Accursed Share* 3: 197-8.

6. Bataille elaborates on the roots of this process: "For the sacred world did not assume until quite late on the unilaterally lofty meaning it has for the religious man of today. It still had an uncertain duality in classical antiquity. For the Christian apparently, sacred things could also be unspeakably foul. And if one takes a closer look one must admit that Satan in Christianity is not so far off from the divine, and even sin could not be regarded as completely foreign to sacredness. Sin was originally a religious taboo, and the religious taboo of paganism is in fact sacred. The fear and trembling that modern man cannot rid himself of when faced with things sacred to him are always bound up with the horror inspired by a forbidden object" (*Erotism* 223). Also, on the same topic, he notes that "within the world of practice, the sacred is essentially that which, although impossible, is nonetheless there, which is at the same time removed from the world of practice (insofar as it might destroy it) and valorized as something that frees itself from the subordination characterizing the world" (*The Accursed Share* 3: 214).

7. James Miller identifies in Foucault's thought a "subterranean link, via his affinities with Klossowski, to a Manichean kind of gnostics," which functions as an "unspoken subtext" to his "peculiar brand of asceticism," an asceticism which I identify as neo- or gutter-dandyism. See *Passion* 445, 129n.

8. James Miller contends that "Foucault maintained an interest in the demonic throughout his life," noting that his final lectures returned to this theme. "I take *all* of Foucault's work," Miller explains, as "the effort to issue a license for exploring . . . and also as a vehicle for expressing" the "*daimonic* possibility" of a gnosis beyond the limits of good and evil, "glimpsed at the limits of experience" (*Passion* 406, 18n; 459, 73n).

9. "Sovereign," says Bataille, "is what you and I are--on one condition, that we forget, forget everything . . ." (*The Accursed Share* 3: 440, 6n).

10. In Greek mythology, Actaeon was the son of Aristaeus and Autonoe, who aroused the ire of the goddess Artemis when he accidentally discovered her bathing. Enraged at being seen naked, this virgin goddess changed Actaeon into a stag, and his own dogs tore him to pieces. See Stapleton 10.

11. In *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault remarks that this 'liberation derives from proliferation of meaning, from a self-multiplication of significance, weaving relationships so numerous, so intertwined, so rich, that they can no longer be deciphered except within the esoterism of knowledge. Things themselves become so burdened with attributes, signs, allusions, that they finally lose their form . . . the image is burdened with supplementary meanings, and forced to express them. And dreams, madness, the unreasonable can also slip into this excess of meaning." Finally, this "multiplied meaning liberates that world from the control of form. So many diverse meanings are established beneath the surface of the image that it presents only an enigmatic face" (18-20). All of this is to indicate the role of the image in the process of "unrealization," which I will later locate as a key stage in the three-fold *destructuralist* spiral central to neo-dandyism.

12. Camille Paglia devotes an entire chapter of *Sexual Personae* to the struggle between Apollo and Dionysus, and most importantly, explicitly appends an archetypal sexual element to the equation which remains implicit in Nietzsche's analysis (his depiction of the Dionysian as the "maternal womb" of nature being one example). For Paglia, on the symbolic level, the Apollonian is a masculine swerve away from "mother nature" (no idle cliché for her): the Western construction of identity, of culture, of artifice, emanates from man's desire to repel the murky, "daemonic" liquidity from which he sprang and to which he must finally return. This Paglian version of the sexualization of Apollo and Dionysus helps to shed light on Foucault's own theory and praxis of aesthetic transgression--or "Apollo Daemonized," as she calls it--as he moves toward the theories of dandyism propounded by Baudelaire. See *Sexual Personae* 489-511.

13. I will suggest that in the Middle Ages, coinciding with this death of "philosophy" and triumph of "philosophical discourse," mystical praxis takes over this *askesis*, this task of constructing the self, in sects like the Gnostic Cult of the Free Spirit, who take up the ancient goal of philosophy as a living praxis which paradoxically leads through ego-loss (ecstatic experience) to a notion of the philosopher's *sovereignty*, of the philosopher/mystic as a kind of secular God.

14. "One could say," Hadot writes, "that what differentiates ancient from modern philosophy is the fact that, in ancient philosophy, it was not only Chrysippus or Epicurus who, just because they had developed a philosophical discourse, were considered philosophers. Rather, *every person who lived according to the precepts of Chrysippus or Epicurus was every bit as much of a philosopher as they.*" (*Philosophy as a Way of Life* 272, italics mine).

15. In Hadot's *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, his reading of ancient thought, the "universal" corresponds to universal reason, a kind of "natural" Cosmic Order. In Foucault's development of the concept for neo-dandyism, as will be seen here, this concept of Cosmic Order becomes instead something more closely related to the Void, as it is called in Buddhism, and/or existential Nothingness, far more Dionysian in character. Hadot notes this difference in "Reflections on the Notion of the Cultivation of the Self," where

he accuses Foucault of conveniently "bracketing" the important "ideas of 'universal Reason' and 'universal Nature' [which] do not have much meaning anymore" (208). This statement can be taken at least two ways: if by "no longer having much meaning" Hadot means that Foucault sees universal nature as being meaning-less (i.e., the void, the chaotic, essence-less Dionysian realm), he is correct. If, however, he merely means that Foucault discounted universal nature in order to concentrate on what he calls Foucault's "new form of dandyism, late twentieth-century style" (211), he is, I hope to show, mistaken. In fact, Foucault's neo-dandyism is *dependent* on his--often subtle--reading of nature.

16. The conception thus develops here amongst the various schools of classical philosophy of the philosopher as a kind of God. "Each school will elaborate its rational depiction of this state of perfection in the person of the sage, and each will make an effort to portray him. . . . in every school the description of this transcendent norm ultimately coincides with the rational idea of God. Michelet remarked very profoundly, 'Greek religion culminated with its true god, the sage. . . . the beatitude the wise man resolutely maintains throughout his difficulties is that of God himself'" (Hadot, *Philosophy* 57-8).

17. What we find, I believe, upon examination of some of Foucault's key works, is that this "de-subjectifying" limit-experience pursues the same result--often through somewhat different means--as the "spiritual exercises" of Hadot's classical philosophers, and as the mystical disciplines of schools such as Buddhism, which pursue the breakdown of the ego through direct means such as meditation, resulting in the recognition that the material world and the 'meanings' we assume inhere within it (including the meaning of the "I," the ego-self that operates within that world) are maya, or illusion. Foucault remarks in a 1978 interview that the whole problem of de-subjectification is directly related to the operations of "mysticism," which he feels are analogous to his task of liberating a "kind of glimmering," an "essence," through the workings of the experience-book. When confronted by an audience of bewildered American post-structuralists regarding this realm of "occult"--or literally, "unknown"-- essence (surely a sin of the greatest magnitude in their eyes!) Foucault "had trouble specifying" just what he meant, but also stubbornly refused to back down (J. Miller, *Passion* 305). Yet those so troubled by the philosopher's stance here only betray their ignorance of his work. Gilles Deleuze, who as Paul Bové explains, "associates Foucault with some prophetic visionary capacity" ("Foreword" *Foucault* xxxii), points out that the Nietzschean nature/culture, rational/ irrational, Apollo/Dionysus spiral "from the beginning (was) one of Foucault's fundamental theses." For Foucault, he says, there exists a binary split between the ultimately indecipherable forms of "visible" content (nature) and forms of articulable expression (language), "although they continually overlap and spill into one another in order to form each new stratum of form of knowledge" (*Foucault* 61).

18. The difference between Hadot and Foucault in this instance is that Foucault's brand of "limit-experience" is rooted in what might be called "the left-hand" path--in other words--occult or "dark" forms of experience as indicated in his writing on Klossowski, whereas Hadot holds firm to the more measured, Apollonian methods of the right-hand path, such

as study, contemplation and meditation.

19. One figure who connects contemporary gutter-dandies with those of classical times is Diogenes the Cynic. "The scandalous gesture of Diogenes," Foucault notes, "is well known: when he needed to satisfy his sexual appetite, he would relieve himself in the marketplace." Diogenes was, Foucault explains, directing a form of "performance criticism" at what he considered the hypocritical Greek code of privacy for sexual acts, as if "the practice of *aphrodisia* was not something that honoured the most noble qualities of mankind." Such a protest "owed its impact to the public character of the act, which went against every convention in Greece." See *The Use of Pleasure* 54-5. Modern-day gutter-dandy Jim Morrison, lead singer of The Doors, engaged in an identical battle with hypocritical societal codes, would, in a Miami concert hall in 1969, be arrested, accused of exposing himself and of masturbating onstage, subsequently facing a trial which did serious damage to his career, yet which also ironically ensured his status as a mythic *daemonic* rebel.

20. Hadot's objection to Foucault's notions of classical models of self-creation, which he correctly feels constitute "a tacit attempt to offer contemporary mankind a model of life . . . an aesthetics of existence," center around what he sees as Foucault's convenient--and as he sees it, trendy--snubbing of the concept of nature, "according to a more or less universal tendency of modern thought, which is perhaps more instinctive than reflective." (*Philosophy* 208). I will suggest, however, that Foucault's views of nature, as much as he tries to obscure them, are crucial to his neo-dandyism, and derive from later mutations of the *philosophia*, such as those which occur in Gnostic thought.

21. Snyder identifies a "Great Subculture which runs underground all through history," which commences in Western culture "starting with the Gnostics," a most important element of which he locates as "The Brotherhood of the Free Spirit." For Snyder, contemporary "tribal" manifestations such as the hippies of the 1960s, and we can extrapolate, the punks of the late 70s, etc., are all in this genealogical line. "The Great Subculture has been attached in part to the official religions," he explains, but due to its insistence on the sovereign will-to-power of the individual, and not the institution, "is opposed for [these] very fundamental reasons to the Civilization Establishment." The Great Subculture posits that

> humanity need not look to a model or rule imposed from outside in searching for the center; and that in following the grain, one is being truly "moral." It has recognized that "to follow the grain" it is necessary to look exhaustively into the negative and demonic potentials of the Unconscious, and by recognizing these powers--symbolically acting them out--one releases himself from these forces. By this profound exorcism and ritual drama, the Great Subculture destroys the one credible claim of Church and State to a necessary

function. (Snyder 109-115)

22. Colin Wilson explains, "there were dozens of Gnostic sects, and their beliefs varied widely. But the basic one was this. The world was not created by God, but by a stupid and conceited demon (or Demiurge). God is above Creation; he is referred to as the Alien, the Abyss, the Non-Existent. This latter epithet means that God is totally beyond everything we mean by existence. . . . But there was some kind of split in this Alien Godhead, and a Fall took place. The end result . . . is the Demiurge (or archon) who created the universe. This archon is the 'God' of the Old Testament. . . . He is totally ignorant of the divinity from which he has fallen, and believes himself to be the only God." Thus, Wilson concludes, in Gnostic thought, man's circumstance is "doubly tragic," as he is trapped in a hostile world "created by a deluded God" (*The Occult* 210).

23. The Free Spirit, true to its individualistic premise, was never a coherent or cohesive movement, but was instead a shared *philosophia* among disparate groups of people from all classes. Marcus asserts that the "Free Spirit grew in strength and numbers when the Franciscans and Dominicans began to slide into wealth and bureaucracy, leaving the roads for monasteries; from the mid-thirteenth century the heresy spread across Central Europe and rooted itself there. Travelling under different names, it was never an organized, let alone hierarchical sect, though Free Spirit houses remained in place for generations" (*Lipstick Traces* 299).

24. Leff further explains the "connection" between Eckhardt and the Free Spirit, which consistently shows how the latter sect strove to turn *ideas* into *action:* "Both made union with God the center of their outlook; but where for Eckhardt this was the end of an arduous journey leading to the renunciation of the world, for the Free Spirit it formed the starting point for participation in the world. Where Eckhardt made contact with God the outcome of the soul's detachment from the senses, the Free Spirit made it the pretext for indulgence of the senses; where Eckhardt signalized the consummation of the soul's return to God by the birth of the Son within it, through the grace of adoption, to the Free Spirit it meant emancipation from venerating the Son or obeying the church. What for one was spiritual poverty for the other was libertinism." Thus, for the Free Spirit, a living praxis of faith meant taking one's freedom to the limit: "Man became God, and in God's name could act with the freedom and self-justification with which god acted. He could thus do anything and whatever he did was right" (308).

25. This line has often been attributed to writer and gutter-dandy William S. Burroughs, who used it as a kind of signature throughout his career. Greil Marcus comments: "The words make up the first line in the canon of the secret tradition, a nihilist catchphrase, an entry into negation, a utopianism, a shibboleth" (*Lipstick Traces* 442).

26. It is important, especially for its correspondences to Foucauldian thought, to differentiate between the soul and the *pneuma:* "It is to be noted that this freedom is not a matter of the 'soul,' which is as adequately determined by the moral law as the body is by

the physical law; it is wholly a matter of the *pneuma*, the indefinable spiritual core of existence, the foreign spark. The soul, *psyche*, is part of the natural order, created by the demiurge to envelop the foreign *pneuma*." See Jonas 129. Foucault's view of the soul as a foreign structure imposed from without is remarkably similar to this line of Gnostic thought. And his insistence, as previously noted, on the existence of a "glimmering," or an "essence" glimpsed at the outer edges of transgressive experience, corresponds closely to the idea of the *pneuma*.

27. The *Compilatio de novo spiritu* of Albert the Great, a Dominican monk, consisted of 97 (later amended to 127) articles of Free Spirit heresy. Among the more noteworthy assertions were the notions that "man united with god was absolved from all ecclesiastical obligations, the observance of festivals, fasts, confessions, and prayer, for these were obstacles to perfection" (articles 44, 50, 52, 97); that "man united with God should boldly satisfy the pleasures of the senses in every way and with both sexes" (106); that he should not "engage in work or dwell on his past sins, however great" (111), but "should eat and drink as much, and whatever, he like" (114), and "recognize that freedom for evil and quietude, together with bodily satisfaction, mean the indwelling of the holy spirit within him" (121). See Leff 311-13.

28. In *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, Cohn writes that from "the twelfth century onwards, there appeared a wealth previously unheard-of in western Europe," which paradoxically created a "craving for renunciation . . . not confined to any one class." Thus, "the voluntary poor formed a mobile, restless intelligentsia . . . operating mostly underground and finding an audience and a following amongst all the disoriented and anxious elements in urban society" (157). At any rate, "all alike seem to have been literate and articulate . . . the clergy who had to combat these people [were] dismayed by the subtlety and eloquence of their teaching and by the skill with which they handled abstruse theological concepts" (159-60).

29. "In practice however," Cohn explains, "the Brethren of the Free Spirit were as convinced as any other sectarians that the highest spiritual privileges were reserved for their own fraternity. They divided humanity up into two groups--the majority, the 'crude in spirit', who failed to develop their divine potentialities, and themselves, who were the 'subtle in spirit'" (173).

30. The "Loyists," as they called themselves, show a remarkable correspondence with the thought of Foucault as in such works as *Discipline and Punish:* a document from the period called the *Summa doctrinae* which documents Loyist beliefs "emphasizes the extent to which masters and experts were turned into objects of derision" by the sect, who expressed the opinion "that those who worry about the Lord, who seek to do good and to respect the most precious wishes of God as expressed in the Gospel, are fools" (Vaneigem, *Movement* 214). This latter group also sounds very much akin to the modern day, "do-gooder" Rousseauian types Foucault often disparages. The Loyist leader himself anticipates twentieth-century gutter-dandy Henry Miller in his elevation of individual

experience over abstraction: Pruystinck, writes one of his detractors, calls "the preaching of the word of God dead syllables, with no efficacity. He slanders ecclesiastical order and discipline as the tyranny and inquisition of Spain. He rejects schools, colleges and universities. He sneers at the commentaries and interpretations of holy and learned men . . ." (214). Finally, Pruystinck presents his views to Martin Luther, who promptly pronounces him "possessed by the devil" (217), eventually leading to his downfall.

31. Throughout Leyden's "reign," a man named Dusentschur, a goldsmith by trade, served as the king's all-purpose prophet. "One day," Cohn writes, "in the main square, this man declared that the heavenly Father had revealed to him that Bockelson was to be king of the whole world, holding dominion over all kings, princes and great ones of the earth" (270). Leyden's coronation followed, as did many more revelations by Dusentschur.

32. Leyden's kingship is marked by its deployment of spectacular imagery and symbolism, behind which there lay only the Void. "Although money had no function in Munster," Cohn writes, "a new, purely ornamental coinage was created. Gold and silver coins were minted with inscriptions summarizing the whole millennial phantasy which gave the kingdom its meaning. 'The Word has become Flesh and dwells in us'. . . . A special emblem was devised to symbolize Bockelson's claim to absolute spiritual and temporal dominion over the whole world. . . . The King himself wore this emblem, modelled in gold, hanging by a gold chain from his neck. His attendants wore it as a badge on their sleeves; and it was accepted in Munster as the emblem of the new state." Leyden also "dressed in magnificent robes and wore rings, chains and spurs made from the finest metal by the most skilful craftsmen in the town," and made public appearances in the marketplace seated on a throne "draped with cloth of gold" (272).

CHAPTER 2: SEIZING POWER: THE *DESTRUCTURALIST* SPIRAL

> **Art is a ritualistic binding of the perpetual motion machine that is nature. . . . Art is order. But order is not necessarily just, kind or beautiful. Order may be arbitrary, harsh, and cruel. Art has nothing to do with morality. . . . Before the Enlightenment, religious art was hieratic and ceremonial. After the Enlightenment, art had to create its own world, in which a new ritual of artistic formalism replaced religious universals. . . . The artist makes art not to save humankind, but to save himself.**
>
> **--Camille Paglia**

Medieval gutter-sovereigns such as John of Leyden ultimately posit a style of living beyond metaphysical concerns (the uncovering of that which can be eternally fixed as "true" underlying any given cultural formation, for instance), for "true nature" can never be arrested or deciphered. Their actions thus expose the structures of "civilized" life (including language) as fictions, whose successive "interpretations" are constituted in "the violent or surreptitious appropriation of a system of rules, which . . . [have] no essential meaning" (Foucault, *Reader* 86). This Apollonian power-play is paradoxical: rules and order have proven to be humanity's greatest defense against the void, serving as the basis for religion, ritual, and art; however, contrary to contemporary liberal-humanist thinking, all of these modes, including art, are in no way exempt from the amorality and cruelty created by the application of the inherently arbitrary and empty "rules" which are their basis. The artist, as a creator of works whose laws are self-contained, is thus necessarily engaged in transgression: initially freeing the subject(ed) through the dispersal of inherited, static rules, he must formulate the world anew, impose a new interpretation, a counter-discourse: when the art-work involved is the self, as in the case of the dandy, the issue of moral responsibility becomes even more problematic. Rather than deconstruction, I would label this spiral *destructuralism*, a movement encompassing both structure and its antithesis. This yoking of opposites becomes increasingly important as art challenges religion for hegemony in the cultural life of Western man.

ASTRIDE THE LINE: SADE

For thinkers as diverse as Foucault, Deleuze and Paglia, the Marquis de Sade's work initiates the *destructuralist* spiral which informs the work of a "shadow canon" of outlaw cultural Western figures in the (post)Enlightenment era, a spiral which is a key element of gutter-dandyism. Most importantly for neo-dandyism is the Sadean idea that the "enlightened" individual--he or she who has developed the will to go beyond the facile, bland exterior of "civilized life"--possesses rights beyond those who spend their lives paying lipservice to everyday morality. "Chief among these rights," states Pierre Klossowski, "is the right to revise the notion of what man is." It is this "*experimental right . . . to conduct forbidden experiments,*" to become one's own Creator and fashion the self as a work of art, that marks "one of the fundamental commitments of the Sadean conscience" (71).

Sade's libertines not only realize Dionysian "true nature," but also sow the seeds of the movement "against nature," resulting in a denaturalized, "dis-eased" Apollonian art-realm wherein, according to Foucault, "every language that has been effectively pronounced" has been consumed and then "repeated, combined, dissociated, reversed, and reversed once again, not toward a dialectical reward . . . but a radical exhaustion" (*Language* 61-2). For Sade, humanity's limits are no longer circumscribed by religion, God having been decentered by the emergence of Enlightenment "man," who now becomes the *raison d'être* f the universe. It is, then, this emergent "mans'" most powerful Dionysian experience--sex--which marks the borderline where thought and language break down into white noise on the threshold of life and death, holding the key to what Foucault describes as "the sovereign enterprise of unreason" (*Madness* 278).

SADE'S NEO-GNOSTICISM

Bataille comments that fundamental Gnosticism posits the "conception of matter as an *active* principle having its own eternal autonomous existence," this notion being in incompatible contrast to "the very principle of the profoundly monistic Hellenistic spirit, whose dominant tendency saw matter and evil as degradations of superior principles" (*Visions* 47). Although Gnostics proclaimed the world and its laws emanations of an "evil

Demiurge," Bataille finds--based on the Gnostic contention that, as a result of this perceived situation, the enlightened individual (*pneumaticos*) is sovereign and not bound by worldly or Divine law--that

> it is difficult to believe that on the whole Gnosticism does not manifest above all a sinister love of darkness, a monstrous taste for [the] obscene and lawless . . . . The existence of a sect of *licentious Gnostics* and of certain sexual rites fulfills this obscure demand for a baseness that would not be reducible, which would be owed the most indecent respect: black magic has continued this tradition to the present day. (48)

For Bataille, no matter what linguistic turns are employed to disguise it, the key element of Gnostic thinking is an *inverse exaltation*, the usurpation of the throne of the sovereign by the base subject: the Low proclaims itself on an equal footing--the Same as--the High. Gnosticism "is a question above all of not submitting oneself, and with oneself one's reason, to whatever is more elevated, to whatever can give a borrowed authority to the being that I am, and to the reason that arms this being." Instead, "this being and its reason can in fact only submit to what is lower, to what can never serve in any case to ape a given authority" (50).

Sade's writings extol a version of this form of Gnostic thought, with a slight twist, in that Nature itself becomes of central importance, and the idea of God, while heavily blasphemed, finally less crucial.[1] Deleuze (via Klossowski 65-86) stresses the concept of a "distinction between two *natures*" as being central to Sade's thought. *Secondary nature* corresponds to the Gnostic world of the Demiurge, the Apollonian realm of law and order, both cosmic (the *heimarmene*), and physical/moral (*nomos*). In Sade, "individuation, no less than the preservation of a reign or a species, are processes that testify to the narrow limits of secondary nature," writes Deleuze (*Coldness* 27). *Primary nature*, however, corresponds to what I have previously identified as "true nature": this is the active Dionysian realm which underlies the static Apollonian dream, a pure chaos in which "all reigns and all laws" are dispersed, as it is "free even from the necessity to create, preserve or individuate" (27). Such a realm of "pure negation," Deleuze explains, "needs no

foundation and is beyond all foundation, a primal delirium, an original and timeless chaos solely composed of wild and lacerating molecules." The task of the Sadean libertine is thus to "bridge the gulf between the two elements," to straddle the line between the Apollonian order of secondary nature--which is "always geared to the demands of conservation," causing "a usurpation of true sovereignty"--and the liberating Dionysian conundrum of true or primary nature (86).

Foucault locates the initial stage of what I am calling the *destructuralist* movement in this Sadean drive toward a total affirmation of primary nature as a state of chaotic flux, an eternally dissonant madness which affirms everything (and therefore nothing) at the same time. Here is Sade's "ironic justification" of the "inanity" of Rousseau's philosophy, with its "verbiage about man and nature" (*Madness* 283). "Within the chateau where Sade's hero confines himself," writes Foucault, "it seems at first glance as if nature can act with utter freedom. There man rediscovers a truth he had forgotten, though it was manifest. What desire can be contrary to nature, since it was given to man by nature itself? . . . The madness of desire, insane murders, the most unreasonable passions--all are wisdom and reason, since they are part of the order of nature" (282). In *The 120 Days of Sodom*, one of the author's main philosophical mouthpieces, Curval, elucidates this line of thinking in an extended oratory. "It is truly incredible," he says

> the way man, already restricted in all his amusements, in all his faculties, seeks further to narrow the scope of his existence. . . . For example, is it not commonly suspected what limitations he who has raised up murder as a crime has imposed upon all his delights; he has deprived himself of a hundred joys, each more delicious than the other, by daring to adopt the odious illusion which founds that particular nonsense. What the devil difference can it make to Nature whether there are one, ten, twenty, five hundred more or fewer human beings on earth? Conquerors, heroes, tyrants--do they inhibit themselves by that absurd law? . . . Forsooth, my friends, I tell you frankly that I tremble, I groan when I hear fools dare to tell me that such is the law of Nature, etc. . . . Merciful Heaven! All athirst for crimes and murders, 'tis to see they are committed, to inspire them Nature has wrought her law. (534)

Curval goes on to state that "the single way of serving nature is blindly to respond to her desires," no matter what form they might take, vice and virtue being equally valid in nature's primary chaos, where "she is wont to urge us to do this, now to do that" (534). To submit to the pre-ordained structures, guidelines and rules of secondary nature is to fall into the Gnostic's worldly prison of the *heimarmene* and the *nomos*, and thus to surrender one's sovereignty.

Taken alone, however, this notion is misleading. Foucault points out that the "first phase" of the Sadean subject's transgression is *not* a simple movement of black into white (which would mean its annihilation), but rather a straddling or puncturing of the binary wall between being and nothingness. "The real decisions," he says, "are still to be made: decisions in which the links between man and his natural being disappear" (*Madness* 283). In this process, the subject's outer, societal "self" is momentarily broken down and reintegrated with the Dionysian continuum, finding "itself in what it excludes . . . perhaps recognizes itself for the first time," a move analogous to the nirvanic (re)union of Atman and Brahman in Eastern mysticism. "Enlightenment," then, for the Sadean subject, is this realization of a "true nature" from which it is nevertheless *alien*. This essence-less-ness is revealed, through the experience of the Dionysian limit, as an "affirmation that affirms nothing," leading to a paradox central to the *destructuralist* spiral: for a living subject on the material plane of existence, Dionysus always leads *back* to Apollo (*Language* 34-6). Every "total" affirmation of true nature is thus an anti-affirmation which in turns affirms the exteriority of man: the paradoxical proclamation "I AM NOTHING" expresses this idea perfectly. Consequently, Sadean "bodies of self and other become objects (rather than sensitive beings) on the threshold between life and death" (During 82), as seen in the following passage from Sade's *Justine*:

> "This torture is sweeter than any you may imagine, Thérèse," says Roland; "you will only approach death by way of unspeakably pleasurable sensations; the pressure this noose will bring to bear upon your nervous system will set fire to the organs of voluptuousness; the effect is certain; were all the people who are condemned to this torture to know in what an intoxication of joy it makes one die, less

> terrified by this retribution for their crimes, they would commit them more often." (675)

This second phase of Sadean transgression--the "return"--establishes the subject's (re)embrace of the Apollonian, this time with the *experiential* realization that the "laws" binding it are, at base, empty and malleable: the *subject* realizes its status as an *object*. Henceforth, "the relation established by Rousseau is precisely reversed; sovereignty no longer transposes the natural existence; the latter is only an object for the sovereign, which permits him to measure his total liberty," his distance from the void (Foucault, *Madness* 283). Finally, even the omnipotence of mighty primary nature is rejected. As Maurice Blanchot explains, "mere nothingness is not the goal" of the Sadean libertine. Instead, "what he has striven for is sovereignty, through the spirit of negation, carried to its extreme." Sadean man's *destructuralist* journey moves from the Apollonian subject constructed by predetermined societal norms (the maze-like world of the Demiurge, secondary nature), through the "negation" of the dissolving Dionysian (primary nature), and then back again to Apollonian form, but this time endowed with a new awareness: he is his own Creator. "Thus," says Blanchot, "the circle is closed. With man we started, we now end up with man. Except that he now bears a new name: he is called the Unique One, the man who is unique of his kind" (64). Accordingly, Sade writes that the philosopher "is alone in the universe, he judges everything subjectively, only he is of importance" (*Justine* 608); here we return to Hadot's definition of the classical philosopher as *atopos*, outside of societal conventions, a race apart, a notion which in Sade is taken to its furthest limits.

THE MAKING OF THE MONSTER

> **Clement: "The philosopher . . . no longer fears to be selfish, to reduce everyone around him, and he sates his appetites without inquiring to know what his enjoyments may cost others, and without remorse."**
>
> **Thérèse: "But the man you describe is a monster."**
>
> **Clement: "The man I describe is in tune with Nature."**
>
> **–Sade's *Justine***

Sade's *philosophia* combines the asocial *atopos* and strict discipline of Hadot's classical philosophers with the libertinistic aspects of medieval Gnosticism seen in the cult of the Free Spirit. What Sade develops, Simone de Beauvoir explains, is a cruel *ascesis* of *apathy* (55).[2] This ascesis is based upon the *active* application of the will, which in the final stages allows the practitioner of a Sadean *philosophia* to gain hegemony over nature itself: rather than "reflect passively the heinousness of Nature, " she says, "one must *make oneself* a criminal in order to avoid *being* evil, as is a volcano or a member of the police" (53). Here is a gnostic form of "spiritual exercises" unimagined by Hadot's noble men of antiquity, yet which seem one logical result of the practice of the *atopos philosophe*. The *spiral of destructuralism* is thus a "paradoxical situation," as the libertine/philosopher "who asserts himself completely is also completely destroyed. He is a man of all passions, and he is without feeling," a pure exteriority, his hard outer shell encasing the void. This form of *apathy in extremis* "is the spirit of negation applied to the man who has chosen to make himself supreme," a limit-application of transgressive apathy resulting in the development of "true energy" (Blanchot 67). The primordial power of "true nature" is now actively employed against itself, harnessed for the singular use of the libertine.[3] Here, says Foucault, the "nothingness of unreason . . . has become a violence of Nature and *against Nature*, to the point of the savage abolition of itself" (*Madness* 285, my italics). The Sadean subject consequently experiences "an exaltation that leads to its complete explosion," the *destructuralist* spiral in action. (Foucault, qtd. in J. Miller 154).

The *philosophia* of Sade is thus shown to travel along a left-hand path that is rigorous, exacting, "a strict task, a total enterprise" (Foucault, *Madness* 282). It is by an effort of will "no less formidable an undertaking than the ascent of Everest" that one attains such a state of Sadean enlightenment: "no one can do it without a colossal concentration of energy." For Bataille, the most striking feature of the Sadean *philosophia* is that it "starts from an attitude of utter irresponsibility and ends with one of stringent self-control. . . . There is a movement foward of transgression that does not stop before a summit is reached" (Bataille, *Visions* 174, 175). The "enlightened" Sadean philosopher never totally relinquishes Apollonian control, before, during or especially *following* Dionysian

dissociation.[4] Sade says admiringly of his character Curval--the same character who advocates following the whims of nature--that

> with that man, passions had not the least influence upon doctrines; firm in his principles, he was just as much an atheist, an iconoclast, a criminal after having shed his fuck as when, before, he had been in a lubricious ferment . . . . Never ought fuck be allowed to dictate or affect one's principles; 'tis for one's principles to regulate one's manner of shedding it. And whether one is stiff, or whether one is not, one's philosophy, acting independently of the passions, should always remain the same. (*The 120 Days of Sodom* 535)

A DIFFERENT DEMOCRACY

> **The revolution is from below, the lower classes, the underworld, the damned, the disreputable, the despised and rejected. Freud's revolutionary motto in *The Interpretation of Dreams: Flectere si nequeo Superos, Acherunta movebo.* If I cannot bend the higher powers, I will stir up the lower depths. Freud's discovery: the universal underworld.**
>
> **--Norman O. Brown**

The *shiny, empty subject*: Sade's version of the medieval Gnostic's *pneumaticos*, or spiritual man, revised for the Age of Reason. Similar to Gnostic doctrine, this state of being, perhaps surprisingly, is actually *democratic* in nature, "open to any individual, regardless of his situation." What is required for Sadean sovereignty is the development of *true will* (a theme Nietzsche would later expand upon); for Sade, "those who remain among the oppressed do so because they are poor-spirited, and they must not be pitied. . . . if one dares, one can." Sade also recognized that the least likely group to partake of this concept would be the emergent middle classes, who, instead, in return for a *limited* sovereignty which in actuality amounts to systematic enslavement,[5] insist upon paying lip service to a view of life famously depicted by Rousseau, one in which men are born equal, "free" and "good," but are then corrupted by an unjust societal structure which creates inequality and hierarchy. In this view, such a state of affairs necessitates an unwritten "social contract" between all members of a given society (and enforced by the state)

ensuring a reciprocal and levelled playing field for all (a notion fervently held--and acted upon legislatively--by middle-class, liberal-humanists in the West to this day [6]). For Sade, this was a fanciful notion that undermined the quest for individual sovereignty and mainly worked to the benefit of the middle classes, being in the interest neither of the rich, "who have nothing to gain in abdicating their privileges" (de Beauvoir 55), nor the poor, "whose inferiority is thereby confirmed" (47). In such a system, the individual is fixed within the predetermined static grid of secondary nature, without the freedom either to rise to the top or sink to the bottom, frustrating the principle of inverse exaltation from either direction (*low-high high-low*).

In the world of experience, such a notion was ultimately untenable. "Sade passionately exposes the bourgeois hoax which consists in erecting class interests into universal principles," writes de Beauvoir. "Since the concrete conditions under which individuals live are not homogeneous, no universal morality is possible" (48). Moreover, such equalizing ideals were opposed to what Sade saw as the inescapably *hierarchical*[7] natural impulses of humanity:

> There is not a living man who does not wish to play the despot when he is stiff: it seems to him his joy is less when others appear to have as much as he . . . he would like to be the only one in the world capable of experiencing what he feels: the idea of seeing another enjoy as he enjoys reduces him to a kind of equality with that other, which impairs the unspeakable charm *despotism* allows him to feel. (*Philosophy* 344)

Sovereignty for Sade then must be accomplished always on an *individual* basis: the bourgeois utopian notion of a *collective, universal* sovereignty of delimited freedoms for all is for him a nightmarish scenario.[8] Laws meant to bring about peace and equality, to protect man from himself, from his own instincts, "forged for universal application, are in perpetual conflict with personal interest." Meant to protect the society at large, such laws "are very bad for the individuals whereof it is composed; for, if they one time protect the individual, they hinder, trouble, fetter him for three quarters of his life" (287). For Sade, such a trade-off was tantamount to the acceptance of a living death, and the only answer

lay in the individual application of transgressive will: "As the weak may redress matters by means of theft, the strong are equally allowed to restore inequality, or protect it, by refusing to give aid to the wretched. The universe would cease on the spot to subsist were there an exact similarity amongst all beings; 'tis of this disparity there is born an order which preserves, contains, directs everything" (*120 Days* 426).

Thus, with the bourgeois middle classes excluded from the attainment of true sovereignty/enlightement by the fact of their very existence as a class, "Sade's heroes are recruited from . . . among the highest and the lowest," writes Blanchot, "from among the mighty of the world and, at the opposite pole, fished up from the sewers and cesspools of the lower depths." Both groups, high and low, "have something extreme working for them, for the extreme of poverty is as powerful a stimulus as are the dazzling possibilities that fortune offers." The problem, then, is one of the middle against both ends. Laws meant to conserve and protect a middle-class world oppress both the high and the low: either "one is too far beneath it to be able to conform to the law without perishing," or "one is too far above the law to submit to it without debasement" (42). Such binary divisions between high and low as rich/poor, oppressor/oppressed are "merely provisional arguments by which Sadean man, depending on his position in the social hierarchy, asserts his right to power," (43) through the transgression of the limits and boundaries of "civilized" society.

WRITING (AS) THE ULTIMATE CRIME

No matter what direction the trangression, however, the key element here remains the same: an apathetic, detached application of *crime*, of *methodical base activity* which functions as an *ascesis* of inverse exaltation by which the self is transmutated, empowered.[9] "Crime matters more than lust, and the cold-blooded, the premeditated crime is greater than the crime committed in the heat of passion," writes Blanchot. "But most important is the somber, secret crime "committed by a conscious hardening of sensitivity," which is the "act of a soul which has destroyed everything within itself, has accumulated an immense strength" through its controlled enfolding of the void. Again paradoxically, this dispassionate application of a cruel *ascesis* leads the subject to a

"supreme enjoyment of the self" which finally "will transport him a sovereign, beyond all imaginable limits," the ultimate seizure of power (68-9).

Also of major importance in this transgressive scenario is Sade's oft-quoted remark regarding the nature of writing itself. Undoubtedly, the "monsters" Sade valorizes when he invokes the "perverse writers whose corruption is so dangerous, so active, that their single aim is, by causing their appalling doctrines to be printed, to immortalize the sum of their crimes after their own lives are at an end," are versions of himself. "They themselves can do no more," Sade continues, "but their accursed writings will instigate the commission of crimes, and they carry this sweet idea with them to their graves" (*Justine* 611). For Foucault, "writing," be it historical, philosophical or literary, in the modern era finds its highest value in this Sadean radicality. The dissociation of those lines which constitute the Western subject or personality is the aim of the "experience-book," which attempts "through experience to reach that point of life which lies as close as possible to the impossibility of living, which lies at the limit or extreme." Such a work itself functions as a "de-subjectifying undertaking," a "'limit-experience' that tears the subject from itself" (*Remarks* 31-2).

Echoing the rhetorical function Hadot attributes to classical texts, Foucault's heterotopic "experience-book" is an active agent, a work of "direct personal experience" (*Remarks* 38) rather than a theoretical/exegetical exercise: *philosophy as a way of life*. The "experience-book" thus functions simultaneously as both theory and practice, erasing the line between the two. "I aim at having an experience myself," Foucault explains, "and I invite others to share the experience . . . that might permit us to emerge from it transformed" (34). The dissociated subject is thus framed through the act of writing and transmitted to others as rhetorical solicitation to "slip into this kind of experience" (40). Implicit in this view--and *explicit* in Sade's comment--is the idea of writing as a *subversive*, *criminal* act: literature as a rhetorical exercise designed to create activity, to stir its readers to action, this being a left-handed version of the classical *philosophia*, where writing--indeed language itself--functions as "a force acting on the world, rather than a series of signs to deciphered" (Tompkins 203). The "experience-book" as defined

and refined by Sade--which eventually becomes the main literary vehicle of the gutter-dandy--contains a crime "which is perpetually effective, even when I myself cease to be effective, so that there will not be a single moment of my life, even when I am asleep, when I shall not be the cause of some disturbance" (Sade, qtd. in Deleuze, *Coldness* 28).

In "The Use Value of D.A.F. de Sade," Bataille devotes an entire essay to this important notion. Bataille indignantly seeks to rescue Sade from "his most open apologists" (*Visions* 92), especially "literary men" who "could even pretend that Sade was the first to take the trouble to situate the domain he described outside of and above all reality," and who "easily affirm that the brilliant and suffocating value he wanted to give human existence is inconceivable outside of fiction" (93). Rather than serving the homogenizing Apollonian ends of philosophy, science, religion and poetry, all of which Bataille classifies as "instruments of appropriation," Sade's books are "heterological," Dionysian texts,[10] working in opposition to "any homogenous representation of the world, in other words, to any philosophical system" (97). Rather than remaining within the realm of abstraction, such works bridge the gap between theory and practice, between Apollo and Dionysus by linking "abstract facts to a practice . . . which immediately reaches concrete heterogeneity, in order to arrive at ecstatic trances and orgasm" (99). They are thus *rhetorical.*

For a society trapped within a "state of stagnation (during a phase of appropriation)"--bound by the interests of the production and conservation of goods, as well as by the servile utility of the individual which defines the middle classes--heterological literature (i.e., the "experience-book") functions actively on the level of the individual in a manner akin to the potlatch, as in "the great ritual destruction of goods in British Columbia" by native peoples, by promoting activity *opposite* to that of conservation and utility: the gratuitous, joyful *waste* of human energy and resources (100). Bataille further defines this line of thought found in the actions of Sade's "sovereign man" when he notes that while Sade does not overtly formulate the principles of potlatch, he "implies them" by advocating a transgressive erotic excess which by its very nature "mocks at toil," and by asserting "that pleasure is more acute if it is criminal and the more abhorrent the crime the

greater the pleasure" (*Erotism* 168-9). Finally, mocking the supposedly "universal good" inherent in work, accumulation and conservation, the decadent principles of this personal potlatch merge with those of *inverse exaltation*:

> Erotic conduct is the opposite of normal conduct as spending is the opposite of getting. . . . We recklessly draw on our strength and sometimes in the violence of passion we squander considerable resources to no real purpose. Pleasure is so close to ruinous waste that we refer to the moment of climax as a "little death". . . . Our only real pleasure is to squander our resources to no purpose, just as if a wound were bleeding away inside us; we always want to be sure of the uselessness or the ruinousness of our extravagance. We want to feel as remote from the world where thrift is the rule as we can. As remote as we can:-- that is hardly enough; we want *a world turned upside down and inside out*. The truth of eroticism is treason. (170-1, my italics)

Sade's poisonous dream: a world turned *upside down, inside out*--a fevered realm in the grip of the *destructuralist* spiral.

DECADENCE AS ENLIGHTENMENT: THE EMERGENCE OF THE DANDY

> **Modern man is not the man who goes off to discover himself, his secrets and his hidden truth; he is the man who tries to invent himself.**
>
> **--Foucault**

What is enlightenment? Aldous Huxley: "To be enlightened is to be aware, at all times, of total reality in its immanent otherness . . . and yet be in a condition to survive as an animal . . . to resort whenever expedient to systematic reasoning" (63). One foot in; one foot out, embodying a state of constant self creation/critique--what the Buddha called *paranirvana*--the essence of *destructuralism*. To know "true nature" and yet be able to live with this knowledge. Foucault, like the Buddha, finally determines that such a state cannot be reached through formulaic means; each person has to find his or her path to "enlightenment" (J. Miller 283). This does not mean, however, that he is against offering some general ideas on the topic.

In the latter stages of his career, Foucault becomes increasingly concerned with the second, reconstructive movement of Sadean transgression. In the original "What Is An Author?", published in 1969, Foucault concurs with the poststructuralist, Barthesian notion that heterotopic fiction, which dissociates and deconstructs the subject-self, has occasioned the death of the historical "author." However, as follows all acts of Dionysian transgression, the Apollonian ordering process quickly rushes in to seal the gap left by the author's disappearance: the empirical author--the invisible, centered, perceiving subject--may have died, but other control mechanisms rush in to contain the void. The author's name, for instance, functions not like a proper name, but a "name-brand," indicating not only ownership of the "branded" material, but a certain kind of discourse or product tied to it. And literary critics, aping the methods of Christian exegesis, also act as agents of control by subsuming contradictions, expelling "alien" texts, and generally ordering the disorderly body of the author's works (*Language* 105-13)

In the 1979 revised text,[11] Foucault adds some subtle closing remarks which, although they have basically gone unexamined, hint at his blossoming interest in dandyism. "I seem to call for a form of culture in which fiction would not be limited by the figure of the author," he now says. This notion is quickly dismissed as naive, however, as it discounts the second phase of the transgressive spiral: a pure state of unfettered Dionysiac bliss for textual and/or human bodies is now deemed "pure romanticism." The key, instead, is a *transformation* of the author-function: "I think that, as our society changes . . . the author-function will disappear, and . . . that fiction . . . will once again function according to another mode, but still with a system of constraint--one which will no longer be the author, but which will have to be determined or, perhaps, *experienced*" (my italics, *Foucault Reader* 119). This last statement is typical of the cagey Foucault, an easily glossed-over hint at his developing interest in Apollonian praxis. What could he mean by this "experience" of the author-function?

The answer lies within the cultural manifestation or symptom known as "decadence," which represents the ironic apex of modernity, existing at the furthest limit of the Apollonian impulse underlying Western culture. Furthermore, decadent art, the logical

extension of the total immersion in and subsequent swerve away from nature seen in Sade (ignored by early Romantics such as Wordsworth, with his benign Rousseauism), is embodied in the person of the *dandy*, who seeks continually to encompass both movements of the spiral by turning life into art, thereby de-forming and arresting nature's insidious, deleterious power:

> Romantic imagination broke through all limits. Decadence, burdened by freedom, invents harsh new limits, psychosexual and artistic. . . . Its nature theory follows Sade and Coleridge, who see nature's cruelty and excess. Art supplants nature. The objet d'art becomes the center of fetishistic connoisseurship. Person is transformed into beautiful thing, beyond the law. Decadence takes western sexual personae to their ultimate point of hardness and artificiality. It is. . . . an Apollonian raid on the Dionysian, the aggressive eye, pinning and freezing nature's roiling objects. (Paglia, *Sexual* 389)

Mark Edmundson explains that, for Paglia, the decadent sensibility is important because of its recognition that "giving up to nature means unconditionally surrendering to the erotic and destructive drives"--ritual and artifice frustrate nature's grinding powers of decomposition (310). Paglia rightly locates French culture as the spawning ground for decadent literary figures as witnessed in the lives and works of poet-dandy Charles Baudelaire, and novelist-dandy J .K. Huysmans, whose *Against Nature* is a virtual guide to decadent/aesthetic practice, directly anticipating the emergence of Jean Genet, who in turn provides a blueprint for the Anglo-American gutter-dandies of the twentieth century.

THE DANDY AS REBEL

Near as I could make out, Baudelaire was the first real rock star. At least he was the first one to smoke dope, stay up all night, and crash in hotels, dress in a dandyish manner that served to confuse 'real men' about his gender, frequent brothels, and proceed to fuck around so much he finally got syphilis and ultimately died insane and mad, brilliant as he was tragic. Years later his life made a significant impression on young Arthur Rimbaud, much as Blake had on Baudelaire years before. That's the start of the lineage . . . as much as Chuck Berry and Little Richard and those guys shaped the sound of rock 'n' roll, these guys set the standard for its action and behaviour, its attitude.

—Danny Sugerman

****

Dandyism . . . inaugurates an aesthetic which is still valid in our world, an aesthetic of solitary creators, who are obstinate rivals of a God they condemn. From romanticism onward, the artist's task will not only be to create a world, or to exalt beauty for its own sake, but also to define an attitude.

—Camus

****

The chief rule of the brotherhood of dandies, strictly observed, is to evade conformity.

—Jessica R. Feldman

Albert Camus, in his philosophical work *The Rebel*, situates the dandy next in the lineage of oppositional Enlightenment figures following Sade. In Camus's characteristically acrid view, dandyism is "a degraded form of asceticism," perhaps a logical enough statement when one considers its lineage as it extends from the left-hand path of medieval Gnosticism through Sade's own Enlightenment-era revision. In Sade's wake, rebellion, "no longer hoping for the rule or the unity of God," assumes an adversarial posture which seeks a solution in "the attitude that it itself" strikes, exemplified in the figure of the dandy, who "creates his own unity by aesthetic means." Still tinged with a touch of the Satanic in a newfound rational world where God is dead yet

paradoxically lives on, the dandy "is, by occupation, always in opposition," compelled to shape the raw flux of existence according to his *own* design. "Up to now," says Camus, "man derived his coherence from his Creator. But from the moment that he consecrates his rupture with Him, he finds himself delivered over to the fleeting moment, to the passing days, and to wasted sensibility. Therefore he must take himself in hand. The dandy rallies his forces and creates a unity for himself by the very violence of his refusal" (51).

The dandy is thus continually compelled to posit a substitute universe in opposition to that of the logocentric God of The Wor(l)d, and does this by rescuing the long discredited pagan Image from its long exile, placing it back upon its cultural pedestal. To this end, Camus contends, he takes the image unto himself, and attempts to merge with it, becoming a work of art: "the artist becomes a model and offers himself as an example" (53). From this socio-historical point onwards, Art itself challenges religion for cultural hegemony, symbolized in the dandy's persona. Life for the dandy is *performance art*: "he is as coherent as an actor . . .always compelled to astonish." As with his conceptual predecessor, the Sadean libertine (exemplified in practice by Sade himself), "singularity is his vocation, excess his way to perfection" (52). Ellen Moers, author of the pioneering study *The Dandy: Brummel to Beerbohm*, explains that the dandy "as Brummell made him, stands on an isolated pedestal of self," his crowning achievement "simply to be himself" (17). This process, however, bears no resemblance to our current *fin-de-millennium* societal mania over "self-esteem" and "protecting one's identity," concerns basically Rousseauian in nature. Instead, "being oneself" in this instance is an *exercise*, an extension of the everyday *philosophia* of classical scholars via Sade's ascesis of apathy. To "be yourself" therefore "does not mean to relax, to sprawl [but] to tighten, to control, to attain perfection. . . . Instinctual reactions, passions, and enthusiasms are animal, and thus abominable" (18).[12] This dandiacal *philosophia* initially finds its most coherent exponent in the work and life of Baudelaire.

BAUDELAIRE: *DÉCLASSÉ* DANDY

Of the vaporization and centralization of the *Self*.
There is everything.

--Baudelaire

****

Creation came from him, [yet] *he* was the object created.

--Sartre, from *Baudelaire*

While Baudelaire could explain that the dandyism, as he conceived it, "is a modern thing, resulting from causes entirely new" (*Mirror* 128), this was only accurate to the extent that the dandy was the *latest* manifestation of the will-to-sovereignty present in *atopos* classical philosopher Diogenes, medieval Free Spirit John of Leyden, and the Marquis De Sade. Baudelairean *dandysme* is basically a further refinement of the animating principles of The Great Subculture, occasioned by the post-Enlightenment triumph of art as a organizational cultural structure able to rival religion's hegemonical status. "Dandyism borders on the spiritual and the stoical," writes Baudelaire in *The Painter of Modern Life*, which contains his definitive theoretical distillation of the phenomenon. It is "a kind of religion," albeit a "weird" one which recognizes "a grandeur in all follies, an energy in all excess," yet frames such activity within a self-contained system "designed to fortify the will and discipline the soul" (28). The dandy is a living paradox.

In the phrase "the vaporization and centralization of the self," which opens *Mon Coeur mis à nu*, Baudelaire succinctly expresses the movement of *destructuralism*, the need for the enlightened, *sovereign* man--the artist-dandy, in his model--to encompass both structure and its antithesis in his person and his work. For Foucault, Baudelaire's modern *ethos*, or "limit-attitude," contains both movements of the transgressive spiral, "beyond the inside-outside alternative" (*Language* 45). Jessica R. Feldman argues that the dandy is "neither spirit nor flesh, nature nor artifice, ethical nor aesthetic, active nor passive, male nor female," but instead a "figure who casts into doubt, even while he underscores, the very binary oppositions by which his culture lives" (4). As seen in Huxley's theorem,

"enlightenment" entails just such a balancing act: constant contact with or awareness of Dionysian chaos whilst maintaining Apollonian control. Just as the dissociated flux of the visible is continually transfigured, framed, and articulated by the decadent artist (as in the *experience-book*), the body's "perpetual disintegration" is transfigured through this same ritual application of Apollonian lines, an "ascetic elaboration of the self," connecting the Foucauldian quest to the operations of mysticism (Foucault, *Language* 42). Deleuze identifies this action as a "folding" of outside power relations "to create a doubling, allow a relation to oneself to emerge, and constitute an inside which is hollowed out and develops its unique dimension" (*Foucault* 100). This seizure of power "is what the Greeks did: they folded force [and] made it relate back to itself. Far from ignoring interiority, individuality, or subjectivity, they invented the subject [and] discovered the 'aesthetic existence.'" Deleuze cannot overstress the importance of this "fundamental idea" underlying Foucault's work: of a "dimension of subjectivity derived from power and knowledge without being dependent on them" (101). *Dandysme* thus represents for these thinkers a formula for individual power/freedom.

Unlike his British predecessor Beau Brummel, a dandy who aspired to escape his middle-class roots via a subversion of the traditional form of aristocracy through his association with the Prince of Wales,[13] Baudelaire lived in an age of aristocratic decline, and as a result, in his search for experiential extremity, "did not set himself above, but below the bourgeoisie," redirecting the quest for sovereignty. The habitually poverty-stricken Baudelaire was "déclassé," and took it upon himself to aestheticize the role in which society placed him: "he set to work to live his *déclassément* . . . as though it were a voluntary separation from bourgeois society" (Sartre, *Baudelaire* 133, 154). If the old aristocracy was dying, subsumed by the emergent bourgeois world of utility, then it was up to the dandy to conceive "a new kind of aristocracy, all the more difficult to shatter as it will be based on the most precious, the most enduring faculties, and on the divine gifts which work and money are unable to bestow" (Baudelaire, *Painter* 28).

Like Sade's "Sovereign Man," who makes an art out of non-productive erotic excess, the Baudelairean dandy rejects the bourgeois world of work: "To be a useful man has

always seemed to me ghastly," Baudelaire declares. The artist-dandy is thus "defined by his uselessness to society," adopting as a first principle the "denial of utility" (Black 192). As Bataille points out, this principle was a defining feature of Baudelaire's life: "On the one hand, his notes are filled with the determination to work, but on the other, his life was a long rejection of useful activity. . . . What in fact won the day with him was the refusal to work, to be satisfied by it." Such a refusal amounts to a denial of the primacy of the future (over the enjoyment of the present) required by a bourgeois world where glory has been replaced by utility (*Literature* 51-9). Accordingly, with the option of the high no longer viable, Baudelaire gravitated downwards, to "all the beings, things and people which seemed wounded, broken or slipping towards their end" (Sartre, *Baudelaire* 175). Baudelaire initiates the dandy's search for sovereignty in the gutter.

The "causes entirely new" which produce Baudelairean *dandysme* are then precisely this "victory" of the utilitarian bourgeois order. In a capitalist world of subjectival control which "reduces what is human to the condition of a *thing* (of a commodity)," dandyism implements an ironic reversal: it deploys the ultra-Apollonianism of the modern epoch against itself, substituting art-worlds for "real" worlds (Bataille, *Accursed* 1: 129). The "ordering" process by which bourgeois capitalism subjects bodies is instead used to liberate them through the process of the *destructuralist* spiral, "the vaporization and centralization of the self." In this process, bodies produce not more malleable bodies measured by their use-value in the service of power, but impenetrable, beautifully "useless" art objects: a *sterile productivity*. The Baudelairean dandy thus fulfills Paglia's first principle of decadent art: the (re)creation of the self as a "manufactured object," or the "product of biology manipulated for art" (*Sexual* 391). This subversive (mis)use of civilizing, ordering power against civilization is deemed a "daemonization" of the Apollonian principle (489) , this term again stressing the underlying connection with the occult, left-hand path trod by members of The Great Subculture since antiquity.[14] Such a state of gratuitous "infecundity" was for Baudelaire a lifelong pursuit (Sartre, *Baudelaire* 107-8).

The concept of the self as "manufactured object" also leads to a refinement of the

Sadean libertine's ambivalent attitude toward nature. Here, nature is not granted the status given it by Sade; for Baudelaire it is a virus which threatens the stability of the self-artifact, linking him even more closely than the at times ambivalent Sade with the hatred of "universal nature" by medieval gnostics, who linked it to a fallen Demiurge. Nature, both organic and human, symbolizes that which is "common" and "normal"; to become *un*-natural, then is to be exceptional, *singular*, for Baudelaire an absolutely necessary prerequisite for sovereignty. If "human nature" is what comprises the inner lives of the docile bourgeois mass, then the boundaries of this "norm-ality" must be dissociated through experiential, limit-testing means: the glorious excess of decadent poetry, the ingestion of drugs, liaisons with prostitutes. Through such experiences, Baudelaire precipitates a "personal apocalypse," and gains access to the void, the "*coincidentia oppositorum*" wherein "the self is destroyed so that it may be born anew." This act of "decreative art," in which "humanly imposed form flirts with . . . chaos" (Feldman 134), allows the dandy to supplant God as creator, and thus contains one of the central paradoxes of *destructuralism*: "Man, in god's image, can create order; yet in doing so he challenges the very notion of hierarchy, of God's utter superiority" (109). *Dandysme* thus possesses both elitist and democratic elements simultaneously, and while Baudelaire and Huysmans were still too enamoured of old-line aristocratic ideals to be *entirely* comfortable with the latter strain, its implications--which Foucault strives to extract and develop in "What Is Enlightenment?"--would be developed in various ways by twentieth-century gutter-dandies like Henry Miller, who, perhaps because of his historical distance as an American, lacked the Europeans' nostalgia for the aristocracy.

Baudelaire's theories find artistic praxis in his disciple Joris-Karl Huysmans' novel *Against Nature*, a veritable textbook of decadent/aesthetic theory. The novel's autobiographical protagonist-dandy, Des Esseintes, proclaims that "Nature . . . has had her day. . . . The old crone has by now exhausted the good-humoured admiration of all true artists, and the time has surely come for artifice to take her place whenever possible" (37). In rebellion against bourgeois culture, "the vast bagnio of America transported to the continent of Europe" (218), Des Esseintes rejects the "visible" world of nature for an

"articulable," aesthetic environment: unsurprisingly, he idolizes Baudelaire, for whom his admiration knows "no bounds." Huysmans's depiction here of Baudelaire's experiential journey through the Dionysian and subsequent (re)emergence as an emptied Apollonian exteriority--as documented in his decadent poetry--is acute:

> Literature, in fact, had been concerned with virtues and vices of a perfectly healthy sort, the regular functioning of brains of a normal conformation, the practical reality of current ideas, with never a thought for morbid depravities and other-worldly aspirations. . . . Baudelaire had gone further; he had descended to the bottom of the inexhaustible mine. . . . There, near the breeding ground of intellectual aberrations and diseases of the mind--the mystical tetanus, the burning fever of lust, the typhoids and yellow fevers of crime--he had found . . . ennui, the frightening climacteric of thoughts and emotions. He had laid bare the morbid psychology of the mind that had reached the October of its sensations . . . he had shown how blight affects the emotions at a time when the enthusiasms and beliefs of youth have drained away, and nothing remains but the barren memory of hardships, tyranny and slights, suffered at the behest of a despotic and freakish fate. (146)

Past the petty moral limits of a stultifying humanism, Baudelaire had plunged headlong into the void, stripping away the conventions of respectable "literature" along with most other facets of middle-class morality, emerging purged of all that might have previously been considered "essential" or "natural": he "had succeeded in expressing the inexpressible," knowledge gleaned from the limits of experience (148). As Sartre comments, this "certain dose of the individual and the eternal" which "intoxicated" the poet was accomplished via an element of apathetic control which was present at all times: though he might be engaging in decadence of various sorts, Baudelaire "never became so involved that he lost his senses. On the contrary, it was in the moment of the bitterest sensual pleasure that he really found himself. The temperamental man," Sartre continues, "forgets himself in the intoxication of the senses. Baudelaire never forgot himself" (*Baudelaire* 77). In modern street slang, Baudelaire was *cool*.

Sade's ascesis of apathy thus plays a central role in Baudelairean *dandysme*. Utilizing

at all times a measure of dispassionate self control, the poet emerges from his Dionysian revelry "lightened, hollowed out, filled in with signs and symbols," a shiny, empty microcosm of the void. "This world which enfolded him was in its immense totality nothing but himself," writes Sartre, "and he was himself the Narcissus who wanted to embrace and contemplate himself" (179). *The right to conduct forbidden experiments*; the usurpation of the role of God/Nature. Baudelaire, in the parlance of 1960s gutter-dandy Jim Morrison, "breaks on through to the other side," to "the place where God topples over into Satan and *vice-versa*" (Kristeva 336), discovering the revelation of the Same at the furthest reaches of Chaos.

THE DANDY AS PUNKY RHIZOME: *ACTIVE* (SELF)DESTRUCTION

> **To the breaking point. Carrying the thought through to the end; crucial experiments, *experimentum crucis*. A witness (martyr) steadfast to the end, tested *in extremis*. Extremism. Truth is not in safety or in the middle.**
>
> **– Norman O. Brown**

The "vaporization/centralization" stage of *destructuralism* central to Baudelaire's dandy-theory can be related to Deleuze's concept of the *rhizome*, a organism characterized by continual spiraling movements of *deterritorialization* and *reterritorialization*, another way of describing the *destructuralist* play of Apollonian and Dionysian processes as formulated by Nietzsche.[15] Sartre says of Baudelaire's dandy that he commits a "slow suicide," one which it is "obviously essential that he should survive" (*Baudelaire* 187-9). Baudelaire "had a hold on himself and worked on himself so that . . . he would never be something given" (186): the dandy thus substitutes the process for the finished article, the *means* for the *end*. He is an *active* artwork perpetually in transition, marked by a constant "fighting attitude" (133). Deleuze labels this specific phenomenon a haecceity, "a mode of individuation very different from that of a person, subject, thing or substance." (*Deleuze Reader* 54). A haecceity "has neither beginning nor end, origin or destination," but instead is "always in the middle[16] . . . not made up of points, only of lines. It is a rhizome" (56). Such an entity is composed of a heterogenous conglomeration of radiating elements, often grouped together under an identifying "brand name." [17] The dandy can thus be described as a *haecceitical* being who, in becoming so, must first employ a vaporization of the "natural" subjectival self imposed from the outside, from society.[18] This entails what Deleuze calls an "active destruction" of the self, as opposed to mere "reactive" self-destruction. This "active negation or active destruction is the state of strong spirits which destroy the reactive in themselves . . . even if it entails willing their own decline." Paradoxically, in this spiraling, *destructuralist* process, "reactive forces *become active*": negative forces *are* "*transmuted*," enabling "a new way of feeling, thinking and above all being," a state which Deleuze equates to that expression of Nietzschean sovereignty, "the overman. . . . the supreme Dionysian metamorphosis" (*Deleuze Reader* 92-3).[19]

This "personal apocalypse" of the dandy is thus a continual recognition of and manipulation of the reality of material presence, of *being human*. "The human body is not a thing or substance given, but a continuous creation," Brown theorizes, "never a complete structure, never static," but rather "in perpetual inner self-construction and self-destruction; we destroy in order to make it new" (*Love's* 155). Here, then, is the mysterious "experience of the author-function" to which Foucault alludes. A rhizomatic conglomeration of loosely structured elements rather than a rigid subject, the haecceitical dandy lives life as continuous theatre, an *actor* for whom all the world is a stage: "When Nietzsche says that the overman resembles Borgia rather than Parsifal . . . that the overman belongs at once to both the Jesuit order and the Prussian officer corps, we can only understand these texts [as] the remarks of a director indicating how the overman should be 'played,'" states Deleuze (*Deleuze Reader* 88). Sartre likewise observes of Baudelaire that "his least desires, his most spontaneous *élans* were repressed, filtered, *acted* rather than lived," and "were only allowed to pass when they had been duly transformed into something artificial" (*Baudelaire* 110). This decadent *philosophia*, marked by an oppositional "fighting attitude," is defined by Julia Kristeva as "punk" in nature, predating the personae of later twentieth-century rock and roll figures such as Iggy Pop and Lou Reed; such a "punk" or gutter-dandy delights in constructing "an aspect--an image--as artificial as it is shocking; an image that, on the one hand, signifies an absence of signification, and on the other a strenuous joke, a furious challenge to those naive advocates of authenticity who let themselves be impressed by such silly antics . . . such 'punk' behaviour before the fact points to the bankruptcy of 'one's own and proper,' the death of the 'authentic' within a subjectivity fully oriented toward a pre-Oedipal landscape" (337). This "landscape" is the natural territory of the haecceitical being: the vaporized, (re)centralized self which Norman O. Brown labels "the Dionysian ego" or "body-ego" (*Life* 175-6), a return to the polymorphously perverse subjectivity of the infant, preceding its colonization by the delimiting hierarchical structures beginning with the Oedipal "daddy-mommy-me." As such, it corresponds to the gnostic desire to return to a sovereign, *pneumaticos* condition free of the repressive *heimarmene*, the Law of the Demiurge.[20]

Rather than being a matter of locating one's proper place within an *a priori* grid (as in our present-day "identity politics"), identity here is *free-flowing* and malleable, under the control of the individual--a *design for life*: "Baudelaire's dandy courts a primordial chaos by an unmaking of the world, a creative loosening of its rigid systems of classification" (22), explains Feldman. Here, he may partially partake of an "individible totality" and "experience the glory of multiplicity, movement, and correspondence in and of themselves, unmoored" (107).[21] Baudelaire's mystical *dandysme* is thus polymorphously body-oriented: he needed the "earthly prison" of the body "so that he could feel that he was continually on the point of escaping from it" (Sartre, *Baudelaire* 181).[22] This persistent tension is typical of a haecceitical being constantly *at the limit*, a locus for what Deleuze and Guattari call "free disjunction" in which "differential positions [i.e., *personae*] persist in their entirety," possessing a sovereign, "free quality" framed within a "faceless and transpositional subject" (*Anti-Oedipus* 77).

The dandy-self is thus a kaleidoscopic image-machine, continually (re)producing an array of singular, spectacular, and even deliberately shocking personae. The punk-influenced "alternative" rockers of the postmodern era, for instance, might be surprised to learn that, in his youth, Baudelaire at one time sported "a head of hair freshly dyed green" (Black 190), embodying a dandiacal praxis which stresses "the joy of astonishing others, and the proud satisfaction of never oneself being shocked," thus emphasizing the crucial role which a "daemonized" Apollonian apathy plays in his *dandysme* (Baudelaire, *Painter* 28). Likewise, Baudelaire's dress was, unlike the clichéd notion of the dandy as a kind of foppish peacock, also quite "punk" in nature: "Baudelaire always relished black," writes Moers, "at once as a colour and as a negation of all colour." The poet would thus don black attire from head to toe in a "desire to appear more *grave* . . . black was appropriate, he felt, to an age in mourning; the century moved down in a declining path, not upwards toward progress," and denoted on the part of the wearer membership in a "spiritual aristocracy" (272). Certainly the black leather jackets, sleeveless black t-shirts, dyed black hair, and other various black accoutrements of contemporary "punk" and "goth" rock stars from the Velvet Underground and their fans onward derive from this Baudelairean take on

fashion.

DANDY, INC.

The Baudelairean dandy thus represents a challenge to a world increasingly organized around commerce: his "transpositional" persona systematically exposes the fact that, underlying the Apollonian dream of homogeneity, as Brown puts it, "every person . . . is many persons; a multitude made into one person; a corporate body; incorporated, a corporation. . . . The unity of the person is as real, or unreal, as the unity of the corporation" (*Love's* 147). This haecceitical being ironically *commodifies* himself, becoming *Dandy, Inc.*, an (anti)corporation of one, a purveyor of mesmerizing, corrupting, beautifully useless images. The rules of the game called Art (or *artifice*) are here rescued from the hands of the bourgeois "experts" Foucault vilifies in *Discipline and Punish*: "Why should the lamp or the house be an art object, but not our life?" he asks. This auto-seizure of "bio-power" [23]--the "experience of the author-function"--goes very much against the grain of the Rousseauian thinking which characterizes present-day North American society: the cult of confession and therapy victim-culture witnessed on various TV talk shows (a phenomenon Foucault sneeringly alludes to as "the Californian cult of the self"), are "diametrically opposed" to dandyism, which stresses *creation*, not *confession* (*Foucault Reader* 362). The key figure of Foucauldian enlightenment--the dandy--thus stands "in a state of tension" with the liberal-humanism of the middle classes (44). And though this notion may bear a passing resemblance to the existential self-fashioning of Sartre, Foucault rightly points out that, while the existentialist notion that existence precedes essence is a starting point, "the only acceptable practical consequence of what Sartre has said is to link his theoretical insight to the practice of creativity--and not of authenticity," a flaw he finds in Sartre's study of Baudelaire. "It is interesting to see that Sartre refers the work of creation to a certain relation to oneself--the author to himself--which has the form of authenticity or inauthenticity," Foucault observes. "I . . . say exactly the contrary: we should not have to refer the creative activity of somebody to the kind of relation he has to himself, but should relate the kind of relation one has to oneself to a creative activity" (*Foucault Reader* 351).

LE DANDY *LÀ-BAS*

Gypsy explorer
Of the New Jersey Heights
Exalted companion
Of cocaine nights
'Cos he's a dandy in the underworld
Dandy in the underworld
When will he come up for air
Will anybody ever care

- Marc Bolan / T. Rex
"Dandy In The Underworld" 1977

In a 1983 interview, Foucault enunciated his by-then passionate interest in a Greek-influenced personal ethics "beyond the law," marked by the Apollonian manipulation of the raw Dionysian matter of the self, divorced from the coercions of any external power. "The idea of the bios as a material for an aesthetic piece of art . . . fascinates me," he says. "The idea also that ethics can be a very strong structure of existence, without any relation with . . . an authoritarian system, with a disciplinary structure" (*Foucault Reader* 348). This is, of course, a very loaded statement, as it implies that an individual life can be lived according to aesthetic, rather than moral precepts, that an independently developed *ascesis* may supplant the social contract, not an idea North American Foucauldians would likely find palatable. Increasingly, as the thought of nineteenth-century aesthetes like Baudelaire and Huysmans develops, finally metamorphosing into the "living stylistics" of the twentieth-century gutter-dandy in (via Rimbaud) the life and work of Jean Genet, there is a concomitant attraction to the "dark underbelly" of society--*là-bas, "down there"*--where one can indeed one may find many literal examples of stylized lives lived "beyond the law."

Following Baudelaire, who in poems such as "The Litanies of Satan" (from *The Flowers of Evil*) called upon the Devil--"thou who knowest all, Hell's sovereign . . .Thou who dost give the outlaw the proud glance / Which damns the crowd who watch his sufferance"--to grant him relief and power against the everyday world's painful mundanity (*Selected* 195), Huysmans, in the aforementioned *Against Nature* and the lesser-known but crucial follow-up *Là-Bas*, continues tracking the descent of the dandy in(to) the underworld. Both novels

break new stylistic and thematic ground, exhibiting features which will later be typical of the twentieth-century gutter-dandy's "experience-book": heavily autobiographical, plot-less, episodic, and imagistic, they document the author's increasing disgust with the triumph of *bio-power*: the commercial world of mindless work and gaudy material accumulation, and the concomitant establishment of superficial Rousseauian "norms" posited as benignly universal--"natural"--rather than advantageously (middle) class-specific. Both books document the author's *individualistic* attempts to redress the balance through an ascesis of limit-experience and oppositional behaviour of various kinds.

In *Against Nature*, which Paglia accurately labels "an anti-Rousseauist polemic"(*Sexual* 432), Huysmans' autobiographical protagonist Des Esseintes uses the raw material of his own existence to conduct *experimentum crucis* upon himself for the novel's duration: as such, *Against Nature* can rightly be labelled an "experience-book" in that it functions as a record of Huysmans/Des Esseintes' own sensory experimentation, as well as a theoretical guide and "invitation" to decadent praxis.[24] Like the gutter-dandies who will follow him--Genet, Miller, Miles Davis, Lou Reed--Huysmans strives to create a world "divorced from modern times and modern society" through an ascesis of sensory (over)stimulation and "artificial" experience, all designed to "transport him to some unfamiliar world, point the way to new possibilities, and shake up his nervous system" (63). Deploying his own left-handed *philosophia*, Des Esseintes' dandiacal existence takes on mystical overtones: "the life he was leading was very similar to the life of a monk," writes Huysmans; "He thus enjoyed all the benefits of cloistered confinement while avoiding the disadvantages -- the army-style discipline, the lack of comfort, the dirt, the promiscuity, the monotonous idleness. . . . like a monk again, he was overwhelmed . . . by a desire to have no further contact with the heathen, who in his eyes comprised all utilitarians and fools" (76). "Des Esseintes withdraws into the self-embowered world of his ornate mansion," comments Paglia. "He is both priest and idol of his own cult" (*Sexual* 431).

Against Nature depicts a spiraling praxis in which life is continually de-naturalized, *turned upside down and inside out*, as famously symbolized by the protagonist's desire at one point not *only* to replace nature by artifice, but to "force nature into art's frame"

(Paglia, *Sexual* 432) by developing real flowers which would look like artificial ones. Des Esseintes also evinces great admiration for Jan van Ruysbroeck, "a thirteenth-century mystic whose prose presented an incomprehensible but attractive amalgam of gloomy ecstasies, tender raptures and violent rages." Such an "unbalanced but subtle mind," in which "the fusion of the skilled psychologist with the pious pedant had proved impossible" (*Against* 97), appeals to Huysmans because it epitomizes the rhizomatic, ***haecceitical*** nature of the dandy: "these jolts, these incoherencies even, constituted the personality of the man," writes Huysmans admiringly (159). The dandy and the mystic are both *de-structured* subjects, evading the normalizing ***bio-power*** of a society which demands compliant uniformity: "one becomes, relatively speaking, a master of one's molecules" (Deleuze, *Foucault* 123). And while many of Des Esseintes' oppositional actions in the novel take place privately, he also recounts transgressive forays into the heart of the societal conundrum, most memorably his attempt to usurp the role of the Creator and fashion a "monster," corrupting a young man by acquainting him with the delights of the brothel and subsequently withdrawing his financial support. "The truth is," he explains to the establishment's "Madam,"

> I'm trying to make a murderer of the boy. . . . By bringing him here, by plunging him into luxury such as he's never known and will never forget . . . I hope to get him into the habit of these pleasures which he can't afford. . . . at the end of . . . three months, I stop the little allowance I'm going to pay you in advance . . . to get the money to pay for his visits here, he'll turn burglar, he'll do anything. . . .
>
> Looking on the bright side of things, I hope that, one fine day, he'll kill the gentleman who turns up unexpectedly just as he's breaking open his desk. On that day my object will be achieved: I shall have contributed, to the best of my ability, to the making of a scoundrel, one enemy for the hideous society which is bleeding us white. (*Against* 81-2)

Such "satanic" behaviour is more fully investigated in *La-Bas*, a crucial text in the evolution of gutter-dandyism which brings together Gnostic, Satanic, and Sadean elements in one work. Here, the thinly-veiled autobiographical protagonist--this time a dandified writer named Durtal--explicitly lays down the stylistic blueprint for the literary artifact of

the gutter-dandy: "We must," he says, "retain the documentary veracity, the precision of detail, the compact and sinewy language of realism, but we must also dig down into the soul and cease trying to explain mystery in terms of our sick senses. If possible the novel ought to be compounded of two elements, that of the soul and that of the body, and these ought to be inextricably bound together as in life. . . . A spiritual naturalism!" (*La-Bas* 10). Here we have a direct correspondence with the Foucauldian "experience-book," which attempts to frame *active* Dionysian chaos (spirit) within Apollonian form (body): "The effect was of matter transformed, by being distended or compressed, to afford an escape from the senses into remote infinity" (11-12).

Inverse exaltation forms the thematic base from which *La-Bas* attempts its alchemical transmutations. From an admiring analysis of painter Mathew Grünewald's portrayal of Christ as a "sewer Deity," proving that realism could be "truly transcendent" (14-15), Huysmans moves on to a novel-length analysis of the life of medieval mystic turned child-killer Gilles de Rais, aka "Bluebeard," who, for Durtal, embodies in his person the constant limit-desire of the man who would "obtain from the Devil the recipe for the sovereign magisterium" (80). De Rais, writes Huysmans, "was a true mystic" who "carried his zeal for prayer into the territory of blasphemy" until he found himself "ready for anything, as well for orgies of saintliness as for ecstasies of crime" (52). Marking de Rais' sovereign attitude is a Satanic pride, leading him to exclaim during his trial that "so potent was the star under which I was born that I have done what no one in the world has done nor ever can do" (53). Sade himself is described as "only a timid bourgeois, a mediocre fantasist," next to this man: "One can take pride in going as far in crime as a saint in virtue," exclaims Durtal. "And that expresses Gilles de Rais exactly" (53-4). Clearly, for Durtal, De Rais exemplifies the ability to be always at the limit, and thus to escape from the totalizing culture of the normalizing middle: to make the saint and sinner within himself meet in the *coincidentia oppositorum* where they are revealed to be emanations of the Same:

> He is now in the clouds, now in the abyss, never on the trodden plain, the lowlands of the soul. . . . Unresponsive to mediocre passions, he is carried away alternately by good as well as evil, and he bounds from spiritual pole to spiritual

> pole. He dies at the age of thirty-six, but he has completely exhausted the possibilities of joy and grief. He has adored death, loved as a vampire, kissed inimitable expressions of suffering and terror, and has, himself, been racked by implacable remorse, insatiable fear. He has nothing more to try, nothing more to learn, here below. (206)

De Rais is a rhizomatic, haecceitical being, "a mass of contradictions and excesses" lacking any "key characteristic which reconciles them" (206). Akin to Sade's "monstrous" writers whose transgressive works remain potent forces for societal disturbance long after the physical death of the author, Durtal, in writing a history of de Rais (and Huysmans, in writing a novel featuring Durtal writing a history of de Rais), is pleased to find that "what a living thing the legend of Bluebeard was" (108), that after the passing of centuries, it "still had the power to terrify" (109). Such was the power generated by Bluebeard's heinous actions that, physically traversing the scene of his most heinous crimes, Durtal finds an evocative world "authored" by de Rais, seemingly frozen in time, outside the hated strictures of the utilitarian society he despises:

> One felt that this iron-grey sky; this starving soil, empurpled only here and there by the bleeding flower of the buckwheat; that these roads, bordered with stones placed one on top of the other, without cement or plaster; that these paths, bordered with impenetrable hedges . . . the dumpy little cows, the black sheep whose blue eyes had the cold, pale gleam that is in the eyes of the Slav . . . had perpetuated their primordial state, preserving an identical landscape through all the centuries. (109)

The dandiacal praxis of Des Esseintes is here connected with the Satanic actions of de Rais: the crass, materialistic world of progress has been denied through a criminal transgression of societal limits and a resultant usurpation of power. The force generated by de Rais' murderous actions was such that he was able to alter not only himself, but also the environment around him, in this case freezing it in suspended animation. The creation of such a state is, according to no less an expert on the matter than Anton Szandor LaVey, founder of the Church of Satan and enthusiastic fan of *La-Bas*, one of the ultimate Satanic ideals.[25]

BREAK(ING) ON THROUGH: RIMBAUD

The truly free man is king and lord of all creatures. All things belong to him, and he has the right to use whatever pleases him.

-Johann Hartmann, medieval adept of the Free Spirit

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The poet, therefore, is truly the thief of fire.
He is responsible for humanity, for *animals* even.

--Arthur Rimbaud

Near the end of *La-Bas*, Durtal attends a Satanic black mass in which all the rituals of the church are defamed and inverted, a church itself systematically turned into a "madhouse, a monstrous pandemonium of prostitutes and maniacs" (249), where, among other things, the host is ejaculated upon and excrement is consumed by the debauched members of the congregation, all of this a ritualized form of inverse exaltation, an attempt on the part of the participants "to shock themselves out of their normal state of dullness" (Wilson 343). In 1891, the year *La-Bas* was published in France, Arthur Rimbaud, the poet who years earlier had written of the crucial need for such a "systematized disorganization of all the senses," died at the age of thirty-seven. Though his literary career was brief, Rimbaud provides an important link between the déclassé *dandysme* of Baudelaire and Huysmans,[26] with its tinge of aristocratic *nostalgie*, and the emergence of a new, more rough-hewn gutter-dandyism of Genet.

"Baudelaire is the first visionary," writes Rimbaud, "the king of poets, *a real God*." Yet, for iconoclastic Rimbaud, even this form of sovereignty is now untenable, even *passé*: Baudelaire "lived in too artistic a milieu," he writes, "and his highly praised form is silly. The inventions of the unknown demand new forms" (104). Rimbaud repeatedly makes it clear that the extension of Baudelaire's thought will require a further blurring or puncturing of the line separating art and life, the elimination of any bohemian pretensions positing art as somehow *superior* to life. Art must now *be* life and vice-versa: that is all. Rimbaud envisions a new kind of dandy, one who disdains any hint of aristocratic luxury and

bourgeois utility, instead embracing grinding squalor as the essence of elegance. In "A Season in Hell" he listens approvingly as an acquaintance (most likely the poet Paul Verlaine) turns "infamy into glory, cruelty into charm" in an act of inverse exaltation: "I'll slash my body all over. I'll tattoo myself. I want to be ugly as a Mongol; you'll see, I'll scream in the streets. I want to really go mad with anger. Don't show me any jewels; I'll get down on all fours and writhe on the carpet. I want my wealth stained all over with blood. I will *never* do any work" (201).

Wallace Fowlie writes that "the essential violence in Rimbaud's nature prevented him from becoming a bohemian." Disdainful of "useless and flaccid posing," Rimbaud's violence takes the form of an ascesis, "committed with intent and purposefulness" (*Rimbaud and Morrison* 61). "The problem," states Rimbaud in Sadean terms, "is to make the soul into a monster." In "The Savage Parade," he writes of a new breed of "strange, well-built young men" who "need nothing, and have little desire to put into play / Their splendid abilities" (158). This new breed of "use-less" dandies, to which, the poet arrogantly informs us, "only I have the key" (159), are far more visceral in nature than the more elegant Baudelairean model, proudly wearing the results of worldly experience like a badge: "Their faces are warped, pitted, blemished, burned," their physical bearing marked by "the excesses of absolute madness" and a "cruel and tinseled stride." Rimbaud also makes explicit here the theme of rebellious homosexuality-- a theme he acted upon in his relationship with Verlaine--which will be a constant feature of Genet's writing: the gutter-dandies are "sent into town to take it from behind / Tricked out in *disgusting* luxury"[27] (158). Clearly, in this new dispensation of The Great Subculture, *activity*--often of a transgressive nature--rather than abstraction, is the key: engaged in a "parade of violence, of grimace and madness," says the poet, the "art" of these gutter-dandies bears "no comparison at all with your Fakirs / And your other entertainers on the stage" (158). Breaking out of the rarefied realm of aesthetics, they directly impact upon their audience to "transfigure places and people" (159). In his excellent study *Delirium: An Interpretation of Arthur Rimbaud*, Jeremy Reed explains that Rimbaud took the implications of his own thought to the experiential limit: "Rimbaud's imperatives are unprecedentedly

revolutionary," he writes. "They demand a commitment . . . and a willingness to explore all facets of human experience, such as few poets have ever dared contemplate. If you need a fix of heroin, and Rimbaud's demands are no less extreme, you may have to sell your body to pay for your habit. . . . You become 'the great criminal,' not only in the sense of aspiring to occult knowledge, but in the context of living outside society" (36-7). For Rimbaud, then, sovereignty is directly related to the life of the "vagabond, in the most sharply modern sense of the word. He is the hitchhiker setting out to corrupt and to be corrupted" (Fowlie, *Rimbaud and Morrison* 62).[28]

ROCK N' ROLL NIGGER

> **Today, Rimbaud would have fed his nerves with loud music (he is in every way the prototypical punk, right to the seminal spiky hair), taken whatever drugs were available, and would have coaxed his poems toward an equally subversive millennial ethos. He would have dressed in a leather jacket and slashed denims.**
>
> **–Jeremy Reed**

Rimbaud also introduces another key theme of what Norman Mailer terms the *white Negro*, of the poet or "hipster" who willingly takes on the racially derogatory, marginalizing term of "nigger." "Yes, my eyes are closed to your light. I am an animal, a nigger. You are fake niggers. . . . Businessman, you're a nigger; judge, you're a nigger; general, you're a nigger; emperor, old scratch-head, you're a nigger" (196). Over a century later, rock and roll gutter-dandy and Rimbaud disciple Patti Smith would pen similar sentiments in her song "Rock N' Roll Nigger," the preface to which is instructive:

> nigger no invented for color it was MADE FOR THE PLAGUE the word (art) must be redefined--all mutants and the new babes born sans eyebrow and tonsil--outside logic--beyond mathematics poli-tricks baptism and motion sickness--any man who extends beyond the classic form is a nigger--one sans fear and despair--one who rises like Rimbaud beating hard gold rythumn outta soft solid shit-tongue light . . . vibrating gushing milk pod of de/light translating new languages new and abused rock and roll and love lashing from the tongue of me nigger. (*Easter* liner notes)

While the charge of white patronisation can and has been made,[29] it is also worth pointing out that modern day black "rap" artists like Ice-T have effected their own version of this inverse exaltation by adopting the term "nigger" as a term symbolic of sovereign street-status, potency and power, an act of inversion that will be more closely examined later in this study. As *dandysme* mutates into the gutter-dandyism of the twentieth century and manifests itself within Anglo-American manifestations of The Great Subculture, the importance of the "white Negro," as a key element in what Mailer defines as "hipsterism," cannot be underestimated. The white Negro / hipster, explains Mailer, is a "philosophical psychopath . . . a psychopath, and yet not a psychopath but the negation of a psychopath, for he possesses the narcissistic detachment of the philosopher . . . so alien to the unreasoning drive of the psychopath" (343). Employing a deliberate ascesis of apathy in the manner of a mystic,[30] he makes the "fundamental decision" to return to a pre-Oedipal landscape in order to rewire his nervous system, dissolving the *imposed* subject(ion) of society by travelling "back along the road of the homosexual, the orgiast, the drug-addict, the rapist, the robber and the murderer," all manifestations of the haecceitical *id*, impulses removed or neutered through societal conditioning. Arriving at point zero through this *deterritorialization*, the hipster can complete the *destucturalist* spiral and *reterritorialize*, "grow up a second time," this process differing from that of language-based therapy because it is based on *action*: the rationally deranged hipster "knows that to express a forbidden impulse *actively* is far more beneficial to him than merely to confess the desire in the safety of a doctor's room" (italics mine, 346).

Just such a "Dionysian metamorphosis" is recollected in the spiralling episodes of the autobiographical *A Season In Hell*, Rimbaud's record of a summer spent conducting various *experimenta crucis* upon himself, these possibly including the ingestion of tarantula venom [31] with Verlaine, alluded to in the opening lines of "A Night In Hell": "I have just swallowed a terrific mouthful of poison. --Blessed, blessed, blessed the advice I was given!" (198). As in Mailer's formulation, Rimbaud seeks to travel back along the paths of Apollonian sublimation in order to reconstruct himself: "I will tear the veils from every mystery--mysteries of religion or of nature, death, birth, the future, the past, cosmogony,

and nothingness." Reaching this apex of his personal apocalypse, Rimbaud finds that he both contains ands reflects the void: "I am a master of phantasmagoria," he exclaims (199). For Rimbaud astride the line, "the I had literally become the other," Reed contends (*Delirium* 23). By "using his body as a biochemical experiment for drugs," Rimbaud "had remained true to his belief that the visionary poet must disintegrate in order to reintegrate as the alchemical conjunctio": the *destructuralist* spiral in action. This achieved, he could send his send his poisonous words, his rhetorical poetry, out "as assassins into the world" (63).

Mystic, Psychopath, Vagabond, Nigger: all this and more is the poet, having become "the great invalid, the great criminal, the great accursed--and the Supreme Scientist," who "attains the unknown," and radiates its flickering images like a film projector onto the blank screen of the world to an audience that will be moved to action as it absorbs them. The "modern" art Rimbaud both theorizes *and* produces thus hearkens back to the *rhetorical* function of Hadot's classical philosophers: like Greek poetry, Rimbaud writes, "this eternal art will be functional . . .[it] will no longer give rhythm to the action; it *will be in advance.*" Similar to the "spiritual naturalism" of Huysmans, art and life co-mingle here, blurring together as the Same. The poet's polysensual visions must be "smelled, fondled, listened to," expressed in a "language . . . of the soul, for the soul," in which nothing is excluded: "perfumes, sounds, colors, thought grappling with thought" (103). A more acute description of the gutter-dandy's heterogenous, haecceitical "experience-book" (or film, or album) is not likely to be found.

Rimbaud thus introduces into the genealogy of the dandy the notion of the vagabond, the "rock and roll nigger," as superman. "The superman," writes Deleuze, "in accordance with Rimbaud's formula," is not only a master of his own molecules, but "is even in charge of the animals (a code that can capture fragments from other codes . . .)" (*Foucault* 132). This rhizomatic, "monstrous" being, having liberated itself from the "classic forms" of society, finds itself free to mingle and mutate among "whatever is unformed" like an imagistic chameleon, a pagan pied-piper.[32] Such a "sovereign," Bataille explains, "is not a man in the individual sense of the word, but rather a *god;* he is essentially the embodiment

of the one he is but is not." Furthermore, "he has no more regard for the limits of identity than he does for the limits of death, or rather these limits are the same; he is the transgression of all such limits. In the midst of all the others, he is not work that is performed but rather play" (*Accursed* 2: 222). Like Sade, Rimbaud imagines that this siren's song of the superman will continue to entice and corrupt long after he has fallen: "so what if if he is destroyed in his ecstatic flight through things unheard of, unnameable," he proclaims. "Other horrible workers will come; they will begin at the horizons where the first one has fallen!" (102-3). Which brings me to the culmination of the continental European line of gutter-dandyism in the life and work of that "horrible worker," Jean Genet.

JEAN GENET: JEAN GENIE

> **Genet's exquisite beauty, his affirmation of betrayal, crime, and homosexuality, filled the guts of Ginsberg, Burroughs, and Kerouac. It helped spawn Jackson Pollock, John Coltrane, and eventually rock 'n' roll.**
>
> **--Patti Smith**
>
> **
>
> **The Jean Genie lives on his back**
> **The Jean Genie loves chimney stacks**
> **He's outrageous, he screams and he bawls**
> **Jean Genie, let yourself go!**
>
> **--"Jean Genie," David Bowie**

Jean Genet, as Patti Smith's remarks imply, is one of the definitive manifestations of the line of *atopos* subcultural figures from classical times, serving as both an icon of gutter-dandyism and as its subversive conduit, as the cultural impetus of The Great Subculture shifts to Anglo-American literary and pop cultural figures. Genet was an ardent admirer of Sade and Gilles de Rais, and an artistic disciple of both Baudelaire and Rimbaud, the latter two and Genet, as biographer Edmund White points out, composing a kind of unholy trinity: "Rimbaud had identified Baudelaire as the first in a line of visionary poets ('The first *voyant*, king of poets, a real god'); Genet was the last apostle in the succession" (137). Genet was also deeply attracted to dandyism--"it was his starting point" (155-6)--especially

as filtered through the decadent sensibility of authors such as Huysmans. Most importantly for the genealogy of gutter-dandyism, White explains that Genet differed from his dandiacal predecessors in that he "intertwined his fantasies with autobiography to a degree unknown to the Decadents" (156), a method which will also heavily mark the work of the Anglo-American gutter-dandies.[33] For Sartre, "the single subject of the single book that Genet has written is Genet himself. But not the flesh and blood Genet . . . that Genet is nothing . . . but a *pretext*" (*Saint* 519). As an orphan and a jailbird with little chance of entrance into the realm of "respectable" society,[34] this merger of the fictive and the real for Genet takes on special meaning. Unlike Baudelaire and Huymans, he lives from the beginning as an outcast in a post-aristocratic universe, with "nothing but his arrogance and sense of style to sustain him" (White 156): if he is to be sovereign, he has no choice but to transmute the lowly circumstances in which he finds himself.

LOSING TO WIN

> **I have this text: 'You call me the shit of God? I am the shit of God! You call me the Antichrist? I am the Antichrist, I am Legba, I am the Holy Fool, I am the Scourge of God. . . .' It's a privilege to accept that. If you tell me I wear a cloak of filth, let me tell you: *I wear it real good.***
>
> **--Diamanda Galas**
>
> **
>
> **Nothing is beautiful, save that which is not.**
>
> **--Genet**

"A real thief who accepts being a thief, who works alone, he must fail" (Genet, "Interview" 449). The magic of the "Jean Genie" consists in this ascesis of inverse exaltation, whereby the utter failure, the originary *defeat* of the outcast, is redeemed, transmuted, through an active application of *style* and satanic pride, into a state of sovereignty. "What Genet has done that is remarkable," Larry David Nachman explains, "is to eroticize the underworld; his aesthete's hatred comes from below rather than above the social order," this marking an "important shift in perspective" in the revolutionary

thought of the twentieth century, a shift of which the unapologetically bourgeois Nachman does not approve[35] (369). Sartre, whose classic work *Saint Genet*--the very title of which implies this inverse exaltation--has intimidated even such high-profile Genet admirers as Foucault from attempting their own Genet analyses, remarks that "we . . . find pride at the root of this perversion. Accustomed to finding its victory in the depths of failure, this perverted soul is going to seek its unique power in its profound impotence" (*Saint* 358). Such a view posits sovereignty as the direct individual realization of, in Bataille's terminology, NOTHING.[36] "I resolved long ago not to seek knowledge as others do, but to seek its contrary, which is unknowing," Bataille proclaims. "I no longer anticipated the moment when I would be rewarded for my effort, *when I would know at last*, but rather the moment when *I would no longer know, when my initial anticipation would dissolve into* NOTHING." Such a "mystical" process, says Bataille, "going in the wrong direction on the paths of knowledge--to get off them, not to derive a result that others anticipate--leads to the principle of *sovereignty*," producing a "use-less" knowledge gained without directive or purposeful end (*Accursed* 3: 208).

This left-hand path is Genet's mystical road. "I call saintliness not a state, but the moral procedure that leads me to it," he writes in *The Thief's Journal*. "It is the ideal point of a morality which I cannot talk about since I do not see it" (215). Throughout his novels, which freely mix personal experience and fictional elements in accordance with the precepts of Foucault's experience-book, Genet employs the dandy's *destructuralist* spiral in the service of the damned, the disenfranchised and the lost, groups of which he counts himself a member: "Genet," White explains, "is quixotic; he loves losers" (341). Yet in this paradoxical praxis of "bottoming out," to lose is to win; the marginalized individual gains his or her life by letting go of it in a personal potlatch, be it through stealing (*The Thief's Journal*), transgressive sex and gender reversal (*Our Lady of the Flowers*), or even murder (*Querelle*). "I make of sacrifice . . . the creative virtue par excellence," Genet says. "There must be damnation in it. Will anyone be surprised when I claim that crime can help me ensure my moral vigor?" (*Thief's* 215). Genet himself is a being constantly at the limit, crisscrossed by extreme and conflicting impulses, as previously seen in the personalities of

Gilles de Rais and Rimbaud: "He was a loyal friend who believed in treachery. He was posssessed of a courtly sweetness that often gave way to fits of rage and pettiness. He alternated between staying in palaces or hovels and consorting with thieves or princes" (White 157). As he moves about in "straight" society, Genet is reminded that, by that world's normalizing standards, "he is a monster, and that awareness of his abjection never leaves him" (Sartre, *Saint* 284). Indeed, the active, direct *experience* of abjection Genet deems essential to an art "which should be only the proof of my saintliness"; this sovereign state, he says, "must be real so that it may fecundate the work" (*Thief's* 207).

Trapped in a material world where the odds are heavily stacked against him, Genet commences the operations of inverse exaltation, or what he terms a "pursuit of the Impossible Nothingness" (*Thief's* 94), recalling the similar imperative of Rimbaud. Adopting a stance similar to the Gnostic rejection of the ***heimarmene***, Genet writes that sainthood "may be won by a mathematical discipline, but I fear it would be a facile, well-mannered saintliness . . . in short, academic . . . this is to achieve a mere semblance." Instead, the gutter-saint must depart on his quest "starting from the elementary principles of morality and religion," moving away from the given Apollonian structures of society, and only "arrives at his goal if he sheds them" (209). This process is characterized by what Sartre repeatedly refers to as "derealization," whereby the imposed, constricted, "essential" societal self--"being in order"-- is vapourized and withdraws into the void, where it is transformed into an image: "in order to form an image, one must disconnect oneself from being and project oneself toward that which is not yet or that no longer is . . . one must *make oneself a nothingness*." In conducting such forbidden experiments, Sartre contends, Genet enacts the Satanic inversion by now characteristic of The Great Subculture: "since man as a being comes from God, he will choose himself resolutely imaginary so as to derive from himself alone" (*Saint* 359). Genet then moves into the realm of psychedelic Dionysian phantasmagoria;

> he travels --in the opposite direction--the path of the great mystics. The latter, convinced that the image is nothing, attempted to tear it from themselves in order to attain a dazzling blindness; Genet, fleeing God, goes from light to

> darkness. But hell is not silence or darkness, it is a swarming of images, of flashes which one *thinks* one sees and which one does not *see*, of sounds one *thinks* one hears and which one *knows* one does not hear . . . he wants to become an illusion that maintains itself, an appearance that produces appearances; he has his being in his image, and it is he, he alone, who produces the image which contains his being. (359-360)

Genet thus attains the sovereign, haecceitical state of the mystical gutter-dandy: encasing the void, becoming a kaleidoscopic image-projector, a phantasmaphysician fulfilling Decadent dandyism's paradoxical principle of *sterile productivity*. Accordingly, says White, Genet's books are cinematic, "constructed through montage, their images . . . not static but always in motion . . . through flashbacks, flash-forwards, broken sequences . . . replays of scenes, fade-outs, jump-cuts and montage," all these inducing a "perceptual vertigo." Here, the pagan image reclaims its former power: Genet's works eschew "deep" logocentric metaphorism and instead create meaning through surfaces, developing "character through gesture, morality from costume, mood from lighting" (24). The attraction which Hollywood and other facets of popular culture will later exhibit toward Genet's Anglo-American successors has its roots here.

MEAT PUPPETS

In Genet, the self as "manufactured object" is now a mere *pretext* for artistic elaborations, like "a knot in a rope of flowing water or a coat-rack that can be rigged out with varying gestures" (White 342). "It is the entire assemblage in its individuated aggregate that is a haecceity," writes Deleuze. "The street enters into composition with the horse, just as the dying rat enters into composition with the air" (*Deleuze Reader* 56). This haecceity is a *constant-becoming*, an event taking place within a given space, inseparable from its environment, like an actor on a stage whose persona is equally composed and contained by his gestures, actions and surroundings. "Straddling the enormous prick of a blond legionnaire, I am carried twenty yards along the ramparts; not the handsome football player, nor his foot, nor his shoe, but the ball, then ceasing to be the ball and becoming the 'kick-off,' and I cease being that to become the idea that goes from the foot to the ball; in a

cell, unknown thieves call me Jean" (Genet, *Thief's* 118). This process of "self-derealization" leads Genet

> to posit the notion that all people are interchangeable, for if we . . . are only mannequins waiting to be outfitted, then we are all capable of becoming one another. Every possibility lies latent in every life, waiting to be released through words, gestures, costumes. Just as the novelist (or masturbator) composes a character out of features and characteristics remembered and reassembled, for Genet real people are similarly composed out of just such collisions of random gestures. (White 342)

"Genet" thus becomes a name denoting a haecceity which travels in various forms throughout his novels under that and other names such as "Divine" and "Querelle," shifting and mutating versions of an assemblage loosely denoted by the authorial name which appears on the book's dust jacket. Here again is Foucault's *experience of the author function* in praxis: for Genet, all the world is indeed a stage, but we are never *merely* players.

"The proper name fundamentally designates something that is of the order of the event, of becoming, or of the haecceity," states Deleuze. "The proper name is not the subject of a tense but the agent of an infinitive" (*Deleuze Reader* 57). Following the initial act of self-vaporization (the first stage of the *destructuralist* spiral), this character sometimes called "Genet" is liberated, now able to behave in the manner of the superman, as he "rivets his attention on a fictive interpretation of his behaviour, [becoming] an actor" (Sartre, *Saint* 350). Genet labels this form of overman a "High Wire Artist," he who is "dead" before he ever takes to the wire, as exemplified by his exaltation of the condemned serial killer Eugene Weidmann in *Our Lady of the Flowers*, who, when informed of his death penalty by the jury, "merely mumbled . . . 'I'm already beyond that'" (*Our Lady* 56). These are the dandiacal (and sometimes diabolical) gutter-saints of the left-hand path, in which

> the discrepancy between mind and body, form and supermundane formlessness, is annihilated . . . the body of the Enlightened One becomes luminous in appearance, convincing and inspiring by its mere presence, while every word and every gesture, and even his silence, communicate

> the overwhelming reality of the *Dharma*. It is not the audible word through which people are converted and transformed in their innermost being, but through that which goes beyond words and flows directly from the presence of the saint. (Govinda in Brown, *Love's* 266).

Arriving at this point, it is gesture, posture, *attitude* which will define "Saint" Genet's various *sexual personae* as they appear in his autobiographical fictions, those such as Armand, whose sovereign authority--such that, "when he got up from his chair, he reigned over the world" (*Thief's* 221)--stems from his rhizomatic possession of "the elegance . . . of the *manifold* play of attitudes" (222). For Genet, such "saintliness is individual. Its expression is original" (209). The "phantasmical" gutter-dandy, "a mere shell, emptied of its man" (206), thus dons what Foucault describes as "the always singular mask that conceals nothing, simulacra without dissimulation, incongruous finery covering a nonexistent nudity, pure difference" (*Language* 177).

MURDER STYLE

In *Querelle*, the protagonist intuitively engages in the act of murder as a form of *destructuralist* ascesis, achieving a "creative singularity," through this "mechanism used without being fully aware of it himself" (130). First, Querelle is derealized through the act of murder: as he prepares to kill, Genet informs us, "the smile left his face. His lungs filled with air. He burst. Now he was nothing. . . . No longer was any part of Querelle present within his body. It was empty. . . . The murderer was about to attain his perfection" (58-9). Immediately following the act, Querelle becomes a "thing . . . within whose cavities, the void becoming vocal, Querelle could hear it surge forth . . . to surround him and protect him" (61). He now experiences "a feeling of being dead," while at the same time conscious, "imagining the quotidian lives of the living, who appeared to him curiously senseless since *he* was no longer there to be their pretext, their center, their generous heart" (67-8). Voided, derealized, "his human form, or 'fleshly envelope,'" nevertheless "went on busying itself on the earth's surface, among all those senseless people" (68). Querelle's terrible limit-experience has, Genet implies in the most direct challenge possible to a society which counts murder as the ultimate crime, made him into a superman, a high-

wire artist above the herd, "mysterious, monstrous, beyond the laws of this world" (90). Far from being psychically debilitated by his actions, "an exquisite sense of freshness spread all through him. More and more he came to see himself as an exceptional and blessed being. His limbs and their gestures showed greater strength, greater grace" (119).

From this point on, the transformed Querelle exhibits what the narrator identifies as a "kind of terrifying dandyism," seen in his theatrically thuggish self-presentation: "it was only after he committed his first murder that he arrived at a gait and posture peculiar to himself: he stalked slowly, both arms stiffly extended, fists clenched in front of his fly, not touching it; legs well apart" (35). Hassan explains that following his initial act of murder, "Querelle knows . . . that he has died himself, or more precisely, that he has put himself beyond death, in a region where divinity coexists dangerously with the void. Murder absorbs all other actions, establishing a magical connection between all objects within its realm . . . because it demonstrates, irremediably, the force of negation, of absence, at the center of existence" (*Dismemberment* 194). Now encasing the void within himself, the murderer, through the force of his transgressive actions, becomes a haecceitical being, an "author" begetting new versions of himself with every singular, stylized act of homicidal experience which follows: "Querelle's murders multiplied his personality, each one creating a new one that did not forget its predecessors. The last murderer born of the last murder lived in the company of his noblest friends, those who had preceded him and whom he now surpassed" (*Querelle* 118). Such is the *destructuralist* art of the high-wire performer: "Each of his jumps transforms itself into a pack of wild and exact beasts. True art is a *politesse* of emptiness" (Hassan, *Dismemberment* 186).[37]

BEAUTIFULLY USELESS

> **Genet's consciousness . . . is in active relationship with the universe . . . but its aim is not so much to know the universe as to draw from it the subject of a work whose purpose . . . is to make the world useless.**
>
> **-Sartre**
>
> ***
>
> ***Deny your culture of consumption / This is a culture of destruction***
>
> **—"Stay Beautiful" Manic Street Preachers**

If the Sadean extremes of *Querelle* best exemplify the darkest implications of the gutter-dandy's practice of *destructuralism*, perhaps this is because Genet felt the dominant cultural situation itself to be so extreme. In a key essay entitled "The Studio of Alberto Giacometti," Genet dreams of a world other than that of the by-now well-established age of bourgeois material utilitarianism, one in which "man, instead of acting so furiously on the visible appearance" of the world, "would attempt to rid himself of it--not only to refuse action upon it, but to strip himself bare enough to discover that secret site within ourselves that would capacitate an entirely different human enterprise. More specifically, an altogether different moral enterprise" (310). Sartre, speaking of Genet, writes that "one can present derealization in broad daylight, as a *value* . . . propose it to human activity as a goal and compel others to derealize themselves voluntarily" (*Saint* 370). This is an apt description of the gutter-dandy theory propounded in Genet's definitive experience-book, *The Thief's Journal*--defined by the author as a "pursuit of the Impossible Nothingness" (94)--a rhetorical work which overtly aims its message at a collective bourgeois "you" with which the narrator, "Genet," is in perpetual conflict: "My talent will be the love for that which constitutes the world of prisons and penal colonies. Not that I want to transform them or bring them around to your kind of life, or that I look upon them with indulgence or pity: I recognize in thieves, traitors and murderers, in the ruthless and the cunning, a deep beauty--a sunken beauty--which I deny you" (*Thief's* 111). In the "serious world," such epiphanies are rare: the "just man," writes Sartre, "is afraid of them and quickly returns to his antlike labour. If a person endeavours to prolong this illumination, to maintain this derealizing attitude all his life, we say that he is an aesthete" (*Saint* 372).

Genet, however, is not *merely* an aesthete: if he is decadent, ripe to the point of rottenness with visions of a slovenly sovereignty, a "new quality--virtue--achieved by slackness, cowardice, etc." (*Thief's* 248), he must therefore swell and burst, spraying his subversive images amidst "you," the population of the "serious-minded" individuals reading his book. Genet's active "art" is a form of contamination, "to transform the good citizen into an aesthete," Sartre declares. "Is there any finer revenge against the spirit of seriousness?" (*Saint* 373). Genet would like to populate "your" world with Stilitanos and

Armands, gutter-dandies whose "harmony in bad taste is the height of elegance" (*Thief's* 120). Crossing over the ontological divide, the empty actor-supermen who populate his autofictive realm may create a society in which his phantasmic images proliferate, and finally swamp, the "solidity" of the real: "the dreamer must contaminate the others by his dream, he must make them fall into it; if he is to act upon Others, he must do so like a virus, like an agent of derealization" (Sartre, *Saint* 369). The *destructuralist* spiral spins again, from nothingness back into the material realm: "impotence, the unreal, evil, have produced directly--and without recourse to being--an *event* in the world" (368).

Genet's is thus a subversive sovereignty, issued to his readers as both a challenge and an invitation. Initially, of course, he is concerned with his own experience, as "the only rule underlying Genet's inventions and creations is himself . . . to compose is to re-create *himself*" (543). In *The Thief's Journal*, Genet breaks off in the middle of his narrative to inform us that

> our language is incapable of recalling even the pale reflection of . . . bygone, foreign states. The same would be true of this entire journal if it were to be the notation of what I was. I shall therefore make clear that it is meant to indicate what I am today, as I write it. It is not a quest of time gone by, but a work of art whose pretext-subject is my former life. It will be a present fixed with the help of the past, and not vice versa. Let the reader therefore understand that the facts were what I say they were, but the interpretation that I give them is what I am--now. (71)

The authorial Genet thus (re)creates "Genet" before our very eyes, and rhetorically directs "our" active participation in his quest: experience is the raw material used to create something new. Foucault could be referring to the above passage when, speaking of the "experience-book," he says that "an experience is neither true nor false, it is always a fiction, something constructed, which exists only after it has been made, not before" (*Remarks* 36).

The gutter-dandy's experience-book, as seen in the work of Genet and later in disciples like Henry Miller and Charles Bukowski, should therefore never be taken to be some mere crude recounting of "transgressive" actions; crude though it may be, the experience-book

always is a part an authorial ascesis, an ongoing attempt to *stylize* oneself and one's past to create the "truth" of a new human, a new moral enterprise. "If I cannot have the most brilliant destiny, I want the most wretched," writes Genet, "not for the purpose of a sterile solitude, but in order to achieve something new with such rare matter" (*Thief's* 244). Following Sade, the gutter-dandy's "work" is to create--using the raw stuff of experience as a base-- a "truth," a *living* legend which will *act* upon the "serious" world as a destabilizing agent, enticing others to enter into it, adopting new postures, new attitudes, in a singular fashion: a seductive *philosophia*. Again, Foucault's words resonate: "An experience is, of course, something one has alone; but it cannot have its full impact unless the individual manages to escape from pure subjectivity in a way that others can--I won't say re-experience it exactly--but at least cross paths with it or retrace it" (*Remarks* 40).[38] Through this subversion and appropriation of the processes of *bio-power* by which subjects are "normally" moulded by society, Genet attains the hallowed, hollowed status of the manufactured object, the seductive *objet d'art* capable of inducing transmutation: "I refuse to live for any other end than that . . . my life be a legend, in other words, legible, and the reading of it must give birth to a certain new emotion which I call poetry. I am no longer anything, only a pretext" (*Thief's* 119).

Genet's "saintly" gutter-dandy thus employs the consumerist ethic of a bourgeois age against itself by simultaneously embodying the beautiful uselessness of the *objet d' art* while apathetically rejecting the workaday values of the "productive" utilititarian world. The gutter-dandy *produces* only sterile versions of himself and actively, like a virus, seeks to draw others into the same mode of existence. This amounts to a paradoxical form of "potlatch, of conspicuous consumption" (White 378), in which the idle, "useless" manufactured object parasitically "wastes" the energies of "serious" society: "a whole portion of human energy is spent in maintaining him so that he may employ his activity in chewing the cud of old dreams; thanks to him, a certain quantity of the world's goods goes up in smoke, men work for *nothing*, their hard labour is finally changed into dreams" (Sartre, *Saint* 369). The *destructuralist* "St. Genet" then, fulfills Bataille's formulation for the contemporary sovereign who recognizes that the "truth of wealth has underhandedly

slipped into *extreme poverty*," and that "genuine luxury requires the complete contempt for riches, the somber indifference of the individual who refuses work and makes his life . . . an infinitely ruined splendor, and . . . a silent insult to the laborious lie of the rich." Genet's gutter-dandy *is* the man or woman who enacts "the real potlatch of our times," achieved through an ascesis of apathy, the disdain of the "individual who lies down and scoffs," who makes a virtue out of squandering the energies employed by the "useful" man for production (*Accursed* 1: 76-7). He both *wastes* and is *wasted*. "It may surprise the reader that the union of such flabby qualities should produce the sharp edges of rock crystal," Genet writes. "These sparkles are the result of a certain arrangement of surfaces. It is to these sparkles that I am comparing the new quality--virtue--achieved by slackness, cowardice, etc." (*Thief's* 248). Such "sparkling" individuals will heavily populate what might be called the "underground" or "avant-garde" literature and popular media of twentieth-century Anglo-American culture, as the contemporary expression of the gutter-dandy reaches its full flower.

Notes

1. "No Thérèse, no, there is no God, Nature sufficeth unto herself; in no wise has she need of an author," explains a character from *Justine* (496). There is some difference of opinion here: Pierre Klossowski, in "Nature as Destructive Principle," makes a case for a more Gnostic view of Sade; in this view, the existence of evil in the world incriminates God, allows Sadean man "the chance to blackmail God, whom he considers the eternal Guilty Party because he is the original Aggressor" (69). In this instance, God is an inferior Demiurge, a Divine torturer, yet He still exists. De Beauvoir dismisses--perhaps missing its Gnostic implications--this argument as the "sophism which maintains that to attack God is to affirm Him" (41). In any case, there is no doubt that Sade sees God--whether existing as a malevolent Demiurge, a secondary being, or not at all--as in all cases inferior to primary, "true" Nature.

2. De Beauvoir is careful to note that Sade's is a true *philosophia*, based on actions taken in his own life: "The fiendish morality which he later established in theoretical form was first a matter of actual experience" (11). Although Sade of course could not have experienced all of the things he wrote about, biographical accounts confirm that there was no shortage of limit-experiences in his life.

3. For Sade, the "modern" individual "represents a certain quantum force: generally he squanders and disperses his forces . . . to the benefit of those simulacra which parade under the names of 'other people,' 'God,' or 'ideals.'" However, the "true man knows that he is alone, and he accepts it; everything in him which relates to others--to his whole seventeen centuries of cowardice--he repudiates and rejects: for example, pity, gratitude, and love are all sentiments he crushes and destroys; by destroying them, he recuperates all the strength that he would have to dedicate to these debilitating impulses and, what is even more important, from this labor of destruction he draws the beginnings of a true energy." (Blanchot 67). I would also suggest that what Blanchot labels "true energy" is analagous to the term "power" in Foucault, especially as it is used in his later writings. It is the individual's ability to harness this same "power," rather than letting it be used against him, that is the key.

4. "Personality in Sade is hard and impermeable--that is, Apollonian," Paglia writes. "There are no mysteries or ambiguities because nothing is left in the unconscious, whose most perverse fantasies empty out into the cold light of consciousness. In Sade, Apollonian personality is plunged into Dionysian sewage but emerges clean and intact." This is the essence of Sade's thought: to plunge into the dissociating revelries of (primary) Dionysian nature, and yet remain intact, is in fact a *victory* over it, the last movement in the *destructuralist* spiral. Also key is the way in which Sade's thinking here directly anticipates Rimbaud's call for a "systematic derangement" of all the senses, as de Beauvoir points out. Many who have trumpeted this phrase as a kind of clarion call to all-out decadence have given short shrift to the implications of the term "systematic" in this context. See Paglia, *Sexual Personae* 237, and de Beauvoir 55.

5. In Bataille's view--heavily influenced by Sade--the sovereignty acquired through adherence to the work ethic and the accompanying accumulation of status-conferring consumer goods commences the "deep degradation" of the concept of sovereignty in our capitalist, middle-class dominated era: "Because of accumulation, bourgeois society is . . . the society of things. It is not . . . a society of the *subject*." Where, in Sadean transgression, the subject paradoxically "empties" itself out in order momentarily to *become* a sovereign object, in the bourgeois realm, "the object, which lasts, matters more than the subject" from the start. Thus, the search for a true sovereignty "is a caricature in our eyes," as we cannot "envisage the NOTHING of sovereignty, but rather the inverse that is the thing, and the ponderousness of those who believe it to be sovereign. In the place where we had reason to anticipate the dazzling appearance of the *subject* . . . the reign of money remains." The bourgeois believes, then, that it can purchase sovereignty as it would a car, a relatively risk-free endeavour complete with warranty. Like Sade, Bataille attributes this degradation of the concept of sovereignty to the imposition upon it of Rousseauist ideals: "The meaning that bourgeois *moderation* gives to the game is quite different . . . the pursuit of rank has kept for the bourgeois society the value it had as a sovereign end for the nobility. But the bourgeois cannot *violate the sense of proportion*"; he must remain within the grid of a "social contract" inherent within a system which predetermines and delimits his rank. Rather than a sovereign *subject/object*, an end unto himself, as in Sade, "bourgeois man is only a means, he has no end but the semblance or illusion of dignity, and that rudimentary humanity connected with the body proper and its instincts, with society and family. In him the pursuit of sovereign dignity is no longer anything but the pursuit of material goods that pertain to that dignity. . . ." See Bataille, *Accursed* 3: 345, 347-8.

6. For Paglia, Sade's thought liberates our true nature from the shackles of a Rousseau-inspired liberal humanism which "still permeates our culture from sex counseling to cereal commercials" (*Sexual* 2).

7. Paglia theorizes that Sade's sexual Apollonianism is a result of his effort to replace the ritualism of the church, which has been eliminated from the Sadean universe. Sade's "lavish sexual ritualism dramatizes the natural hierarchism of sex--a hierarchism having nothing to do with social custom, for women can be masters as well as slaves," she explains. "Hailed in the sixties as a sexual liberator, Sade is actually the most scholarly documenter of sex's subjection to hierarchical orders" (*Sexual* 243).

8. These ideas were obviously a major influence on Foucault: see his previously noted loathing for the Rousseauist "dream of a transparent society, visible and legible in each of its parts, the dream of there no longer existing any zones of darkness, zones established by the privileges of royal power or the prerogatives of some corporation, zones of disorder . . . the dream that each individual, whatever position he occupied, might be able to see the whole of society, that men's heart's should communicate, their vision be unobstructed by obstacles, and the opinion of all reign over each" *Power/Knowledge* 152. Foucault also scathingly alludes to Rousseauian philosophy in action in *Madness and Civilization*, where

he implies that Rousseau's model of society is best seen in the lunatic asylums of the Enlightenment: "The asylum is a religious domain without religion, a domain of pure morality, of ethical uniformity. . . . The asylum must represent the great continuity of social morality. The values of the family and work, all the acknowledged virtues . . . ," he seethes. (257).

9. In *The 120 Days of Sodom*, Sade provides a thorough overview of the deliberate employment of inverse exaltation: "Once a man has degraded himself, debased himself through excesses," says the author's mouthpiece, Curval, "he has imparted something of a vicious cast to his soul, and nothing can rectify that situation . . . from the state in which one has ceased to blush, to that other state in which one adores everything that causes others to blush, there is no more, nor less, than a single step. All that affected one disagreeably, now encountering an otherwise prepared soul, is metamorphosed into pleasure, and from this moment onward, whatever recalls the new state one has adopted can henceforth only be voluptuous" (496).

10. In early essays such as "Preface to Transgression" and "Language To Infinity," Foucault, like the poststructuralist version of Roland Barthes, luxuriates in the notion of a textual space composed of a self-referential language liberated from any grounds, exulting the primacy of the signifier, its groundless and irreducible plurality. Such texts, defined in *The Order of Things* as *heterotopias*, "dessicate speech, stop words in their tracks, contest the very possibility of grammar at its source" (xviii). The heterotopic text, then, is a text at the limits which consistently threatens to violate its ordered Apollonian boundaries, opening its chaos onto the world of practice. As it often does, Foucault's thinking here owes much to Bataille. However, this heterological or heterotopic text should *not* be interpreted, as it has been by some writers of both the "late" and "post" modernist schools, to indicate a text which is basically unreadable or indecipherable. "The fact of needlessly resorting to literary or poetic verbiage, the inability to express oneself in a simple and categorical way, not only are the result of a vulgar impotence, but always betray a pretentious hypocrisy," Bataille fumes in "The Use Value of D.A.F. de Sade" (*Visions* 92). Any text which gives itself over purely to such "undecidability" is not a *destructuralist* text, as it ignores the crucial element of Apollonian order which is never entirely abandoned in the process of rational derangement. In order to have rhetorical impact, a text must in some way *make sense*, though that sense may be entirely singular.

11. The revised version can be found in *The Foucault Reader*, 101-120, and in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, 141-160. Josué V. Harari sees this second version of the essay as marking a shift in emphasis "crucial to an understanding of Foucault's work" ("Critical" 43); James Miller notes that Foucault's increasing emphasis on retaining and transforming Apollonian power/order occasioned a split with the more Dionysian-oriented Deleuze (287-298).

12. Camus and Moers disagree on this point. For Camus, dandyism is an emanation of romantic rebellion which "at the source of its inspiration is chiefly concerned with defying

moral and divine law" (50). Moers points out that the element of *self-control* the dandy must employ in his own singular ascesis, his necessary harnessing of Dionysian urges, "diverges most widely from the romantic" sensibility (18). As I hope this study demonstrates, the roots of dandyism run far deeper than the Romantic period, although elements of the Romantic character certainly inform dandyism of all stripes.

13. Brummell's "arrogant superiority was an affirmation of the aristocratic principle, his way of life an exaltation of the aristocratic society," writes Moers. "But his terrible independence proclaimed a subversive disregard for the essentials of aristocracy. The dandy, as Brummell made him . . . has no coat of arms on his carriage . . . no ancestral portraits along his halls . . . no decorations on his uniform . . . no title but Mr. Brumell, *arbiter elegantarium*" (17-18).

14. Paglia cites Balzac's novel *Sarrasine* as an important precursor of this phenomenon. "Balzac's Zambinella is the first Decadent art object," she says. "The transsexual castrato is an artificial sex, product of biology manipulated for art. Zambinella *does* give birth--to other art objects. First is Sarrasine's statue of him/her; then a marble copy commissioned by the cardinal; next a painting of Adonis based on the copy; finally, Girodet's sensuous painting of effeminate sleeping Endymion, inspired, Balzac claims, by Zambinella as Adonis. The sterile castrato, propagating itself through other art works . . . teems with inorganic seed" (*Sexual* 391).

15. The "rhizome" as a conception of a specific form of subjectivity is an extension of the notion of the "desiring-machine," or "body without organs," first developed in *Anti-Oedipus*. As opposed to the conception of the "normal," centered, Oedipalized subject, the rhizome is multiple, constantly able to interact in a polymorphous way with its environment: "any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be," writes Deleuze. The "movements of deterritorialization and reterritorialization" by which the rhizome interacts with the world are, I would posit, directly analogous to the operations of *destructuralism* I have identified within the history of The Great Subculture. Furthermore, when Deleuze says that rhizome "has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle [milieu] from which it grows and which it overspills," we may also think of Baudelaire's key formulation of *dandysme* as a "vaporization and centralization of the self." The dandy-self may be compared to a dark mist or vapour on which an array of ever-shifting, kaleidescopic lights are continously projected; like the rhizome, which is "defined solely by a circulation of states," the dandy is not a being, but a constant "becoming." See *The Deleuze Reader*, 27-36. Also "Chapter 1: The Desiring Machines." *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia.*

16. This notion of "being in the middle" reverses the idea of the middle as a static place of safety or non-extremity. Here, the notion designates a constant, spiraling state of limit-experience, a perpetual state of *becoming*, a high-wire act traversing the line between being and nothingness.

17. A haecceity, explains Deleuze, "differs from the concepts we usually associate with those terms, for "you will yield nothing to haecceities until you realize that that is what you are, and that you are nothing but that." A haecceity is a constant-becoming, an event or "assemblage in its individuated aggregate," whose proper name "designates something that is the order of the event, or becoming of the haecceity." Deleuze cites the military operations and weather phenomena such as hurricanes which are given proper names as examples of this form of individuation, where the name "is not the subject of a tense but the agent of an infinitive." The Baudelairean dandy is a self-conscious form of haecceity. See *The Deleuze Reader* 54-58.

18. In his critique of Baudelaire, Bataille rightly notes that Baudelaire's self-vapourization, his nihilistic refusal to work and be "productive," something which Sartre attributes to a failure of existential will, was in fact "the most profound form of refusal, as it was in no way an assertion of the opposite principle" (*Literature and Evil* 41). For Bataille, far from being a mere lack of inner will, Baudelaire's life was a *refusal* of the demands of a "material tension imposed, historically, from without" (38). His hedonism and decadence were ways in which he "drew from his failure what others drew from rebellion" (41), his "use-less-ness" an ascesis by which he denied "the primacy of the future" (42) in order to live as a gutter-sovereign in the moment. Baudelaire thus lived out a personal potlatch, following an instinctual need to waste his energy and squander his resources.

19. Norman O. Brown describes this Dionysian transformation as an abolition of the repressive mechanisms which force "unnatural concentrations of libido in certain bodily organs," the same Oedipal limits later critiqued by Deleuze and Guattari. This sovereign human is "polymorphously perverse, delighting in that full life of the body" that the docile, obedient masses fear. Such a consciousness "does not observe the limit, but overflows [and] *does not negate any more*" (*Life* 308).

20. R.D. Laing's critique of the colonizing mental structures of the Oedipal "daddy-mommy-me" also precedes that of Deleuze and Guattari. For Laing, the nuclear family, which has taken on a mythical, "holy" status in today's mainstream society, and whose various malfunctions are taken as a sign of immanent societal collapse, is *the* instrument by which a constrictive Apollonian order indoctrinates its subjects. "The family's function," he sneers, "is to repress Eros; to induce a false consciousness of security; to deny death by avoiding life; to cut off transcendence; to believe in God, not to experience the Void; to create, in short, one-dimensional man; to promote respect, conformity, obedience; to con children out of play; to induce a fear of failure; to promote a respect for work; to promote a respect for 'respectability.'" Perhaps, then, the collapse of the nuclear family would mean an end to the current order, but for Laing--and Deleuze, and Brown--that would be a desirable result. See Laing 57-76.

21. Kristeva describes Baudelaire's dandiacal mysticism as the "pulverizing of meaning and language, the pulverizing of one's own identity." The teachings of mystics such as Swedenborg, the drug-induced writings of Poe and De Quincey, and the use of hashish

and other drugs all "emphasize the reversibility of sensations and images," leading to a vapourized state, "the mixing of perceptions when, all borders being confused," the identity is dissolved. (329).

22. This notion roughly corresponds to the limit-state of Deleuze's haecceitical being, continually astride the boundary of creation/destruction.

23. "Bio-power" is for Foucault a crucial term which designates the forces which form and control human subjects in our (post) Enlightenment era, "what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life" (*The History of Sexuality*. 1: 143). For Foucault, the present era is highly Apollonian in form, organized by a "power whose task it is to take charge of life" by "distributing the living in the domain of value and utility" (144). Such a power, which is bent upon producing, organizing, and "normalizing" life, is a marked departure from previous eras which, being more pagan and Dionysian in nature, centered around the power and glory of the sovereign and his right to mete out death. Apollonian *bio-power*, concurrent with the rise of our middle-class managed capitalism, instead centers around the need for the "controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production" (141). The dandy's "seizure" or "subversion" of this bio-power effectively "sterilizes" the process, frustrating its goal of utility: his production, himself, is indeed beautifully use-less.

24. "Invitation" may seem too strong a term here, but, despite the fact that Des Esseintes' experiments appear to have been unsuccessful overall by the novel's end, there is never any doubt where the author's true sympathies lie, and Oscar Wilde's subsequent adoption of the book as the very flower of decadent thought seems to back the notion that *Against Nature* places Huysmans in Sade's line of authors whose works seek to "corrupt" others--in other words, they have a rhetorical function.

25. "It's not a crime to wish for other worlds," writes modern day Satanist and Huysmans fan Anton Szandor LaVey, whose own brand of religion is heavily flavoured with the aesthetics of dandyism. The late LaVey, who constructed what he called "total environments," or recreations of scenes from past eras, in the basement of his dwelling, shared Huymans' disdain for materialism and utilitarian "progress." "'You can't go backward,' 'You can't live in the past,' they tell you. Why not? . . . These are all expressions of modern disposability. It's a mediocritizing technique--trying to get rid of what I call 'past orthodoxies.' It's our past that makes us unique, therefore it's our past that economic interests want to rob from us, so they can sell us a new, improved future. . . . I say, 'Don't let it happen. Keep things the way you want them and let the rest of the world be duped.'" See Barton, 134-5. This anti-bourgeois passage could easily have been taken straight from the pages of *La-Bas*.

26. "Rimbaud's greatness," writes Camus, "shines forth at the moment when, in giving the most peculiarly appropriate expression to rebellion that it has ever received, he

simultaneously proclaims his triumph and his agony, his conception of a life beyond the confines of this world and the inescapability of this world, the yearning for the unattainable and reality brutally determined on restraint, the rejection of morality and the irresistable compulsion to duty" (88). This passage, describing as it does a being at the limit, constantly alternating between polarities, is uncannily similar in tone to the description of Gilles de Rais by Huymans! The same "symptoms of genius" inform the characters of both men, and the same fate: systematically opening themselves to the turbulence of the *coincidentia oppositorum*, both men die young, de Rais at thirty-six, Rimbaud at thirty-seven. Rimbaud's crucial experiments, happily, were mainly self-directed.

27. Wallace Fowlie's translation substitutes the word "finery" for "luxury," a stronger choice, but Schmidt's version seems more compelling overall. See "Circus" in Fowlie, *Rimbaud: Complete Works, Selected Letters* 225.

28. Rimbaud's own style of "disgusting finery" caused Verlaine's bourgeois Parisian coterie to regard him "as satanic," Reed writes. "'Satan in the midst of the doctors' is how Léon Valade described Verlaine's young protégé with his blue eyes, red face and big hands and feet" (*Delirium* 47). In fact, Reed continues, Rimbaud's "Luciferian qualities were infallible. . . . [He] seems briefly to have generated the occult energy we associate with fascination. Levi and Crowley possessed it, and so too did Mick Jagger in the late sixties with his adoption of a Lucifer persona when performing songs like 'Sympathy For The Devil,' 'The Midnight Rambler' and 'Gimme Shelter.' At the time of the murders and brutal maimings at the Rolling Stones Altamont Freeway concert in December, 1969, the Luciferian character that Jagger was able to project was something of which Rimbaud would have approved" (51).

29. See, for instance, Ned Polsky's reply to Mailer, "Reflections On Hip," printed in *Advertisements For Myself*. "Even in the world of the hipster," writes Polsky, "the Negro remains essentially what Ralph Ellsion called him--an invisible man. The white Negro accepts the real Negro not as a human being in his totality, but as the bringer of a highly specified and restricted 'cultural dowry,' to use Mailer's phrase. In doing so he creates an inverted form of keeping the nigger in his place" (369).

30. According to Mailer, the mystic and the hipster share an "intensity of . . . private vision" and a "burning consciousness of the present" in which "the reward is their knowledge that what is happening at each instant of the electric present is good or bad for them. . . . The element which is exciting, disturbing, nightmarish perhaps, is that incompatibles have come to bed, the inner life and the violent life, the orgy and the dream of love, the desire to murder and the desire to create . . . a dark, romantic, and yet undeniably dynamic view of existence for it sees every man and woman as moving *individually* through each moment of life forward into growth or backward into death" (*Advertisements* 342-3, italics mine). The hipster, like the dandy, encases the void: he embraces the Other, only to find it at its very limits The Same.

31. Rimbaud "used absinthe . . . morning glories, the traditional witchcraft herbs like datura, henbane and belladonna, *and* spider venom. His entire corpus came out of a few years of feverish work culminating with that fateful summer where he took tarantula venom repeatedly in the family granary--the summer chronicled in *Une Saison en Enfer*. . . . Yet generations of students have been taught by effete pot-bellied lit crit types that when Rimbaud opens his classic and telling poem, *Nuit de l'enfer*, with the announcement 'I have just swallowed an enormous mouthful of poison,' he is being *somehow metaphoric*" (Mu 128-134).

32. Bataille explains that beauty is "at the mercy of a definition as classical as that of the common measure"; however, "each individual form escapes this common measure and is, to a certain degree, a monster" (*Visions* 55). Unlike the "average man," who seeks to conceal this "abnormality" through conformity, seeking refuge in society's predetermined grids, the gutter-dandy overtly intensifies his "monstrous" individuality by taking it to the limit, becoming a freak, a clown, or as Jack Kerouac labels Neal Cassady in *On The Road*, "A Holy Goof."

33. Ihab Hassan writes: "The literary practice of Genet extends his autobiography into art. Five prose works carry the tendencies of his existence till fiction and confession merge in rituals of self-redemption" (*Silence* 187).

34. Ironically, of course, "respectable" society does come to honour Genet later in his life, yet he remains suspicious of it to the end, the suspicion of the "reformed" guttersnipe who always feels that he is being patronised, and that he may be thrown back to the gutter whence he sprang at any moment. In 1962, Genet admitted that he still couldn't get with the program of bourgeois morality: "I'm not a guy on the right or on the left. . . . I'm still a hoodlum. That is, I can't accept a morality that's handed down, already worked out, no matter how generous it might be." See White 399.

35. Nachman can barely contain his revulsion for Genet. "The Nazis built their movement by attracting men like Genet," he says. "He would have been at home in the SA which was, among other things, a cult of decadent homosexual toughs and aesthetes" (369). It is doubtful, however, that an individualist like Genet would ever be able to adhere completely to the dogmas of *any* political organization. White observes that, while Genet may have toyed with the idea of joining the Communist party in 1952, "it seems unlikely that he ever wanted to be a card-carrying member of the Party. He was too much an anarchist, too distrustful of organized politics" (399).

36. White observes that Bataille was blinded by a dislike for Genet even though the latter's life and work fulfilled most of Bataille's notions of what constitutes sovereignty in a post-Enlightenment era. Bataille charges that Genet's version of sovereignty is too insular, that he is too disinterested in communication to be truly sovereign: "sovereignty," he says "presupposes communication: either it is deliberately communicable, or it is not sovereign." Given the amount of writing Genet published, as well as his overtly expressed

intent to contaminate the bourgeois world with his writing (an act of communciation), this seems a spurious, trumped-up charge. Indeed, White points out, that while Bataille and Genet had "so much in common (a love of Sade, Gilles de Rais, Nietzsche, a taste for violence. . . .)," a "personal animus" resulting from a possible theft by Genet of a Bataille manuscript during a lunch together (an event which occurred before Bataille had composed his essay on Genet), caused a rift. Later, White notes, Bataille admitted that he had judged Genet too harshly and underestimated his talent. See Bataille, *Literature and Evil* 201-4; White 398-9.

37. It should be noted that Genet was not, to my knowledge, a murderer. Yet, given his concern with crime as a vehicle by which to destructure the self, to place oneself apart from and above the despised world of the bourgeois, it is logical that he would utilize the novel as a vehicle by which to explore the effects of the ultimate crime upon the perpetrator.

38. In his prose poem "Crowds," Baudelaire depicts an enlightened dandy-poet to whom "in his cradle a fairy has bequeathed a love of masks and disguises," able to "plunge, at the expense of humankind, into a debauch of vitality." For such a man, "multitude" and "solitude" are "equal and interchangeable terms"; he "enjoys this incomparable privilege, to be at once himself and others," possessing the ability to "enter the personality of every man" at will in the manner of a disembodied spirit. This "solitary and thoughtful stroller," Baudelaire explains in the poem's key line, "*derives a singular intoxication from this universal communion.*" See *Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Verlaine* 106-7. Astride the line between Apollo and Dionysus, the enlightened dandy envelops the chaos of the swirling mass within his voided frame, which all the while retains an outer rigidity. Likewise, Genet's paradoxical sovereign man is at once wholly singular, yet also able to vapourize, dissolve into "communication" within the mass.

CHAPTER 3: YANKEE DOODLE (GUTTER) DANDIES

HENRY MILLER AND JACK KEROUAC: REBELS WITHOUT A CAUSE

> **To break through language in order to touch life is to create or recreate the theatre. . . . We must believe in a sense of life in which man fearlessly makes himself master of what does not yet exist, and brings it into being. And everything that has not been born can still be brought to life if we are not satisfied to remain mere recording organisms.**
>
> **Furthermore, when we speak the word "life," it must be understood that we are not referring to life as we know it from its surface of fact, but to that fragile, fluctuating center which forms can never reach. And if there is one hellish, truly accursed thing in out time, it is our artistic dallying with forms, instead of being like victims burnt at the stake, signaling through the flames.**
>
> **--Antonin Artaud**

****

> **You *had* to be a rebel without a cause. The intellectuals had preempted all the causes. Causes were to twentieth-century intellectuals as manners had been to Victorians. There was no way you could beat a Victorian on manners and there was no way you could beat a twentieth-century intellectual on causes. That was part of the problem. That was what was being rebelled against. All that neat scientific knowledge that was supposed to guide the world.**
>
> **--Robert M. Pirsig**

If art had displaced religion in societal status and importance in the aftermath of the Enlightenment, it is itself superseded in the twentieth century by the rise of a corporate capitalism driven by science and technology. The artist, who had previously supplanted the priest as the chief interpreter human life, is in turn eclipsed by the rise of the "objective," technocratic "expert" who could explain and control the various chaotic phenomena of existence through rational analysis, in a cool, "disinterested" and "scientific" manner. "Life," as Foucault posits in works like *Discipline and Punish* and

The History of Sexuality Vol. I, now becomes defined by the operations of a diffuse, de-centered *bio-power*, involving the systematic taming of man's chaotic, Dionysian impulses thorough proper training, management and "discipline," organized around "objective," scientific principles or "norms."

The "ordinary" (non-expert) human being, in this scenario, hardly requires a metaphysical guide in the form of a priest, or an artist-priest. Rather than an individual, he or she now becomes a quantifiable "unit" whose success or failure is primarily measured by the ability to remain invisible, to stay within the parameters of a "scientifically"-defined (through psychiatric analysis, for instance) "norm." Nietzsche uncannily forecasts this development back in 1887, when, anticipating the corporate takeovers and consumer-driven conformism that would dominate the twentieth century, he writes that "once we possess the coming economic management of the earth that will soon be inevitable, mankind will be able to find its best meaning as a machine in the service of this economy--as a tremendous clockwork, composed of ever smaller, ever more subtly 'adapted' gears . . . as a whole of tremendous force, whose individual factors represent '*minimal forces, minimal values*'" (*Will* 463). In this scenario, the individual's potential for sovereignty is neutered within a system bent only on the controlled insertion of docile bodies into the now-sovereign corporate economic machinery.

Twentieth-century corporate America is the engine driving this Apollonian world of Western techno-capitalism, producing a plethora of new technologies and their resultant products. Yet, if it is plausible, as Camille Paglia contends, that America's "capitalist products are another version of the art works flooding western culture," and that "capitalist and artist are parallel types" (*Sexual* 37), she fails adequately to take into account how this demotion to the status of "producer" impacts on the Western artist in the twentieth century. As Andreas Huyssen notes, most aspects of art, including the avant-garde whose project it was to resist the pressures of bourgeois capitalism, have in the twentieth century either succumbed to its normalizing power or retreated to an obscure cultural corner:

> Like a parasitic growth, conformism has all but obliterated

> the original iconoclastic and subversive thrust of the historical avantgarde of the first three or four decades of this century. This conformism is manifest in the vast depoliticization of post-World War II art and its institutionalization as administered culture, as well as in academic interpretation which, by canonizing the historical avantgarde, modernism and postmodernism, have methodologically severed the vital dialectic between the avantgarde and mass culture in industrial civilization. In most academic criticism the avantgarde has been ossified into an elite enterprise beyond politics and beyond everyday life, though their transformation was once a central project of the historical avantgarde. (3-4)

In "The Case Against Art," John Zerzan argues that art finally ends up joining other Apollonian forces such as religion and science to create a "separate realm of contrived life . . . both impotent and in complicity with the actual nightmare that prevails" (124). The failure of various avant-garde movements from Dada to Surrealism leads to, whether under the guise of "high modernism" or "post-modernism," the artist's attempt to salvage his authoritative position by mimicking the technocratic "expert," creating increasingly obscure, "undecidable" texts meant only for others with sufficient intellectual background and training, such as other like-minded writers or critical theorists: "literature" now becomes a "discourse," existing in a rarefied, abstract sphere apart from everyday life.[1] Modernist art "expressed the conviction that only by a drastic reduction of its field of vision could art survive," and so became "increasingly self-referential in its search for a 'purity' that was hostile to narrative"; the end result, however, of this "insistence on art as an object in its own right in a world of objects" was a further reduction of art to a "simple commodity status" (127). Postmodernism, in Zerzan's view, is merely a footnote, an obituary, "a tired, spiritless recycling of past fragments, announcing that the development of art is at an end" (128).

The previously elevated societal status of art and the artist, it seems, has also been reduced to "*minimal forces, minimal values*" in the new dispensation. In his experience-book *Lila*, Robert M. Pirsig explains that "sometime after the twenties a secret loneliness, so penetrating and so encompassing that we are only beginning to realize the extent of it,

descended upon the land. This scientific, psychiatric isolation and futility had become a far *worse* prison of the spirit than the old Victorian 'virtue' ever was." Life within the capitalist system of bio-power had, says Pirsig, lost much of its "*realness*"; instead, people now lived "in some kind of movie projected by this intellectual, electromechanical machine . . . which had inadvertently shut them out from direct experience of life itself--and from each other" (323-4). All this is the logical result of what Norman O. Brown refers to as the Apollonian "law of ever increasing abstraction" which reaches its apex in a techno-scientific order. "This holding of life at a distance," he says, is "negation; sublimation is life entering consciousness on condition that it is denied." This negation, Brown continues, "is plain in the inseparable connection between symbolism (in language, science, religion and art) and abstraction," which is "a denial of the living organ of experience, the living body as a whole" (*Life* 172).[2]

This escalating denial of life and experience, "the infection of the human," is in fact the basis of a stinging critique delivered by the "mad" poet and playwright Antonin Artaud in the "Preface" to *The Theatre and Its Double:* "If our life lacks brimstone, i.e., a constant magic," he writes, "it is because we choose to observe our acts and lose ourselves in consideration of their imagined form instead of being impelled by their force." For Artaud, action does not *create* meaning (something to be gleaned after the fact): action *is* meaning. This is a crucial distinction. The successfully "civilized" man of today is he who has mastered the system, or perhaps more accurately, been mastered by it: "a person who thinks in forms, signs, representations--a monster whose faculty of deriving thoughts from acts, instead of identifying acts with thoughts, is developed to an absurdity." Western man has seemingly mistaken the Apollonian "system," be it philosophical, technological, or artistic, for the thing itself, "but where can it be shown," Artaud asks, "that life, our life, has ever been affected by these systems?" *True nature*, the basic underlying stuff of life, remains unaffected by any attempt to "systematize" it. Artaud puts the case plainly: "Either systems are within us and permeate our being to the point of supporting life itself (and if this is the case, what use are books?), or they do not permeate us and therefore do not have the capacity to support life (and in this case what does their disappearance

matter?)." Such a "painful cleavage" between culture and experience, between art and life, is finally "responsible for the revenge of things," an omnipresent, coercive and deadening cultural materialism (8-9).

It is into this "Air-Conditioned Nightmare," as Henry Miller labels it, that the Anglo-American gutter-dandy emerges in the twentieth century. As the oppositional, *atopos* gutter-dandy makes his way across the Atlantic, initially embodied in the person of Miller, he finds himself in a world where "Art," at least in the Platonic sense of a "timeless," monumental works and overarching societal metanarratives, as well as in the sense of increasingly irrelevant and solipsistic avant-garde movements, is now firmly part of the problem. "In a jaded, enervated age," writes Zerzan, "when it seems to speak is to say less, art is certainly less. Baudelaire was obliged to claim a poet's dignity in a society which had no more dignity to hand out. A century or more later how inescapable is the truth of that condition and how much more threadbare is the consolation or station of 'timeless' art" (128-9). Henceforth, most of what issues forth from the literary gutter-dandy exists somewhere out on the furthest horizons of what is normally called "art" and/or "literature": much of it might accurately be termed *anti-art* and/or *anti-literature*,[3] and all of it exhibits an at least implicit awareness of the fact that what capitalistic bourgeois society (including academe) has sanctioned and "canonized" as acceptable will no longer do, and that, as Zerzan puts it, by its very nature, "art must remain alienation and as such must be superseded . . . art is disappearing because the immemorial separation between nature and art is a death sentence for the world that must be voided" (128). For the gutter-dandy, the "accursed dallying with forms" decried by Artaud, typical of twentieth-century art, is indeed at an end; he is ready to "signal through the flames" with the fervour of a victim being burnt at the stake, to begin to forge a new alliance between expression and experience.

THE SPECTACLE OF THE SAGE

> **Today, the best hopes of the historical avantgarde may not be embodied in art works at all, but in decentered movements which work toward the transformation of everyday life. The point then would be to retain the**

avantgarde's attempt to address those human experiences which have not yet been subsumed under capital, or which are stimulated but not fulfilled by it. Aesthetic experience in particular must have its place in this transformation of everyday life. . . .

--Andreas Huyssen

****

All art, I firmly believe, will one day disappear. But the artist will remain, and life itself will become not "an art," but *art*, i.e. will definitely and for all time usurp the field.

--Henry Miller

In a capitalist world of Apollonian systems, networks, and structures, real change will never occur by merely adding one more ideology or cause to the cultural brew. Technologically-driven systems quickly co-opt and transform "causes" into slogans and commodities,[4] meaning that cultural transformation must emanate from the level of the individual outwards, not by the imposition of an ideology, *any* ideology, on the mass. "The quantitative universe of modern science is totally unrepresentable, and within it the individual feels isolated and lost," Pierre Hadot laments. "But can the experience of modern man be reduced to the purely technico-scientific? Does not modern man, too, have his own experience of the world qua world? Finally, might not this experience be able to open up for him a path toward wisdom?" (252). For a solution to this dilemma, Hadot looks back to the example of the ancient "sage," the "enlightened" man for whom philosophy was a *philosophia*: a mode of existence, a way of "seeing" the world. For contemporary man, Hadot explains, such a process would definitely *not* entail some fanciful, Rousseauian "return" from the now omnipresent scientific paradigm ("a universe reduced, by both mathematical and technological means, to its quantitative aspects") to the everyday mode of "habitual" or "utilitarian" perception, a state of sleepwalking which "in fact hides from us the world qua world" and is "not radically affected by scientific conceptions." Instead, what is required is a "*conversion*, a radical rupture with regard to the state of unconsciousness in which man normally lives. The utilitarian perception we have of the world, in everyday life, in fact hides from us the world qua world. Aesthetic

and philosophical perceptions of the world are only possible by means of a complete transformation of our relationship to the world: we have to perceive it *for itself*, no longer *for ourselves"* (253-4, first italics mine).

Crucial to this process by which men may become "enlightened," in Hadot's view, is the figure of the sage, he who embodies wisdom attained through experience. "There is a strict analogy between the movement by which we accede to the vision of the world, and that by which we postulate the figure of the sage," he writes. Ancients "considered the figure of the sage an inaccessible role model, whom the *philo-sopher* (he who loves wisdom) strives to imitate, by means of an ever-renewed effort, practiced at each instant." The sage becomes what Seneca calls a "spectacle of wisdom," or "wisdom personified within a specific personality," he whose image compels those drawn to it toward a new perception of the "world as it is," or everyday life. The sage melds subject and object at the apex of his enlightenment: he provides through his own individual experience a "spectacular" example of the path toward enlightenment with which other subjects can then imaginatively interact, helping bring about their own transformation. "Thus," concludes Hadot, "by a total conversion, we can render ourselves open to the world and to wisdom. . . . both the world as perceived in the consciousness of the sage, and the sage's consciousness itself, plunged into the totality of the world, are revealed to the lover of wisdom in one single, unique movement" (261).[5] Nietzsche predicts that "as the consumption of man and mankind becomes more and more economical," with the "machinery" of corporate "interests and services" integrated into everyday life, a "counter-movement," similar to that postulated by Hadot, "is inevitable." The Apollonian sublimation of Dionysian experience moves toward its apex, and "if we place ourselves at the terminal point of this great process, where society and custom finally reveal their true aim," Nietzsche writes, "we shall find the ripest fruit of that tree to be the sovereign individual, equal only to himself, all moral custom left behind." The clockwork society, then, will eventually breed its opposite: "My concept, my metaphor for this type," Nietzsche writes, "is . . . the word "overman" (*Will* 463). Perspicacious though he was in foretelling the future, Nietzsche's concept of the "overman" would require some fine

tuning, but, as Georges Bataille observes, although Nietzsche "was not fully aware of the sharp contrast that must separate traditional sovereignty from that of the 'free spirits' he spoke of," his main notion, "that of a sovereignty that refuses to govern the world of things," an anti-materialistic, *anti-bourgeois* sovereign, "freed from any order, finally," was accurate (*Accursed* 3: 457-8, n55). Such a sovereign, as I have suggested, might more accurately be termed the *Untermensch*: the underman, the gutter-dandy who functions as a contemporary version of the classical sage, an artist of life making a "spectacle of himself" (recalling Deleuze's description of the Nietzsche's Dionysian overman as one who should be "played," who gives an essentially theatrical "performance" [88]) in order to enlighten.[6]

THE FRENCH CONNECTION: MILLER AND RIMBAUD

> **Rimbaud restored literature to life; I have endeavored to restore life to literature.**
>
> **--Henry Miller**
>
> **********
>
> **Of all writings I love only that which is written with blood. Write with blood: and you will discover that blood is spirit.**
>
> **--Nietzsche**

No matter what literary form they may nominally take (fiction, essay, etc.), the writings of Henry Miller are essentially the "performances" of a contemporary sage, an *Untermensch* named "Henry Miller." The "counter-movement" forecast by Nietzsche is the overriding concern of Miller, who, influenced by Europeans such as Nietzsche and Rimbaud, along with American writers like Emerson and Whitman, becomes the first true Anglo-American heir of the line of classical and European gutter-dandies, extending the lineage of The Great Subculture into the "new world" which would come to dominate Western culture in the twentieth century. Although it would appear that Foucault himself was not well acquainted with his work, Miller, in both theory and practice, almost uncannily anticipates the Foucauldian call for a contemporary version of the classical *"techne tou biou"* (*Care* 43) by which "men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to

make their life into an *oeuvre* that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria" (*Use* 10-11). In Miller's work--which is, as will become evident, inseparable from his life--this quest is a constant, overarching theme.

Miller explicates his ties to The Great Subculture and his sense of himself as carrying on the anti-tradition of the "monster" in a little-analyzed yet key text entitled *The Time of the Assassins: A Study of Rimbaud*. Typically for Miller, this text functions as much as an autobiographical/philosophical exercise as it does a critical study of Rimbaud, of whom Miller says, "I see myself as in a mirror. Nothing he says is alien to me" (*Time* 108).[7] More specifically, Miller uses the topic of the life and work of Rimbaud to examine his own links with the anti-tradition of "free spirits" of which Rimbaud was, for Miller, the ultimate nineteenth-century representative, as well as to launch a Nietzschean critique of twentieth-century Western--especially American--technocratic society.

"At the very beginning of his career," Miller writes, Rimbaud "understood what others only understand at the end, if at all, that the sacred word no longer has validity. He realized that the poison of culture had transformed beauty and truth into artifice and deception" (134). In words heavily redolent of the Nietzsche of *The Genealogy of Morals*--not to mention Foucault's later *Discipline and Punish*--he unfavourably compares the middle-class dominated Apollonian age of science and diffused *bio-power* with the Dionysian society of extremes characteristic of the Middle Ages:

> The medieval man recognized the Prince of Darkness and paid just homage to the powers of evil, as is evident from the testimony of stone and script. But the man of the Middle Ages also recognized and acknowledged God. His life therefore was keen and rich, it sounded the full gamut. By contrast, the life of the modern man is pale and empty. The terrors he knows exceed any known to men of previous ages, for he lives in the world of the unreal, surrounded by phantoms. He has not even the possibilities of joy or deliverance which were open to the slaves of the ancient world. He has become the victim of his own inner emptiness; his torments are the torments of sterility. (126-7)

Rimbaud's importance, Miller explains, stems from his acute perception of this nascent

condition of sterility affecting modern Western man, and from his early realization that "art" as it was, and as it had been developing since antiquity--as a product of the ever-intensifying realm of Apollonian abstraction [8]--was increasingly part of the human "problem," rather than the solution. "The poetry of the civilized man," Miller explains, "has always been exclusive, esoteric. It has brought about its own demise" (39). Of the exclusivistic nature of modernism, Miller is especially disdainful: modernist poetry is indeed "gibberish," he says, "if out of two billion people who make up the world, only a few thousand pretend to understand what the individual poet is saying. The cult of art reaches its end when it exists only for a precious handful of men and women" (38). More specifically troubling for Miller is the fact that modern art has betrayed its Dionysian and rhetorical functions, making its peace with the "phantom" Apollonian realm of scientific abstraction:

> On the poetic corpse of Rimbaud we have begun erecting a tower of Babel. It means nothing that we still have poets, or that some of them are still intelligible, still able to communicate with the mob. What is the trend of poetry and where is the link between poet and audience? *What is the message*? Let us ask that above all. Whose voice is it that now makes itself heard, the poet's or the scientist's? . . . The poetry of life is only expressed in terms of the mathematical, the physical, the chemical. . . . The world has indeed become number. (34)

In contrast to the majority of his twentieth-century poetic successors, Rimbaud, Miller contends, "was advocating the practice of a new way of life. He was not trying to set up a new school of art in order to divert the enfeebled spinners of words--he was pointing out the union between art and life, bridging the schism, healing the mortal wound" (93-4). Here, Miller's thought meshes with that of Colin Falck, who, in *Myth, Truth and Literature: Towards a True Post-Modernism*, asks: "Is art *necessary* to human life? Could life alone, under certain conditions, be sufficient?" For Falck, "the necessity of art in Western culture" is not occasioned by "metaphysical" need but rather "a relative and cultural one," functioning both as "a counter to dogmatic belief," and "to the culture's prevailing technological mentality." Thus, a *true* post-modernist art would "engage with,

and thereby redeem, the mechanized and de-sacralized word of practical life," closing the binary divide which is instead so often anxiously or neurotically "problematized" in the material we more readily associate with the term. "The notion that in order to cope with a difficult world modern art must be difficult (T.S. Eliot)," Falck observes, "has never been seriously questioned; yet it seems much more likely that the reverse is in fact the case" (170).

Falck's generalization stands corrected here, for as we have seen, it is Henry Miller's quite serious intent to formulate just such a challenge to the world of modern art, one probable reason why his legacy has remained truly "marginal," still contained mainly within the parameters of The Great Subculture. Miller's theories, which are put into practice in his fiction, make him resistant to "canonization," for they lead along the road of anti-art, if we take the noun "art" to refer to aesthetic objects *separate* or *apart* from life. While naturalists like Zola had prided themselves on accurate artistic depictions of lower class life in works like *Germinal*, Rimbaud "had perceived that there was a step beyond art" (*Time* 102), this glimmer being the presentiment of an enlightenment in which man will "possess the truth *in body and soul*" (147). Miller goes on to identify the workings of the *destructuralist* spiral in Rimbaud's life and work as a form of *creative destruction*[9] in which man experiences "resurrection *in the flesh*," finally accepting total responsibility for himself, for his fate. "Rimbaud," he writes,

> tried to re-situate man on the earth, *this earth*, and completely. He refused to recognize an eternity of spirit created out of dead bodies. Similarly, he refused to recognize an ideal society composed of soul-less bodies manipulated from their political or economic centers. . . . It is creation he worships, creation he exalts. Out of this fever comes the "need for destruction" sometimes alluded to. It is not a wanton, vengeful destruction that Rimbaud urged, but a clearing of the ground so that fresh shoots may spring up. His whole aim is to give the spirit free rein. (148)

Miller thus links Rimbaud--and in turn, himself--to the anti-utilitarian, individualistic and oppositional line of figures--the "free spirits" or "gutter-dandies"--I have thus far traced throughout the history of the West, a line characterized by their utilization of the

de-structuralist spiral as the basis for attaining enlightenment. More tellingly, Miller goes on to state that his precursor Rimbaud's *techne tou biou* exemplifies "the enlightenment of those who demand that salvation make sense," his "rational song of the angels" constituting a rhetorical "persuasion to immediate effort" (149). Rimbaud framed and encased Dionysus within his work and within himself: "It was as though he put a tent over the void," Miller marvels (108). This deliberate manipulation and "perversion" of the Apollonian principle in service of the Dionysian is typical of anti-literature, which, explains Ihab Hassan, "like anti-matter, comes to symbolize not merely an inversion of forms but will and energy turned inside out" (3). Miller is careful to stress that this seizure of *bio-power* by the gutter-dandy/poet Rimbaud appropriates the rational *outer workings* of scientific methodology, while in fact being fundamentally opposed to its usual abstract content, being a writing which emanates from the heart, "forged in blood and anguish." Standing alone, "the father of many schools and the parent of none," Rimbaud's work was

> at once a protest and a circumvention of the dismal spread of knowledge which threatened to stifle the source of the spirit. . . . Here he is closer to the mathematician and the scientist than to the poet of our time. Unlike our latter-day poets, be it noted, he did *not* make use of symbols used by the mathematician and the scientists. His language is the language of the spirit, not of weights, measures and abstract relations. In this alone he revealed how absolutely "modern" he was. (*Time* 57)

Or, perhaps, how *post-modern* he was: in Miller's view, Rimbaud's merger of art and life was the "true trend of the poet" (57), albeit one whose cultural evolution had been sluggish. Hassan locates the emergence of this Rimbaudian/Mille(r)narian strain of anti-literature in Romanticism, where, he explains, a "dual retreat from language became evident: first, in the ironic and self-effacing manner of Mallarmé, and second, in the indiscriminate and surrealistic manner of Rimbaud." The "correlative" of the first strain, whose characteristics we have come more readily to associate with late modern and "post-modern" writing, "is Number," a predominantly Apollonian mode, while the second, of which Hassan counts both Rimbaud and Miller as exponents, the Dionysian mode of "Action." Both modes of writing, Hassan believes, "lead finally to silence," but through

vastly different means, "the former . . . toward its disappearance . . . the latter . . . toward a monstrous re-integration of the self in 'la vie ardente'" (*Literature* 22).

THE ANTI-JOYCE

In an essay entitled "The Universe of Death," Miller launches a blistering attack upon the Apollonian mode of modernist literature exemplified for him by James Joyce, in whose work he observes "that peculiar failing of the modern artist--the inability to communicate with his audience" (*Cosmological* 124). As opposed to those Dionysian "aristocrats of the spirit" such as D. H. Lawrence, whose failed attempts to merge language and life "speak of heroic struggle" and are thus "fecundating" (108), Joyce is for Miller the "high priest" of symbolic defeat and living death as seen in the "lifeless literature of today" (115); his is a cowardly art offered "as a means of salvation, as a redemption from suffering, as a compensation for the terror of living. *Art as a substitute for life*. The literature of flight, of escape, of a neurosis so brilliant that it almost makes one doubt the efficacy of health" (110). Most critically, Miller sees Joyce as mimicking the oppressive and repressive Apollonian system by using abstraction against his fellow man, eschewing any attempt at communication through the "erection of a fortress of meaningless verbiage" exemplified by the novels *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. Rather than embarking on the initial *destructuralist* path toward the realization of chthonian "true nature," which unites and animates all of life, Joyce instead moves in the exact opposite direction, in the manner of a scientist seeking to create ever more abstract, complex structures by which to evade and defeat the ultimate reality, "burying himself under an obelisk for whose script there will be no key" (115). Joyce, Miller contends in an important passage,

> is not a realist, nor even a psychologist . . . there are caricatures of humanity only, *types* which enable him to vent his satire, his hatred, to lampoon, to vilify. For at bottom there is in Joyce a profound hatred for humanity--the scholar's hatred. One realizes that he has the neurotic's fear of entering the living world, the world of men and women in which he is powerless to function. He is in revolt not against institutions, but against mankind. Man to him is pitiable, ridiculous, grotesque. And even more so are man's ideas--not that he is without understanding of them, but that

> they have no validity for him; they are ideas which would connect him with a world from which he has divorced himself. His is a medieval mind born too late: he has the taste of the recluse, the morals of an anchorite, with all the masturbative machinery such a life entrains. (128)

In opposition to the sterile and ultimately oppressive literary "dead moons" of Joyce and his followers in the "Revolution of the Word" (125), Miller is quick to oppose the revolutionary fragments, the more obscure "little works" of those such as Rimbaud, whose *Illuminations* "outweighs a shelf of Proust, Joyce, Pound, Eliot" (112). In this "other" line of modernist writers is launched "something close to a total rejection of Western history and civilization" within a literature of action (Hassan, *Literature* 6). Foucault writes of this submerged subcultural line being linked by "a madness *beneath* the mask," one that "links and divides time, that twists the world into the ring of a single night." This state of being, "so foreign to the experience of its contemporaries, does it not," Foucault asks rhetorically, "transmit--to those able to receive it, to Nietzsche and to Artaud--those barely audible voices of classical unreason, in which it was always a question of nothingness and night, but amplifying them now to shrieks and frenzy?" (*Madness* 281). But if this is a line of art which issues out of madness and chaos, Foucault importantly qualifies this notion by adding that, as seen in the "calm, patient language of Sade" (282), these cries of chaos are now *ordered*, given "for the first time an expression, a *droit de cité*, and a hold on Western culture which makes possible all contestations, as well as total contestation." This is a Dionysian form of art, the "primitive savagery" of primary or true nature contained within an Apollonian frame, reflecting "the ambiguity of chaos and apocalypse" (*Madness* 281-2).

In this new form of art initiated by Rimbaud, it is the experiment itself--the individual, immediate *act* of communication--rather than any ego-driven, specific, anticipated *result* of the experiment that counts: for Miller (as for Bataille), the man who would be sovereign must *communicate*. Conversely, the scientist "is utterly concerned with the world of illusion, the physical world where things *are made to happen*," and thus "is already a victim of the powers he once hoped to exploit" (*Time* 58). Poets of the

predominant Apollonian modernist strain "have made themselves as abstract as the problems of the physicist," demonstrating an egoistic and "womblike yearning for a world of pure poetry in which the effort to communicate is reduced to zero," effectively neutering themselves while "surrendering the destinies of countless human beings to the control of worldly individuals whose sole aim is their own personal aggrandizement" (59). In contrast, the Rimbaudian poet, "who is lord of imagination and unacknowledged ruler of the world, communicates, holds communion, with his fellow man" (92). Anchored within the flux of true nature, where "any and all material makes itself available" to him, the Dionysian poet transmutates raw experience into "the language of the soul." Where the opposing literary camp breaks up into atomized and isolated ego-units, "in this realm," writes Miller, "there are no analphabets, neither are there grammarians. It is only necessary to open the heart to throw overboard all *literary* preconceptions . . . to stand revealed, in other words. This, of course, is tantamount to conversion. It is a radical measure, and presupposes a state of desperation. But if all other methods fail, as they inevitably do, why not this extreme measure--of conversion?" (93).

BREAKING AWAY

> **It may be conjectured that the decisive event for a spirit in whom the type of the "free spirit" is one day to ripen to sweet perfection has been a *great separation*, and that before it, he was probably all the more a bound spirit, and seemed to be chained forever to his corner, to his post.**
>
> **--Nietzsche**
>
> **
>
> **What I secretly longed for was to disentangle myself from all those lives which had woven themselves into the pattern of my own life and were making my destiny a part of theirs. To shake myself free of these accumulating experiences which were mine only by force of inertia required a violent effort. . . . My liberation seemed to involve pain and suffering to those near and dear to me. Every move I made for my own private good brought reproach and condemnation. . . . I had lost the right to even become ill--because "they" needed me. I wasn't *allowed* to remain inactive.**

--Henry Miller

With the emergence of Henry Miller, the Sadean "monster" and *atopos* classical sage become united within the Anglo-American persona of the gutter-dandy. Of Rimbaud's line of literary monsters, Miller declares that, while "it is the fashion to speak of these demonic beings, these visionaries, as Romantics, to stress their subjectivity and to regard them as breaks, interruptions, stopgaps in the great stream of tradition . . . nothing could be more untrue." Instead, these members of The Great Subculture are "precisely these innovators who form the links in the great chain of creative literature." The task at hand, then, for he who would follow in the footsteps of Rimbaud and Baudelaire--i.e., Henry Miller--is *actively* and courageously to "'hold the gain,' as Rimbaud puts it--and not sit down comfortably in the ruins and piece together a puzzle of shards" (*Time* 87).

The first great conversion, then, is the embracing of the "Monster" within, necessary if one is to break free of societal bonds and "become oneself." Such a task, says Nietzsche, requires that one "voluntarily takes upon himself the suffering involved in being truthful, and this suffering serves to destroy his own wilfulness and to prepare that complete overturning and conversion[10] of his being, which it is the real meaning of his life to lead up to" ("Schopenhauer" 152). The temperament of such a man is "far removed from the cold and contemptible neutrality of the scientific man," but instead singularly *artistic:*

> Artists alone hate this sluggish promenading in borrowed fashions and appropriated opinions and they reveal everyone's secret bad conscience, the law that every man is a unique miracle . . . more, that in being strictly consistent in uniqueness he is beautiful, and worth regarding, and in no way tedious. When the great thinker despises mankind, he despises its laziness: for it is on account of their laziness that men seem like factory products, things of no consequence and unworthy to be associated with or instructed. (127)

Miller likewise believes the "monster" to be the one who has overcome the enslaving timidity of modern life, eschewing the "laziness" of those content to merely acquiesce to received opinion, to the system, to "power." To make the soul monstrous, says Miller,

> is to say, not hideous, but prodigious! What is the meaning

> of monstrous? . . . The root is from the Latin verb *moneo*, to warn. In mythology we recognize the monstrous under the form of the harpy, the gorgon, the sphinx, the centaur, the dryad, the mermaid. They are all prodigies, which is the essential meaning of the word. They have upset the norm, the balance. What does this signify if not the fear of the little man. Timid souls always see monsters in their path. . . . Man's greatest dread is the expansion of consciousness. (*Time* 31)

In this process of *becoming-prodigal*, Miller attributes a key role to art and philosophy. Discussing Henri Bergson's [11] *Creative Evolution*, he outlines how Bergson's work had a *direct effect* upon his life, leading him to the brink of the great separation: "If I had never understood a thing which was written in this book," Miller explains, "if I have preserved only the memory of one word, *creative*, it is quite sufficient. This word was my talisman. With it I was able to defy the whole world, and especially my friends. . . . The discovery of this book was equivalent to the discovery of a weapon, an implement, wherewith I might lop off all the friends who surrounded me. . . . It taught me that I had no need of friends" (*Capricorn* 210). To become *creative*, then is to become *prodigal*: diffuse, polymorphous, *haecceitical*, expanding beyond the circumscribed limits of conventional society.[12] The *destructuralist* spiral is now set in motion; one attains the "emptied-out" void-state which necessarily precedes the last phase of re-construction:

> Everything which once I thought I had understood crumbled, and I was left with a clean slate. My friends, on the other hand, entrenched themselves more solidly in the little ditch of understanding which they had dug for themselves. They died comfortably in their little bed of understanding, to become useful citizens of the world. I pitied them. . . .
>
> I come back to the word *creative*. I am sure that the whole mystery lies in the realization of the meaning of the word. When I think of the book now, I think of a man going though the rites of initiation. The disorientation and reorientation which comes with the initiation into any mystery is the most wonderful experience which it is possible to have. Everything the brain has labored for a lifetime to assimilate, categorize and synthesize has to be taken apart and reordered. (220)

With the realization that "I am a man without a home, without a friend, without a wife . . . a monster who belongs to a reality which does not exist yet" (*Capricorn* 225), Miller, following a long period of artistic failure and domestic discord, experiences what Nietzsche calls the "great separation" (the prerequisite process for becoming a "free spirit") in which the soul responds to "an urge, a pressure," which commands it to "to go away, anywhere, at any cost," all the while driven by a singular notion: "Better to die than to live *here*" (*Human* 6). Miller accordingly sets out from his native New York and travels, penniless, to Paris to glean raw experience and eventually write what he calls, in reference to Rimbaud's description of *A Season In Hell*, "my nigger book," [13] *Tropic of Cancer*, described by the author as "the last word in despair, revolt and malediction," yet also "prophetic and healing, not only for my readers but for me too" (*Time* 47), words which reveal Miller's consistent need to unite the The Monster and The Sage within his person. This task, muted but implicit at times within the work of Genet, Baudelaire and Huysmans, now becomes explicit: "One has to establish the ultimate difference of his own peculiar being and doing so discover his kinship with all humanity, even the very lowest," Miller writes of his paradoxical, circular, *destructuralist* quest. In accomplishing this, "acceptance is the key word," yet it is also "precisely the great stumbling block," as the result must be "total acceptance, and not conformity" (48). The Dionysian monster-sage, through active identification with the creative flux of existence, "*augments* life," and is thus "permanently removed--and protected--from the insidious death" of workaday society. Such a being, Miller explains, "divines that the great secret will never be apprehended but incorporated in his very substance. He has to make himself a part of the mystery, live *in* it as well as with it. Acceptance is the solution: it is an art, not an egotistical performance on the part of the intellect. Through art, then, one finally establishes contact with reality: that is the great discovery" (*Sexus* 213). Miller's gutter-dandy is Dionysus framed, a living artwork.

Tropic of Cancer is both a record of Miller's immediate post-conversion activity--of a spirit's newfound freedom--and a flagrantly rhetorical attempt to convert others. It is an "experience-book" in the subversive Foucauldian sense, an autobiographical fiction in

which "Henry Miller"[14] rips away at the illusions of technocratic, bureaucratic social order to reveal the deeper, transformative realities which lay bubbling beneath its surface: the *world qua world*. "Standing in the midst of reeking humanity," writes Hassan of the novel's author-narrator, "Miller suddenly steps aside and apart, knowing that true artists and visionaries alike are condemned by their race. He belongs . . . with the monsters of creation" (64). *Cancer* 's pages thus vibrate with unexpurgated descriptions of activities of the Monster, juxtaposed with the philosophical wisdom of the Sage. The book's "prodigious" power to disturb and provoke remains undiminished: *Tropic of Cancer*--and Miller's fiction in general--remain for the most part "untouchable, " marginal even in the view of supposedly enlightened academic "liberals" of the present day who nevertheless traffic in terms like "transgression" constantly.[15] But then again, perhaps this is only fitting for a novel which is described by its author as "not a book, in the ordinary sense of the word," but "a prolonged insult, a gob of spit in the face of Art, a kick in the pants to God, Man, Destiny, Time, Love, Beauty" (*Cancer* 2), a *total contestation*, in Foucauldian terms, of all the usual Platonic concepts by which Western art works have traditionally been evaluated.

The plot-less, picaresque and episodic *Tropic of Cancer* is thus Miller's first Dionysian, *rhizomatic* and *haecceitical* novel, after two misguided attempts to construct the Apollonian, "well-wrought" novel of the learned man, *Crazy Cock* and *Moloch*, failed, leaving the writer suicidally depressed, a man at the psychic limit. "I had all the vices of the educated man," Miller reveals in "Reflections On Writing." "I had to learn to think, feel and see in a totally new fashion, in an uneducated way, *in my own way*, which is the hardest thing in the world" (*Wisdom* 29). In the later novel *Sexus* (part of the *Rosy Crucifixion* trilogy which also includes *Nexus* and *Plexus*) he describes this period immediately preceding his "great separation" as one in which he unwittingly had become enmeshed in the socio-economic clockwork envisioned by Nietzsche:

> By a chain of circumstances having nothing to do with reason or intelligence I had become like the others--a drudge. I had the comfortless excuse that by my labors I was supporting a wife and child. That it was a flimsy

> excuse I knew, because if I were to drop dead on the morrow they would go on living somehow or other. To stop everything, and play at being myself, why not? The part of me which was given up to work . . . was the least part of me. . . . The world would only begin to get something of value from me the moment I stopped being a serious member of society and became--*myself*. (206).

Here, as throughout Miller's work, are Nietzschean echoes: "The man who does not wish to belong to the mass," advised the philosopher, "needs only to cease taking himself easily; let him follow his conscience, which calls to him: 'Be your self! All that you are doing, thinking, desiring, is not you yourself'" ("Schopenhauer" 127).

MILLE(R)NARIANISM

> **Simple people are the volatile fluid of the social body. . . . When clerics--who are now known as "intellectuals," because they take pride in the alienation of the mind rather than in the alienation of the body--treat such people as satyrs, brutes and monsters scarcely emerged from animality, as a natural chaos destined to be dominated, ordered and purified by the combined intelligence of God and his clergy, they are making the Church into the agent of a kind of alchemy . . . Surely this represents an absolute recognition . . . of the *materia prima*, the natural matter in which the human and the inhuman are intermingled.**
>
> **--Raoul Vaneigem**
>
> **
>
> **I've always fought against 'knowledge,' against intellectuals. That's what's important. In my opinion, intelligence alone leads nowhere and intellectuals can never be certain of anything. . . . They talk as if they 'know' but they don't know--at least I don't think so. Whereas a very simple man who is, let's say, rather religious in temperament, can have that certainty. And for me it's a marvelous thing to meet human beings like that.**
>
> **--Henry Miller**

As *Cancer* opens, we find its protagonist, Henry Miller, in "the fall of my second year in Paris," impoverished and "dead." Yet this state is, paradoxically, not a cause for

despair, but instead for exhilaration, as is expressed in the book's infamous declaration, "I have no money, no resources, no hopes. I am the happiest man alive." The death in question, rather than the corporeal demise usually associated with the term, instead refers to the author's psychic apocalypse: the experiential death of the inculcated abstract mental concepts around which society is ordered (Foucault's "power"), the destruction of the Platonic ideals that he was brought up to believe in and to apply to himself. "A year ago, six months ago," he writes, "I thought I was an artist. I no longer think about it, I *am*. Everything that was literature has fallen from me. There are no more books to be written, thank God" (3). In *Tropic of Cancer*, the first stage of the gutter-dandy's *destructuralist* journey--the *great separation*, the unlearning and stripping away of the bourgeois value system, the implosion of the ego, the apocalyptic *depowerment* of the self--has already taken place, and Miller is now one with the very flux of existence, a primal being:

> It seemed to me that the great calamity had already manifested itself, that I could be no more truly alone than at this very moment. I made up my mind that I would hold onto nothing, that I would expect nothing, that henceforth I would live as an animal, a beast of prey, a rover, a plunderer. . . . At the extreme limits of his spiritual being man finds himself again naked as a savage. When he finds God, as it were, he has been picked clean: he is a skeleton. One must burrow into life again in order to put on flesh. The word must become flesh. . . . (98)

The word must become flesh.[16] The thematic movement of *Tropic of Cancer* is from the abstraction of language back into life, a progression directly antithetical to that usually witnessed in modern art, which tries to convert and subsume experience into all-encompassing symbols--Time, Art, Beauty and so on--and metaphors. "My understanding of the meaning of a book is that the book itself disappears from sight, that it is chewed alive, digested and incorporated into the system as flesh and blood which in turn creates new spirit and reshapes the world," Miller explains (*Capricorn* 221) . This notion, says Falck, represents a true POST-modernism, one which recognizes that "all truth is carnal, and that Energy is from the Body is the true meaning of the word made flesh" (170). To go from the word back into life is for Situationist author Raoul Vaneigem tantamount to

chucking off centuries of servitude: "Theology (the language of the gods) and philosophy (the language of men) are both moments in a single progression," he writes. "They are both nothing more than ways of abstracting life. Thus spiritual and temporal power vie with one another in order to carry out one goal: to perpetuate slavery." For Vaneigem (as for Miller), "words only have importance in life where they are forgotten and only have charm at the moment when they give way to the eloquent silence of the gestures of love" (45-6).

Paradoxically, Miller's forward-looking, POST-modern (as opposed to post-MODERN) philosophy here also links him to the millenarian Brethren of Free Spirit and related Gnostic sects of the Middle Ages,[17] from the author/protagonist's usual state of voluntary poverty ("I want to prevent as many men as possible from pretending that they have to do this or that because they must earn a living. *It is not true*. . . . Every man who voluntarily starves to death jams another cog in the automatic process" [*Capricorn* 307]), to his insistence that the key to human "enlightenment" lay in what Brown calls "the Resurrection of the Body," a Dionysian state in which the human subject becomes "polymorphously perverse, delighting in that full life of the body which it now fears" (*Life* 308). The Brethren of the Free Spirit in fact held that this was itself a state of holiness: for them, "heaven and hell were merely states of the soul in this world and . . . there was no afterlife of punishment or reward. To have the Holy Spirit incarnated in oneself and to receive the revelation which that brought--that was to rise from the dead and to possess heaven" (Cohn 173). Often, as shown previously, the members of the Free Spirit strove to reach this "sovereign" state through a disavowal of materialism and subsequent embrace of an anarchic, extreme brand of hedonism. The result is a consciousness "strong enough to endure full life," transformed from a primarily Apollonian to a primarily Dionysian form, a "consciousness which does not observe the limit, but overflows" (Brown, *Life* 308). "Yes, . . . I too love everything that flows: rivers, sewers, lava, semen, blood, bile, words, sentences," declares Miller, embracing the *prodigiousness* of the monster (*Cancer* 257).

One infamous Free Spirit tract in particular, *A Single Eye All Light, no Darkness; or*

Light and Darkness One by English "Ranter" Laurence Clarkson (alternatively, Claxton), uncannily anticipates many of *Cancer*'s themes. For Clarkson, the man who was capable of uniting all binary oppositions within himself--light/darkness, good/evil, God/Satan--had attained enlightenment, and was consequently sovereign over all things.[18] Especially relevant for Miller's work are Clarkson's views on the resurrection of the body. In the Ranter's teachings, the body, whose essence is that of the primordial, chthonian ooze of primary nature, is threatened by the conceptual abstraction Christians call heaven, which, he says, "would become a hell to the Body, for after laid in the grave, it is buried in its heaven, glory and happiness, where it shall rot and consume into its own nature for ever and ever" (Cohn 315). True heaven, then, lies not in the static, arid mental *abstraction* of a "final home for the spirit," but instead in the promise of the everlasting *activity* of the decomposing body within the churning, roiling conundrum of primary nature. The implication of this, writes Clarkson, is that enlightened men and women should strive to enact this "holy" bodily activity while alive, augmenting and becoming one with the processes of nature itself, uniting all duality ("light and darkness one") within their very beings:

> So in that light I do declare, that the corrupt senses, must put on incorruption, thy mortal apprehension must put on immortality, that whereas before thou was alive to five, and dead to one, now thou shalt be dead to five, and alive to one, that lovely pure one who beholds nothing but purity . . . let it be under what title soever, thou art risen from title to act, from act to power, from power to his name, and that only one name, pure and undefiled; so that now thou art of purer eys than to behold any iniquity, so that Devil is God, Hell is Heaven, Sin Holiness, Damnation Salvation, this and only this is the first Resurrection.
>
> I say, till flesh be made Spirit, and Spirit flesh, so not two, but one, thou art in perfect bondage . . . so that now whatsoever I act, is not in relation to the Title, to the Flesh, but that Eternity in me; So that with me, all Creatures are but one creature, and this is my form, the Representative of the whole Creation: So that see what I can, act what I will, all is but one most sweet and lovely. Therefore my deer ones consider, that without act, no life; without life, no

> perfection, no eternal peace and freedom indeed, in power, which is the everlasting Majesty, ruling, conquering, and damning all into its self, without end, for ever. (315-316)

Clarkson's formula: bodily (sexual) activity and experience lead to a sovereignty achieved through a deterritorialization[19] of all the senses, which merge into one luminous, Dionysian consciousness: enLIGHTenment. In this doctrine of the Free Spirit, the adept is "illumined by that essential light beside which all created light is darkness and obfuscation. One can be, according to one's wish, Father or Son or Holy Spirit" (174-5). In the tellingly entitled "The Prose of Actaeon," the postmodern gnostic Foucault also rhetorically propounds a similar apocalyptic version of this millenarian thought-line: "What if . . . the Other were the Same?" he asks. "And the Temptation were not one episode of the great antagonism, but the meager insinuation of the Double? What if the duel took place inside a mirror's space? What if eternal History (of which our own is but the visible form, soon to be effaced) were not simply always the same, but the identity of this Same--at once the imperceptible displacement and the grip of the nondissociable?" (xxii). For Foucault, it is *the prose which leads to action*, a rhetorical literature of the "transgressive word," which leads to an "enlightenment" wherein the subject-object divide is finally bridged, where

> one is dealing not with the profound, continuous beings of reminiscence, but with beings consigned, like those of Nietzsche, to profound forgetfulness, to the oblivion which makes possible, in "re-collection," the sudden appearance of the Same. Everything in them is breaking apart, bursting, presenting itself and then withdrawing in the same instant; they might well be living or dead, it matters little; oblivion in them oversees the Identical. They signify nothing; they simulate themselves. (xxx)

Miller's works enact a very similar millennial *philosophia*, projecting "an amorphous and omnivorous ego, a kind of pre-artistic consciousness" which likens to "the diffused sensuality of the child," Freud's state of "polymorphous perversity" (Hassan 83-4).[20] In *Black Spring* (the second part of Miller's initial post-enlightenment trilogy which also includes the two *Tropics*), Miller's stated views of the *active*, "holy" body in fact sound

remarkably close to those of Clarkson:

> You might think there was a limit to what the body could endure, but there's none. So high does the body stand above suffering that when everything has been killed there remains a toenail or a clump of hair which sprouts and it's these immortal sprouts which remain forever and ever. So that even when you are absolutely dead and forgotten some microscopic part of you still sprouts, and be the past future so dead there's still some little part alive and sprouting. [21] (203-3)

Like Clarkson, Miller believes that it is through the "resurrection of the body" that one unites all duality in the form of The Same, framing the flux of primary nature and attaining a true sovereignty: "I am a man of God and a man of the Devil." he declares. "To each his due. Nothing eternal, nothing absolute. Before me always the image of the body, our triune god of penis and testicles. On the right, God the Father; on the left and hanging a little lower, God the Son; and between and above them the Holy Ghost" (*Cancer* 24-5). Like many adepts of the Free Spirit, who viewed this gnostic "resurrection" or "enlightenment" as a not only an equaling but a *surpassing* of the sovereignty of God (Cohn 175-6), Miller sees himself as having attained the ultimate form of power: "It is no sacred heart that inspires me, no Christ I am thinking of," he explains, but instead "something better than a Christ, something bigger than a heart, something beyond God Almighty . . . MYSELF, *I am a man*. That to me seems sufficient" (*Cancer* 24).

SEX, WORK, ART

> **There was another thing I heartily disbelieved in--*work*. Work, it seemed to me even at the threshold of life, is an activity reserved for the dullard. It is the very opposite of creation, which is play, and which just because it has no *raison d'être* other than itself is the supreme motivating power in life.**
>
> **--Henry Miller**
>
> **********
>
> **To live for the moment, no longer to heed these instincts for survival; this is dying to oneself, or at least it is living with death as an equal. Each man prolongs**

> **through his whole life the effects of his attachment to himself. He is continuously bound to courses of action aimed at a valid result on the plane of individual existence. In so far as he is willing to enslave the present to the future he is self-satisfied, conceited, and mediocre and prevented by selfishness from approaching the life . . . called divine and which may also be more broadly called sacred.**
>
> **--Bataille**

The question which Miller continually poses, both implicitly and explicitly, in *Tropic of Cancer*, and indeed throughout his work, is whether the "sacred" activity of the body will be put into play freely, in the moment and in any direction ("I am the Chancre, the crab, which moves sideways and backwards and forwards at will" [Miller, *Black* 29]), according to one's desires, or will instead become enmeshed in a state of continual, linear servitude, from birth to death. In this regard, three main themes come into play: sex--especially the physical *act* of sex--work, and finally art, which interacts with the previous two areas, and is usually evaluated by Miller according to its proximity to each. For Miller, art is only valuable when it merges with the procreative, prodigious *flow* of existence, becoming a means of sovereignty and an invitation to conversion. Otherwise it is just more *work*, another static "product" of man's enslavement. Accordingly, he begins *Cancer* with a quotation from the letters of Emerson, who predicts that "novels will give way, by and by, to diaries or autobiographies" whose success will be measured by the writer's ability "to choose among what he calls his experiences that which is really his experience, and how to record the truth truly."

Miller's attempt to realize the truth of his own existence leads to a *writing of the blood*, the "recording of all which is omitted in books" which ultimately leads to "the triumph of the individual over art" (*Cancer* 11). In a thematically related essay, "Creative Death," he laments the lopsided triumph of the Apollonian element in modernist art: art may indeed strive to create an order in which the terrifying flux of existence is arrested, but the unfortunate result is that "in the attempt to defeat death man has been inevitably obliged to defeat life, for the two are inextricably related" (*Wisdom* 6). The Dionysian

artist, Miller asserts, doesn't labouriously strive toward some imagined great accomplishment in the future, but instead, "is always a-historical. *He accepts Time absolutely*, as Whitman says . . . in the sense that any moment, every moment, may be the all; for the artist there is nothing but the present, the eternal here and now" (3). The kind of sovereignty attained by the Apollonian artist such as Joyce, who painstakingly constructs an abstract kingdom over which he alone may rule, Miller deems ego-driven, hollow and incomplete. One must go further:

> In the rush upward the "individual" aspect of one's being was the imperative, the only obsession. But at the summit, when the limits have been felt and perceived, there unfolds the grand perspective and one recognizes the similitude of surrounding beings, the inter-relationship of all forms and laws of being . . . the oneness of life.
>
> And so the most creative type--the individual artist type--which had shot up the highest and with the greatest variety of expression, so much as to seem "divine," . . . must now, in order to preserve the very elements of creation in him, convert the doctrine, or the obsession of individuality, into a common, collective ideology. This is the real meaning of the Master-Exemplar, of the great religious figures who have dominated human life from the beginning. (10)

Miller's POST-modern sage is thus he who refuses to subordinate the present in service of the future or defer gratification, and who "fundamentally [has] no desire to become a useful member of society." The societal clockwork mechanism runs on and on, yet its action is empty, paradoxically *devoid* of life: "Everybody and everything is a part of life, but when they have all been added together, still somehow it is not life." Miller cries. "*When is it life*, I ask myself, and *why not now*?" (*Capricorn* 102). In *Tropic of Capricorn*, Miller's post-enlightenment recounting of his pre-enlightenment times, it is the figure of Roy Hamilton, functioning here as the epitome of the sage, who breaks on through the straitjacket of abstraction artfully to unite thought with action. Meeting Hamilton, Miller writes,

> For the first time I was talking to a man who got behind the meaning of words and went to the very essence of things. I felt that I was talking to a philosopher, not a philosopher as

> I had encountered through books, but a man who philosophized constantly--*and who lived this philosophy which he expounded*. That is to say, he had no theory at all, except to penetrate to the very essence of things, and, in the light of each fresh revelation to so live his life that there would be a minimum of discord between the truths which were revealed to him and the exemplification of these truths in action. (147).

What sets Hamilton apart is his ability to unite theory with practice: "he was the first mystic I had ever encountered who knew how to keep his feet on the ground," Miller writes, a man whose imagination was translated into action in the *world qua world*, as demonstrated in his invention of a drill which "was badly needed for the oil industry and from which he later made a fortune" (148). Yet Hamilton is not attached to the results of such actions, being spiritually emancipated from the ties of the material world; as such, he is regarded by those still held in its thrall as a "strange" person, a "bad influence," and a "crackpot," all modern pseudonyms for the monster. As Miller describes their relationship in terms which recall Rimbaud's remarks to Paul Demeny,[22] it becomes clear that Hamilton's true "gift" is the gift of conversion:

> By comparison I was very bookish, intellectual, and worldly in a wrong way. But almost immediately I discarded this side of my nature and allowed myself to bask in the warm, immediate light which his profound and natural intuition of things created. To come into his presence gave me the sensation of being undressed, or rather peeled, for it was much more than mere nakedness which he demanded of the person he was talking to . . . he addressed himself to a me whose existence I only dimly suspected. . . . He was appealing, in other words, to the germ of the self, to the being who would eventually outgrow the naked personality, the synthetic individuality. . . . Hamilton opened my eyes and gave me new values, and though later I was to lose the vision which he had bequeathed me, nevertheless I could never again see the world, or my friends, as I had seen them prior to his coming. Hamilton altered me profoundly, as only a rare book, a rare personality, a rare experience, can alter one. (149)

In *Tropic of Cancer*, it is Miller himself who takes on the monster-sage role of Roy

Hamilton, overtly seeking to alter the world and /or his readership through a merger of art and life not in a literary "novel," but in a book of experience. "Still I can't get it out of my mind what a discrepancy there is between ideas and living," he laments. "A permanent dislocation exists, though we try to cover the two with a bright awning." Thus, Miller's prescriptive task is to lead us on a gutter-dandy's trawl through life at the visceral level, tearing away this superficially shiny Apollonian awning to reveal the potentially transformative underlying realities: "Ideas have to be wedded to action; if there is no sex, no vitality in them, there is no action. Ideas are related to living: liver ideas, kidney ideas, interstitial ideas, etc." (242). In contrast to the static literary "work," then, *Tropic of Cancer*, and indeed all of Miller's "fiction," is a bold move "to get off the gold standard of literature . . . to present a resurrection of the emotions, to depict the conduct of a human being . . . in the grip of delirium . . . to paint a pre-Socratic being, a creature part goat, part Titan . . . to erect a world on the basis of the *omphalos*, not on an abstract idea nailed to a cross" (243). As we have seen, this is a move which represents the *end* of the modernist aesthetic of hyper-abstraction rather than its continuation, an authentic move back to the "body" of experience so often theorized but so seldom enacted by many supposed "postmodernist" writers. "Society must heed the *vision* of the artist, " Hassan writes of Miller's rhetorical theory of art, "heed his message; otherwise, the artist becomes merely a caterer, refining our appetite for cultural consumption" (*Literature* 54).

Miller's "war on art," then, is really a war on a certain *form* of art which has as its end something *outside of* or *apart from* direct action upon man. Welch D. Everman perceptively notes that in *Tropic of Cancer's* clarion call against art "we come upon an apparent contradiction," as Miller's attack "comes from within literature itself, from within the text of a book . . . that would kill the book by way of the book." However, he contends, upon looking closer, we discern that what Miller actually has in mind is "an art that would break down the barriers between art and anti-art, between art and life. The artist would be the one whose art would escape the limits of its own conventions and open out onto the world, where art and life would be identical. Art would become itself by ceasing to be itself, as the artist would become the artist not by way of production but by

way of loss" (329-330). In this "anti-aesthetic," Everman concludes, "there is something . . . that we might want to call, for the lack of a better term, postmodern" (331).

STREET LIFE

> **These are thoughts born of the street. . . . In the street I expose myself to the destructive, disintegrating elements that surround me. I let everything wreak its own havoc with me. I bend over to spy on the secret processes, *to obey* rather than to command.**
>
> **--Henry Miller**
>
> **********
>
> **Living matter in the state of sexual exuberance manifests itself among human beings inversely to the amount of power they have in the social and economic organization.**
>
> **--Raoul Vaneigem**

Tropic of Cancer's rhetorical advocacy of *depowerment*, of a sovereign state of art as life attained through loss, dovetails with the thought of Georges Bataille. Like Miller, Bataille rejects the bookish accumulation of abstract "knowledge" as a subservient activity which obstructs the desired realization of immanent sovereignty: "To know is always to strive, to work; it is always a servile operation," he declares, "indefinitely resumed, indefinitely repeated. Knowledge is never sovereign; to be sovereign it would have to occur in a moment. But the moment remains outside, short of or beyond, all knowledge." Knowledge, explains Bataille, is always tied to some imagined resolution or end in the future,[23] the proverbial carrot on a stick whose operations distract us from the ultimate goal, the kingdom which is nigh and within: "We know nothing absolutely, of the moment. In short, we nothing about what ultimately concerns us, what *is supremely* [souverainement] *important to us*. The operation leaves off as soon as sovereignty is its object" (*Accursed* 3: 202-3).

As does Miller, Bataille directly opposes the middle-class system--characterized by material accumulation, deferment of pleasure, investment in the "future," and the elevation of work to the status of religion--to the operations of *loss* which lead to sovereignty: "Consciousness of the moment is not truly such, is not sovereign, except in *unknowing*,"

Bataille contends. "Only by canceling, or at least neutralizing, every operation of knowledge within ourselves are we in the moment, without fleeing it. This is possible in the grip of strong emotions that shut off, interrupt or override the flow of thought" (203). Bataille opposes man's *animal* (Dionysian), sexual nature to his *human* (Apollonian) nature, the latter characterized by his capacity for work. Man's primary, animal state of being, he contends, is fundamentally opposed to the workaday world he has created for himself: "If the animal enters the cycle of useful activity as a means and not as an end it is reduced to the status of a thing," he explains. "Yet this reduction denies its real nature." Indeed, it is man's animal function, so often bracketed and hidden, "thought of as filthy or beastly," which provides "the greatest barrier to the reduction of man to the level of the thing." The animal within, then, is the key to sovereignty,

> but this is only evident at a second glance; man is first of all a working animal, submitting to work and thence obliged to renounce some of his exuberance. There is nothing arbitrary about sexual restrictions: each man has only a certain amount of energy and if he devotes some of it to work he has to reduce his sexual energy by that much. So humanity, seen from the human, anti-animal standpoint of work, is that which reduces us to things and our animal nature preserves the values of our subjective existence. (*Erotism* 158)

Bataille's equation: ***humanity servility***.[24] Furthermore, he significantly adds, it is "in the underworld alone, where no work is done and where behaviour in general adds up to a denial of humanity" that we today find this principle of sovereignty is put into practice (158-9). He draws a parallel between the European aristocracies of days past and America's underclass of today, which sets itself against the world of the bourgeoisie, the "single dominant class from the beginning [which] is hardly ever idle" (160). Here, then, lay the roots of the American version of the dandy, the gutter-dandy, who emanates from this inversion of high and low cultures connected by his propensity for "use-less" behaviour: "What is the ruling class but a lucky set of thieves, secure in the mass assent of the population?" Bataille asks (160n).

"By what he calls the better part of his nature, man has been betrayed, that is all," Miller laments in Bataillean fashion in *Tropic of Cancer* (98). In one of the book's key passages,

he further elucidates upon this theorem, fashioning a kind of "anti-creed," the "rebel without a cause" stance which is central not only to his own work, but to the work of those who will follow in his footsteps:

> Once I thought that to be human was the highest aim a man could have, but I see now that it was meant to destroy me. Today I am proud to say that I am *inhuman*, that I belong not to men and governments, that I have nothing to do with creeds and principles . . . I am inhuman! I say it with a mad, hallucinated grin, and I will keep on saying it though it rain crocodiles. . . . Side by side with the human race there runs another race of beings, the inhuman ones, the race of artists who, goaded by unknown impulses . . . [from] the dead compost and the inert slag . . . breed a song that contaminates. I see this other race of individuals ransacking the universe, turning everything upside down. . . . And anything that falls short of this frightening spectacle, anything less shuddering, less terrifying, less mad, less intoxicated, is not art. . . . The rest is human. The rest belongs to life and lifelessness. (254-5)

Bataille's formulations help situate Miller's gutter-dandyism in its proper context: his goal in "contaminating" his readers is rhetorically to initiate the throwing off of the shackles of "human nature," the important first step in the crucial search for "enlightenment." Miller's attacks on art are then more specifically defined as attacks on art "works," the isolated, abstract products of servile "humanity"; the true artist is instead he who employs the "human" element in the service of the *materia prima*, the animal part of his being, stylizing it, making it a conscious part of his everyday life, no longer bracketed or repressed, but totally accepted: a Dionysian consciousness. He must then get beyond or beneath the ever-accumulating mountain of contradictory "facts," the information overload of the technological media-age with its accompanying sentimentalized middle-class moral context, invoking instead a process of *loss* which requires that you first be "crushed . . . your conflicting points of view annihilated. You have to be wiped out as a human being in order to be born again as an individual," Miller explains. "You have to get beyond pity in order to feel from the very roots of your being" (*Capricorn* 35). Foucault, referring to Diogenes' infamous act of masturbation in the marketplace, called this defiant, asocial state

of being the "*bios philosophicos* [which] is the animality of being human, renewed as a challenge, practiced as an exercise–and thrown in the face of others as a scandal" (qtd. in J. Miller 363). A very good description of both *Tropic of Cancer* and *Tropic of Capricorn*.

This last point also helps to contextualize the "gutter" aspect of the Anglo-American dandy. For, as Bataille points out, in our modern, ostensibly democratic age, as opposed to the era of Sade and his aristocratic libertines, it is in the underclass where we find the license to live more closely to one's animal nature. This situation is intensified in North America, where gradations of the dominant middle-class reign supreme (surely CNN magnate Ted Turner and Microsoft maven Bill Gates, despite their vast wealth, are merely examples of the middle-class values and hyper techno-capitalism taken to the limit), and where the equivalent of European aristocratic license is only found in the culture of the street, of the gutter. Miller, rejecting his lower middle-class roots, explicitly links the gutter-dandy's process of enlightenment--a process which is reminiscent of the *ascesis of apathy* discussed earlier in connection with Sade--with the criminal milieu, cast here as a contemporary version of the medieval Brethren of the Free Spirit united by a *sovereign* realization of and constant contact with instinctual animal nature:

> Now all my faculties become alert. I am the most suave, silky, cunning animal--and I am at the same time what might be called a holy man. I know how to avoid work, how to avoid entangling relationships, how to avoid pity, sympathy, bravery, and all other pitfalls. . . . In this condition I have always fallen in with thieves and rogues and murderers, and how kind and gentle they have been with me! As though they were my brothers. And are they not, indeed? Have I not been guilty of every crime, and suffered for it? And is it not because of my crimes that I am united so closely to my fellowman? Always, when I see a light of recognition in the other person's eyes, I am aware of this secret bond. It is only the just whose eyes never light up. It is the just who have never known the secret of human fellowship. It is the just who are committing the crimes against man, the just who are the real monsters. . . . I prefer the thieves, the rogues, the murderers. . . . (*Capricorn* 229). [25]

As an artist, "Miller sees himself as a Patagonian, a literary gangster," at war with the

comparatively genteel, elitist conventions of high modernism (Hassan, *Literature* 29). Miller's Anglo-American version of the dandy therefore takes a more overt swing toward the democratic, in line with the dictates of Emerson, who counsels that the "literature of the poor, the feelings of the child, the philosophy of the street, the meaning of household life" are, in a techno-scientific era, the most valuable literary topics (68-9). In such a "blood-warm" writing are the signs of a "new vigor, when the extremities are made active [a dictum Miller *truly* takes to heart], when currents of warm life run into the hands and feet." For Emerson (as for Miller), the key is a writing which, far from constructing obscure, elaborate, alienating structures, instead spiritualizes and redeems the *moment*: "I ask not for the great, the remote, the romantic. . . . I embrace the common . . . the familiar, the low. Give me insight into to-day, and you may have the antique and future worlds" (69).

THE LAND OF FUCK

Miller also presages the thematic rather loosely termed "sex, drugs, and rock and roll" which becomes a mainstay, with varying emphases on specific elements of this Dionysian equation, in the Anglo-American gutter-dandies who appear in his wake. For Miller, man's sexual experience forms the "nexus" of the *destructuralist* spiral, the link in a constant process of destruction and renewal in which the subject "seizes power" over the self and rebuilds it from scratch (as in Foucault's "experience of the author-function"). "The task which the artist sets himself," he explains, "is to overthrow existing values, to make of the chaos about him an order which is his own, to sow strife and ferment so that by the emotional release those who are dead may be restored to life." The *destructuralist* artist, Miller continues, "who would create order . . . because he is imbued with will . . . must go again and again to the stake and the gibbet" (*Cancer* 253), returning again and again to the void-state he semi-comically terms "The Land of Fuck," so-named because "that was the only name which might be given to it . . . it was more than fuck and by fucking one only began to approach it" (*Capricorn* 192). Described as a "*terrain vague*," this is an emptied-out, spent post-coital state similar to a waking dream: a "discordant fullness, a crowded ghostly world in which the soul goes reconnoitering" (198).

In The Land of Fuck, Miller reaches the very limit between being and non-being, experiencing the enlightened paradox of the self as NO-THING: "At every egress there was written in big letters ANNIHILATION," he writes. "I had achieved that state of vacuity so earnestly desired by certain devout members of esoteric cults. I was no more. *I was not even a personal hard-on*" (202). In the midst of this diffuse realm, Miller experiences a revelation: the world is entirely animate, *active*: "everything is sentient, even at the lowest stage of consciousness." "God" is now seen to be not some abstract entity existing *apart* from the body (see also, "Art"), but rather an accessible force inherent *within it* at all times: "At the very bottom of the ladder, *chez* the spermatozoa, there is the same condition of bliss as at the top, *chez* God. God is the summation of all the spermatozoa come to full consciousness. Between the bottom and the top there is no stop, no halfway station" (204).

Miller's realization of "The Land of Fuck" is Bataille's "practice of joy before death" in action, an experiential form of mysticism—or perhaps more accurately an *anti-mysticism*—in which there "is no reason to link any presuppositions concerning an alleged deeper reality with a joy that has no object other than immediate life" (*Visions* 236). It is the destination of the POST-modern sage, whose "shameless, indecent saintliness" alone, Bataille concludes in a flourish which could be in direct reference to Miller's work,

> can lead to a sufficiently happy *loss of self*. "Joy before death means that life can be glorified from root to summit. It robs of meaning everything that is an intellectual or moral *beyond*. . . . It is an apotheosis of that which is perishable . . . of flesh and alcohol as well as of the trances of mysticism. The religious forms it rediscovers are the naive forms that antedate the intrusion of a servile morality: it renews the kind of tragic jubilation that man "is" as soon as he stops behaving like a cripple, glorifying necessary work and letting himself be emasculated by the fear of tomorrow. (237)

The Dionysian realm invoked by Miller's Land of Fuck, achieved through the practice of joy before death, is for Foucault "a philosophy of nonpositive affirmation," an integral part of the principle of total socio-cultural *contestation* which must begin on the individual level: "Rather than being a process of thought for denying existences or values,

contestation is the act which carries them all to their limits, and from there, to the Limit where an ontological decision achieves its end; to contest is to proceed until one reaches the empty core where being achieves its limit and where the limit defines being" (*Language* 36). Paradoxically, this individualistic inner experience, "interior and sovereign" (32), leads at its apotheosis to "an opening where its being surges forth . . . where its being surges forth, but where it is already completely lost, completely overflowing itself, emptied of itself to the point where it becomes an absolute void--an opening which is communication" (43).

The choice as Miller sees it is Dionysian (active) communication versus Apollonian (static) death: "This is why he gives to the Dionysian theme such importance. . . . The soul sings when the flesh is redeemed. The holy orgy is both destruction and renewal. . . . Therefore the only theme permissible, or possible, to the writer is the Dionysian theme" (Hassan, *Literature* 54). "To put it the simple way," Miller says, "everybody becomes a healer the moment he forgets about himself." Continually to live "self-consciously" (post-MODERNLY) is to

> always fail to cope with the world. It is not necessary to die in order to come at last face to face with reality. Reality is here and now, everywhere, gleaming through very reflection that meets the eye. . . . Everybody is a neurotic, down to the last man and woman. . . . To be cured we must rise from our graves and throw off the cerements of the dead. Nobody can do it for another--it is a private affair which is best done collectively. We must die as egos and be born again in the swarm, not separate and self-hypnotized, but individual and related. (*Sexus* 337)

The thoughts expressed here are echoed rather remarkably by Foucault, for whom enlightenment constitutes "both . . . a process in which men participate collectively and . . . an act of courage to be accomplished personally" ("Enlightenment" 35). Here, "men are at once elements and agents of a single process," the spiraling enlightenment process of *destructuralism* (35). Emerging from this process, Miller's reborn, emancipated (under)man takes the form of a polymorphous, rhizomatic, ***haecceitical*** being: "*New beings*, yes! We have need of new beings still. We can do without the telephone, without

the automobile . . . but we can't do without new beings" (Miller, *Capricorn* 293). In his journey to the limit of the inherited/imposed, worldly ego, a trip which takes "the form a of a spiral which no simple infraction can exhaust" (Foucault, *Language* 35), the protagonist "Henry Miller," not so much an "author" as "literary sage," engages in what Deleuze and Guattari call the "task of *schizoanalysis* . . . that of tirelessly taking apart egos and their presuppositions; liberating the prepersonal singularities they enclose and repress; mobilizing the flows they would be capable of transmitting, receiving, or intercepting; establishing always further and more sharply the schizzes and breaks well below conditions of identity; and assembling the desiring-machines that countersect everyone and group everyone with others. For everyone is a little group. . ." (262).

THEATRE OF THE OBSCENE

> **All violent manifestations of radiant power have an obscene glow when visualized through the refractive lens of the ego. All conversions occur in the speed of a split second. Liberation implies the sloughing off of chains, the bursting of the cocoon.**
>
> **-Henry Miller**
>
> **
>
> **One who has only risen to the curbstone dares not return to the gutter. Only the higher man can metamorphose . . . all the way. He knows he is circumspect and cultured the greater part of his life. So a transition to animalism can be entertained without compunction.**
>
> **--Anton Szandor LaVey**

Examined in the above context, the much-remarked upon "obscene," ultra-vivid imagistic descriptions of sex in Miller's books--such as the following excerpt from *Tropic of Capricorn* in which Miller, utilizing a neo-Sadean *ascesis of apathy* by employing "scientific," Apollonian control in the service of Dionysian, animal force, approaches The Land of Fuck--are thus his attempts to "make a spectacle of himself," to turn his life into art and in the process reveal the transformative truth of the *world qua world* to the reader:

> Anyway, it was only a few hours since I had said to Maxie in the bathhouse that I would like to take a look at his sister's

> quim, and here it was now smack up against me, sopping wet and throwing out one squirt after another. If she had been fucked before she had never been fucked properly, that's a cinch. And I myself was never in such a fine cool collected scientific frame of mind as now lying on the floor of the vestibule right under Maxie's nose, pumping it into the private, sacred and extraordinary quim of his sister Rita. I could have held it in indefinitely-- it was incredible how detached I was and yet thoroughly aware of every quiver and jolt she made. . . . I thought so hard and fast between orgasms that my cock must have grown another inch or two. Finally I decided to make an end of it by turning her over and back-scuttling her. . . . "Oh yes, oh yes, do it, do it!" she gibbered, and with that I got really excited. I had hardly slipped it into her when I felt it coming, one of those long, agonizing spurts from the tip of the spinal column. I shoved it in so deep that I felt as if something had given way. We fell over, exhausted, the both of us, and panted like dogs. (213-214)

Obscene? *Pornographic*? Perhaps, but we must keep in mind the words of Emerson, who asserts that there "is no object so foul that intense light will not make it beautiful" (14). The writer who recognizes and represents the beauty of the *world qua world* "is a sovereign," an "emperor in his own right," one who is aware of the prescriptive, rhetorical function of his communicative art: namely, that 'words are also actions, and actions are a kind of words." He is not only a sovereign, then, but a shaman, a holy man, a sage: "the true and only doctor" (245). Extending the tradition of The Great Subculture into North America, Miller seeks to help restore his reader/patients back to the true "life" which his diagnosis indicates is rapidly being subsumed by The Air-Conditioned Nightmare of life-less mass passivity of which his homeland is the primary producer. Fully to realize the animal state, to purposefully "pant like dogs," is--as seen also in the thought of Bataille--tantamount to throwing off the chains of servile "humanity" in order to recover one's originary sovereign nature.

The Land of Fuck *is* Artaud's "fragile, fluctuating center which forms can never reach," the interzone where one becomes diffuse and "prodigious," shucking off the imposed restraints of "civilization" and commencing the task of self-creation from the *inside-out*,

fearlessly making himself master of what does not yet exist and bringing it into being while eschewing the passive role of a mere recording organism (*Theater* 13). From this vantage point, one (re)discovers the dandy's multiplicity of self, the ability to "say Yes and No at the same time . . . [to be] a stevedore in the daytime and a Beau Brummel in the nighttime" (Miller, *Capricorn* 295).[26] As in Brown's dictum that "every person, then, is many persons; a multitude made into one person; a corporate body" (*Love's* 147), the previously monostatic self, now liberated, becomes rhizomatic, a *haecceity*.

Miller's autobiographical novels are thus a "spectacular," kaleidoscopic form of imagistic literary theatre in which experience and fiction merge and mutate, allowing the author to change, while simultaneously, through their form of therapeutic *schizoanalysis*, inviting others to do the same: "I believe that I am rendering back life, enhanced and exalted, to those who read me," he testifies (*On Writing* 194), bringing to mind Foucault's theory that "an experience is, of course, something one has alone, but it cannot have its full impact unless the individual manages to escape from pure subjectivity in such a way that others can--I won't say re-experience it exactly--but at least cross paths with it or retrace it" (*Remarks* 40). Neither "true" nor "false," the Foucauldian experience-book bridges the binary chasm, being both "inscribed" in the transformative flux of existence, yet also simultaneously working "*for* this transformation . . . even if in a small way, [as] an agent" (42). The "autobiographical" work, Miller explains, "is not a transcript of life itself any more than the ["fictional"] novel is. It is a medium of expression in which truth rather than art predominates. But it is not *truth*. It is not for the simple reason that the very problem, the obsession . . . is truth." The experience-book thus finds its value "not for the truth about things but as an expression of this struggle to be free of the obsession for truth" (*Cosmological* 271). "Who ever thought he was writing anything but fiction," echoes Foucault, laying bare the paradox of the experience-book (*Remarks* 33).

Miller's version of this, in typically grand mille(r)narian fashion, is intended as public gesture toward *mass enlightenment*, what Foucault terms "a metamorphosis which isn't simply individual but which has a character accessible to others . . . [an] experience . . . linkable . . . to a collective practice and to a way of thinking" (*Remarks* 38-9). In his much

noted depictions of the obscene, Miller explains, "there is an ulterior motive at work . . . the purpose is to awaken, to usher in a sense of reality." He likens the role of the true artist to that of Zen masters who "never hesitate to resort to any means in order to awaken their disciples," including the performance of "sacrilegious acts" in which the witness is "altered forever." Engaged in this process, the artist himself is also transformed, and "stands among his own obscene objurgations like the conqueror midst the ruins of a devastated city," suddenly aware that "the real nature of the obscene lies in the lust to convert." The enlightenment process is thus paradoxical, in that one must first embrace the obscene, the "low," in order to attain the "high," to become sovereign: "He knocked to awaken," Miller concludes, "but it was himself he awakened" (*On Writing* 186-7).[27] Finally, the enlightened literary artist, who "is only at the vestibule, as it were, at the palace of wisdom," must exchange "his own being for the medium of words" (188). Miller's take (via European predecessors such as Sade and Genet) on the typically dandyesque notion of the artist as a work of art thus becomes the blueprint for the Anglo-American gutter-dandy as he mutates from the literary realm into the omnipresent and omnivorous popular culture of the twentieth-century.

MILLER'S DIONYSIAN CHILDREN

> **The psychopath is a rebel without a cause, an agitator without a slogan, a revolutionary without a program.**
>
> **--Robert Linder**
>
> **********
>
> **. . . the only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars. . . .**
>
> **--Jack Kerouac**

Henry Miller's prototypical Anglo-American gutter-dandy may not have made a great impact on the mainstream North American literary scene--as one of his biographers points out, "Miller is seldom read in schools or colleges, and there is little good academic criticism

on him" (Dearborn 308) [28]--but there can be no doubt of his enormous influence within the Parameters of The Great Subculture, whose (anti)traditions Miller, following Rimbaud's dictates, extends and expands into the New World. "The Beats," observes Gregory Stephenson, "were of the first and the few in the postwar period to express disenchantment with what was to them, in Henry Miller's phrase, an 'air-conditioned nightmare' . . . . [They] were appalled by what they saw as the diminishment of human potential and freedom, the constriction of consciousness, and the insipid systematization of life in the United States" (175). Indeed, in the loose conglomeration of writers lumped under the banner of the "Beat Generation" and its offshoots especially, Miller's influence is pervasive. "Strange Anglo-American literature," write Deleuze and Guattari, citing Miller and his most influential offspring, beat icon Jack Kerouac, as examples: "Men who know how to leave, to cause flows to circulate. . . . They overcome a limit, they shatter a wall, the capitalist barrier. And of course they fail to complete the process, they never cease failing to do so" (132-3). This Dionysian line of Anglo-American writers, which also includes William S. Burroughs, Alexander Trocchi and Charles Bukowski, while varying in great degrees stylistically, all take their cue from Miller's "breakthrough," his peculiarly American version of Euro gutter-dandies like Rimbaud and Genet.

JACK KEROUAC: ON THE *DESTRUCTURALIST* ROAD

> **Dean: "You see, man, you get older and troubles pile up. Someday you and me'll be coming down an alley together at sundown and looking in the cans to see."**
>
> **Sal: "You mean we'll end up old bums?"**
>
> **Dean: "Why not, man? Of course we will if we want to and all that. There's no harm ending that way. You spend a whole life of non-interference with the wishes of others, including politicians and the rich, and nobody bothers you and you cut along and make it your own way."**
>
> **--from Jack Kerouac's *On The Road***

Jack Kerouac is of course the man whose name has become synonymous with the Beat Generation, but is perhaps more accurately described as the man who consolidated Miller's

cross-cultural, Euro-American version of the gutter-dandy and placed it in a more specifically North American context. Unlike Miller, who in his Nietzschean "great separation" flees to the homeland of Rimbaud, Baudelaire and Genet to commence the task of *destructuralizing* the self, Kerouac first takes to the streets, highways, jazz bars, and railroad yards of his native continent, "in flight from the sedentary suburbs, from cultural orthodoxy, and the corporate way of life" (Stephenson 175). In Kerouac's defining experience-book *On The Road*, the Beat hunger for limit-experience, for living-in-the-moment "kicks," is thematically expanded from Miller's near-exclusive concentration on the liberational power of sex also to include drugs and music, specifically jazz, which is eventually replaced in this Unholy Subcultural Triumvirate by rock and roll.

HIT THE ROAD, JACK

> **Human destiny wants capricious chance to command; what reason substitutes for the rich vegetation of chance is no longer an adventure to be lived, but is instead the empty and correct solution for the difficulties of existence. . . . For it is human to burn and consume oneself to the point of suicide at the baccarat table. . . . It is, on the contrary, inhuman to abandon life to a chain of useful acts.**
>
> **—Bataille**

To leave, to take off, to "hit the road," to "go," is in Beat parlance the equivalent of Nietzsche's "great separation," signaling the initiation of the *destructuralist* spiral.[29] In *On The Road*, the thinly-veiled autobiographical protagonists, "Sal Paradise" (Kerouac) and "Dean Moriarty" (lifelong Kerouac muse Neal Cassady) are continually leaving, returning, and leaving again; the road is the tool by which they attempt to throw off the shackles of societal "power," to shed the encumbrances of a system which rewards obedience and conformity with the living death of the workaday world. Their road is indeed a circular one, the novel comprising a series of journey-spirals which symbolize the continual demands of *destructuralism* in which one must go again and again to the stake and gibbet. "I'll tell you Sal, straight," says Moriarty, in a key passage,

> no matter where I live, my trunk's always sticking out from under the bed, I'm ready to leave or get thrown out. I've

> decided to leave everything out of my hands. You've seen me try and break my ass to make it and you know that it doesn't matter and we know time--how to slow it up and walk and dig and just old-fashioned spade kicks, what other kicks are there? *We* know." (*Road* 206)

Moriarty here enunciates a Beat version of *depowerment* [30] with which Paradise, his acolyte, immediately connects: "I agreed with him. He was reaching his Tao decisions in the simplest direct way" (206), he enthuses. Throughout *On The Road*, Cassady / Moriarty is depicted as a primal id-force, a Dionysian sage who, by his very presence, alters the lives of those around him, especially the life of writer Kerouac / Paradise, who is open and receptive, a willing initiate who anticipates that "somewhere along the way" during the course of their adventures, " the pearl would be handed to me" (11). The viewpoint which Moriarty enunciates above is redolent of Mailer's "White Negro," the existential hipster who realizes that

> if our collective condition is to live with instant death by atomic war, relatively quick death by the State as *l'univers concentrationnaire*, or with slow death by conformity with every creative and rebellious instinct stifled (at what damage to the mind and the heart and the liver and the nerves no research foundation for cancer will discover in a hurry), if the fate of twentieth-century man is to live with death from adolescence to premature senescence, why then the only life-giving answer is to accept the terms of death, to live with death as immediate danger, to divorce oneself from society, to exist without roots. . . . In short . . . the decision is to encourage the psychopath in oneself, to explore that domain of experience where security is boredom and therefore sickness, and one exists in the present, in that enormous present which is without past or future, memory or planned intention, the life where a man must go until he is beat. . . . (339)

"To live for the moment, no longer to heed these instincts for survival; this is dying to oneself, or at least . . . living with death as an equal" (Bataille, *Erotism* 233). For Mailer's White Negro, this "psychopathology" functions as a philosophy, an *ascesis*: the hipster's intuitive drive is to *de-sublimate* imposed Apollonian power structures, to explode "the stable middle-class values so prerequisite to sublimation" in order to reach once again the

Dionysian "paradise" of the womb and momentarily luxuriate in void (as in Miller's "Land of Fuck") and then, completing the spiral, to "create a new nervous system" for himself and "grow up a second time," fashioning an authentically created--rather than societally--imposed--self (Mailer 345-6). The symbolically named Sal Paradise states the problem thus: "The only thing we yearn for in our living days, that makes us sigh and groan and undergo sweet nausea of all kinds, is the remembrances of some lost bliss that was probably experienced in the womb and can only be reproduced (though we hate to admit it) in death. But who wants to die?" (*Road* 103). The paradoxical Beat quest, then, is to die while remaining alive to benefit from the experience of death: to become enlightened.

It is Moriarty who initially goes the furthest along the road to enlightenment,[31] and the narrator's description of his friend's appearance during his "final development" stands as a definitive image of the blown-out American gutter-dandy: "He was wearing a T-shirt, torn pants hanging down his belly, tattered shoes; he had not shaved, his hair was wild and bushy, his eyes bloodshot . . . and on his face was the goofiest grin I ever saw" (155). Moriarty's wild, untamed exterior mirrors his inner development, as he reaches the culmination of a series of Dionysiac transgressions, the pinnacle of his de-sublimating, psychopathic ascesis.[32] "I suddenly realized," recounts Paradise, "that Dean, by virtue of his enormous series of sins, was becoming the Idiot, the Imbecile, the Saint of the lot . . . the HOLY GOOF" (160). Finally, in a room facing down his many doubters and accusers, Moriarty finally achieves *destructuralist* nirvana, and the rebel without a cause now becomes Artaud's alinguistic artist of life, madly signaling though the flames:

> Then a complete silence fell over everybody; where once Dean would have talked his way out, he now fell silent himself, but standing in front of everybody, ragged and broken and idiotic, right under the lightbulbs, his bony mad face covered with sweat and throbbing veins, saying "Yes, yes, yes," as though tremendous revelations were pouring into him all the time now, and I'm convinced they were, and the others suspected as much and were frightened. He was BEAT--the root the soul of Beatific. (161)

Similar to Miller's Land of Fuck, Kerouac's realm of BEAT-itude is reached at the culmination of exhaustive limit-experience: "The condition of weariness, emptiness,

exhaustion, defeat and surrender is antecedent to and causative of a state of blessedness," Stephenson explains. "In being Beat the ego is diminished and in abeyance; the psyche becomes receptive, responsive to its deeper, more sublime aspects, the *imago Dei*--the innate spiritual wisdom of the unconscious" (24). An exhausted, forlorn Paradise himself reaches this realm one day while picking up old cigarette butts from the street: "And for just a moment I reached the point of ecstasy that I always wanted to reach, which was the complete step across chronological time into timeless shadows, and wonderment in the bleakness of the mortal realm . . . into the void of uncreated emptiness," Paradise recounts. "I realized I had died and been reborn numberless times, but just didn't remember especially because the transitions from life to death and back to life are so ghostly easy. . . . I felt sweet, swinging bliss, like a big shot of heroin in the mainline vein; like a gulp of wine late in the afternoon . . . I thought I was going to die the very next moment. But I didn't die. . . " (*Road* 143-44).

Overall, however, Paradise remains more deeply rooted in "reality" than does Moriarty: the former is more the Apollonian artist who mostly remains once removed from the flux of existence, while the latter more literally embodies the Dionysian flux--with all the positive and negative aspects that entails, aspects which for Moriarty have become meaningless and interchangeable--within his very being (although, like the Chinese yin-yang symbol, or "T'ai-chi T'u," both characters contain elements of their opposing nature as well). Like Miller's enlightened monster, Moriarty has died as an individual--to the everyday world and its petty, parochial concerns--only to be reborn in the very stream of existence. "He no longer cared about anything (as before) but now he also *cared about everything in principle*," explains Paradise. "That is to say, it was all the same to him and he belonged to the world and there was nothing he could do about it" (155). Finally, Moriarty has become Bataille's sovereign man, an *Untermensch*, beautifully useless, beyond good and evil: "He was alone in the doorway, digging the street. Bitterness, recriminations, advice, morality, sadness--everything was behind him, and ahead of him was the ragged and ecstatic joy of pure being" (161).

Yet, while Moriarty / Cassady may be "enlightened," it is also clear that it will not be he

who will transmit this knowledge to the world at large (ironically, at the beginning of the novel, Moriarty supposedly comes to visit Paradise to learn how to become a writer, a notion that the latter doesn't take entirely seriously [7]). "What was he knowing? He tried in all his power to tell me what he was knowing. . . . he's got the secret that we're all busting to find and it's splitting his head wide open," Paradise observes in his role as student (161). Moriarty's is a purer form of sovereignty; his frenetic, directionless yet multidirectional activity and permanently wired demeanour in *On The Road* exemplify the existential concept of the *acte gratuit*, being "spontaneous, unmotivated, unproductive" behaviour that "transcend[s] and violate[s] means-to-end rationality" (Reynolds and Press 143). Moriarty truly lives the "life beyond utility" which Bataille deems prerequisite for the sovereign existence, never employing the present for the sake of the future. Cassady's entire life, writes Jay Stevens, was in fact "one long *acte gratuit*," an inspired improvisation entirely rooted in the moment (105). He is a rhetorical figure, a *destructuralist* initiator whose *philosophia* consists of "inciting action, urging others on to pleasure and abandon," his very being a denial of "the self-limiting cautions and conventions by which most people live their lives" (Stephenson 155).[33]

It will then be up to Moriarty's alter-ego and disciple, Sal Paradise, who has been most altered by the manic life-art of The Holy Goof, to fully complete the *destructuralist* spiral's last movement, back into the realm of the Apollonian: to transmute both men's raw experiences into an experience-book, the interweaving of fact and fiction that is *On The Road*. Which is to say that, without one another, Paradise and Moriarty--like the yin and the yang, or Apollo and Dionysus--are incomplete. Each character represents a key stage of the *destructuralist* process: Moriarty the *depowering* move into the flux; Paradise the reconstructive phase of self-creation--Framing Dionysus.

BLOWING THE BOOKMOVIE

> **Compared with music all communication by words is shameless; words dilute and brutalize; words depersonalize; words make the uncommon common.**
>
> **--Nietzsche**

****

PROCEDURE: Time being of the essence in purity speech, sketching language is undisturbed flow from the mind of personal secret idea-words, blowing (as per jazz musician) on subject of image.

--Jack Kerouac

Interestingly, while Kerouac's *On The Road* is certainly less *overtly* rhetorical and prescriptive in nature than are Miller's *Tropics*--Kerouac is often a good deal more ambivalent in tone than is Miller, as in the book's conclusion when, sick and abandoned by Moriarty in Mexico, Paradise ruefully admits of his friend, "When I got better I realized what a rat he was" (*Road* 249)--its impact on popular (if not academic) culture has been greater than anything Miller could have dreamed of. *On The Road*, with its somewhat wider Dionysian palette of sex, drugs and music, "wasn't just the Bible of the beats, but a founding text for the first wave of rock rebels" (Reynolds and Press 230). As such, it has directly impacted on the lives of succeeding generations of disaffected Western youth, becoming a clarion call for those seeking an existence outside the circumscribed moral boundaries of the dominant middle-classes.[34] If *On The Road* is a fiction, then, it is a fiction which, in Bataille's words, demands to be "*made true*," a form of "action" which "resonates in the ear with the blast of the trumpets of Jericho," rousing in those truly able to hear it "the necessity to take action is imposed without delay and without condition" (*Visions* 226). Eschewing the neutered literary forms of either realism or escapist fantasy--each nothing more than "the dust raised by the passage of ACTION" (227)--*On The Road* instead functions as an experience-book, a "*living* myth" (231) which is "placed in opposition to fiction if one looks at the people who dance it, who act it, and for whom is living *truth*" (232).

Kerouac strives in his writing to bridge the binary art/life divide by coming as close as possible to the free-flowing improvisational rhythms of jazz. Like Miller, in both theory and practice he aims toward a new literary combination of the Apollonian and Dionysian drives, a new balance in which the former functions as a thin outer shell which contains but not constrains the latter's ever shifting textures. This form of writing he describes as "the prose of the future," emanating "from both the conscious top and the unconscious bottom

of your mind, limited only by the limitations of time flying by as your mind flies with it. UNINTERRUPTED AND UNREVISED FULL CONFESSIONS ABOUT WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED IN REAL LIFE" (*Portable* 481). In "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose," Kerouac uses Whitmanesque terms explicitly to compare his writing to that a horn-wielding jazzman: "Begin not from preconceived idea of what to say about image but from jewel center of interest in subject of interest at ***moment*** of writing," he advises, "and write outwards swimming in sea of language to peripheral release and exhaustion . . . tap from yourself the song of yourself, ***blow!--now!***--your way is your only way . . . spontaneous, "confessional" interesting, because not 'crafted.' Craft *is* craft" (485). Like the improvisatory jazzman, Kerouac aims to transmute the raw material of experience, recreating both himself and his audience in the process: it is the process, in fact, which is all.

Kerouac thus also moves further away from the high modernist belief in that omnipotent Apollonian elitist edifice, the rarefied World of Words that Miller so vehemently attacks in the later work of Joyce: "Modern bizarre structures (science fiction, etc.) arise from language being dead," he opines. "Different themes give illusion of new life" (485). In contrast to this, the freedom of the jazzman to "blow," to riff on a given image, is for Kerouac also the key to removing the constraints of a repressive society which have become deeply embedded in the psyche: the liberated Dionysian rhythms of jazz are, like the road, like the act of sex ("write excitedly, swiftly . . . in accordance . . . with the laws of orgasm" [485]), tools of (potentially mass) *conversion*, components of the *destructuralist* process itself, taking both players and audience on a spiral through chaos and then back into form--again and again going to the stake and gibbet, through the revolving door of pleasure-pain. "There's always more, a little further--it never ends," Sal Paradise explains in *On The Road*, describing a frenzied night at a jazz club. "They sought to find new phrases . . . they tried hard. They writhed and twisted and blew. Every now and then a clear harmonic cry gave new suggestions of a tune would someday be the only tune in the world and would raise men's souls to joy. They found it, they lost, they wrestled for it, they found it again . . . and Dean sweated at the table and told them to go, go, go" (199).

Likewise, the writer must engage in this spiraling, orgiastic process through anti-form and back to form again, creating a living myth, or else succumb to the Universe of Death inhabited by the Apollonian "craftsman":

> Shame seems to be the key to repression in writing as well as in psychological malady. If you don't stick to what you first thought, and to the words the thought brought, what's the sense of bothering with it anyway, what's the sense of foisting your little lies on others, or, that is, hiding your little truths from others? What I find to be really 'stupefying in its unreadability' is this laborious and dreary lying called craft and revision by writers . . . recognized by the sharpest psychologists as sheer blockage of the mental spontaneous process. . . . (Kerouac, *Portable* 486)

Anticipating the direction of American popular culture of the later part of the twentieth century, Kerouac eschews the cult of the Holy Word in order to elevate the democratic image to a newfound level of importance: "Write for the world to read and see yr exact pictures of it," he counsels. "Bookmovie is the movie of words, the visual American form" (483). With Kerouac, the figure of the gutter-dandy completes the move across the Atlantic initiated by Henry Miller, from Europe to America, and now enters the realm of mass culture. "Writers . . . write the script for the reality film," observes Kerouac's friend and fellow gutter-dandy William S. Burroughs (who eventually has an equally great influence on popular culture). "Kerouac opened a million coffee bars and sold a million pair of Levis to both sexes. Woodstock rises from his pages" (180). Indeed, although the literary gutter-dandy continues to be a figure of great importance post-Kerouac, it is now in the realm of imagistic popular culture that he makes his greatest impact.

Notes

1. Pierre Hadot detects this shift occurring as far back as the Middle Ages, when theology and philosophy shifted in form from experiential modes of being to "teachable" subjects. In his view, the University is one of the originary models for the modern bureaucratic state, the place where the figure of the "expert" first comes into being. "One of the characteristics of the university is that it is made up of professors who train professors, or professionals who train professionals," he writes. "Education was thus no longer directed toward people who were to be educated with a view to becoming fully developed human beings, but to specialists, in order that they might learn how to train other specialists. This is the danger of 'Scholasticism,' that philosophical tendency which began to be sketched at the end of antiquity, developed in the Middle Ages, and whose presence is still recognizable in philosophy today." See *Philosophy As A Way Of Life* 270.

2. Citing the work of Nietzsche and Freud, Brown describes "world history as the history of an ever increasing neurosis . . . an ever increasing sense of guilt caused by repression." The constant privileging of Apollonian abstraction in the form of techno-scientific "progress" has resulted in "mankind making history without having any conscious idea of what it really wants or under what conditions it would stop being unhappy; in fact, what it is doing seems to be making itself more unhappy and calling that unhappiness progress." See "Neurosis and History," *Life Against Death* 11-19.

3. The term "anti-literature" is memorably introduced and defined in Ihab Hassan's "Prologue" to *The Literature of Silence* 3-32.

4. "Not only is the historical avantgarde a thing of the past," Huyssen contends, "but it is also useless to try to revive it under any guise. Its artistic inventions and techniques have been absorbed and co-opted by Western mass mediated culture in all its manifestations from Hollywood film, television, advertising, industrial design, and architecture to the aesthetization of technology and commodity aesthetics. The legitimate place of a cultural avantgarde which once carried with it the utopian hope for an emancipatory mass culture under socialism has been preempted by the rise of mass mediated culture and its supporting industries and institutions" (15).

5. This notion of the sage as spectacle and thus a vehicle for conversion is also found in Christianity, as seen in Paul's message in 1 Corinthians 4:9: "For I think that God hath set forth us apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men."

6. The sage as underman also appears in 1 Corinthians 4:13, where Paul says of the apostles: "Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, *and are* the offscouring of all things unto this day."

7. Interestingly, one of the points of correspondence which Miller feels he has with Rimbaud is a propensity toward sartorial dandyism, initially toward the more traditional

European (Brummellesque) version, and then toward the more eccentric, "punk" attire of the gutter-dandy (think of Baudelaire's green hair). "I have always pictured the boy Rimbaud as being dolled up like a sissy, and later when a young man, as a dandy. That at any rate, was my case. My father being a tailor, it was natural for my parents to concentrate on my attire. When I grew up I inherited my father's rather elegant and sumptuous wardrobe. We were exactly the same size [How apropos that the seminal American gutter-dandy should be decked out in hand-me-down finery!]. But, like Rimbaud, again, during the period when my individuality was asserting itself strenuously, I got myself up grotesquely, matching the inner eccentricities with the outer." See *The Time Of The Assassins* 17. Miller's remarks here also correspond to Ellen Moers' examination of the "Yankee Doodle Dandy" as depicted in the song from the revolutionary 1770s describing an American soldier who "came to town / Riding on a pony / Stuck a feather in hat / And called it Macaroni!" Sung throughout the American colonies, "the oldest stanzas of 'Yankee Doodle' bear directly on the origins of dandyism," Moers writes. "The most popular [version] . . . was written by an Englishman to make fun of the appearance of the American troops. . . . The colonial soldiery wore 'variegated, ill-fitting and incomplete' uniforms; the Macaronis were that circle of affected, oddly-dressed, cosmopolitan Londoners who can be identified as the nearest ancestors of the Regency dandies; the anonymous satirist amused himself by comparing the two" (11-12). "Sticking a feather in your cap" in order to be glamourous is in actuality an aesthetic practice we have already seen in the dress of some members of medieval Brethren of the Free Spirit, who would often adorn the rags they wore with jewels. It seems then, that there has always been a close link between the Übermensch and the Untermensch, between the refined, aristocratic dandy and his brethren in the gutter.

8. "What we do not always realize is that every act of renunciation in our lives prepares the way for further renunciation," Hassan explains. "The logic . . . is that repression begets civilization, civilization begets more repression, more repression begets abstraction, and abstraction begets death. We are moving along the road pure intelligence, which . . . is a principle of madness." See *The Literature of Silence* 24-5. Miller's view of America as the main purveyor of the oncoming Apollonian apocalypse only intensified with time; in 1964 he told *Playboy* that "what I read about the American way of life, about what goes on here, fills me with horror and dismay. It's become even more of an air-conditioned nightmare. . . . I'm being corroborated, I feel, by events. . . . For seventy-two years I've been waiting to see some breakdown of the artificial barriers surrounding our educational system, our national borders, our homes, our inner being--a shattering of the wretched molds in which we've lived--but it never happens. . . . Despite the rosy dreams of the politicians and the so-called intellectuals of today, we're not going to bring about a better world peaceably and in an evolutionary manner . . . we progress, as we regress, in catastrophic jumps. And when I talk about the violent, explosive alteration of things, it's a wish as much as a prediction of future events. . . . I want to see everything swept away. . . . I want to get beyond civilization . . . and see the new man who will live without all the restrictive, inhibiting barriers that hedge us in." See *Conversations with Henry Miller* 97.

9. Hakim Bey points out that this notion of creative destruction as an ascesis toward attaining "enlightenment" and "power" is also central to Eastern mystical traditions. "To go through CHAOS, to ride it like a tiger, to embrace it (even sexually) & absorb some of its shakti, its life juice--this is the Faith of Kali Yuga. Creative nihilism. For those who follow it she promises enlightenment & even wealth, a share of her temporal *power*." Within the realm of Dionysian experience, low meets high, art merges with life, and "everyday life's" binary chasm is resolved: "sexuality and violence serve as metaphors in a poem which acts directly on consciousness through the Image-ination--or else in the correct circumstances they can be openly deployed and enjoyed, imbued with a sense of holiness of every thing from ecstasy & wine to garbage & corpses." See "Instructions For The Kali-Yuga," *Apocalypse Culture* 87.

10. Shortly before his death, Foucault elaborates on the theme of conversion in regard to his ongoing study of the care of the self and dandyism. Asked if the care of the self, the self-stylization of the *bios* "could be understood as a sort of conversion of power?" he replies: "A conversion, yes. In fact it is a way of controlling and limiting" (*Final* 7-8). Having reached the NO-THING of the self stripped of all extraneous societal bonds (in the sense that human nature is not the definable quantity indicated by the term but rather an indefinable energy, a *micro-chaosmos),* the task then becomes the re-construction of a viable being able to function with the maximum amount of autonomy allowable, without curtailing the right of others to do the same (a break from the aristocratic, libertine dandyism of Sade, which Foucault finally comes to see as a "retro-version" [see *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1*, 150]). This shouldn't be confused with a Rousseauist utopia of leveled equality, however: "I don't believe there can be a society without relations of power," Foucault says, "if you understand them as the means by which individuals try to conduct, to determine the behavior of others. The problem is not of trying to dissolve them in the utopia of a perfectly transparent communication, but to give to one's self the rules of law, the techniques of management, and also the ethics, the *ethos*, the practice of the self, which would allow these games to be played with a minimum of domination" (*Final* 18). Foucault thus looks toward a more democratic state of mass sovereignty, in which the subject "exercises his power correctly, i.e., by exercising at the same time his power on himself," (8) i.e., by framing Dionysus.

11. Deleuze, also heavily influenced by Bergson, explains how the latter's *Creative Evolution* is important for its breakthrough equation of communication and (sovereign) power. "Likening the living to a microcosm is an ancient platitude," he explains, "yet if the living organism was thought to be similar to the world, this was attributed to the fact that it was or tended to be an isolated system, naturally closed; the comparison between microcosm and macrocosm was thus a comparison between two closed figures. . . . Bergson completely alters the scope of the comparison by opening up both ends. If the living being resembles the world, this is true, on the contrary, insofar as it opens itself to the opening of the world; if it is a whole, this is true to the extent that the whole, of the world as of the living being, is always in the process of becoming, developing, coming into being or advancing, and inscribing itself within a temporal dimension that is irreducible and

nonclosed." Inscribing itself, in other words, within chthonian realm of *true nature*. See *Anti-Oedipus* 95-6.

12. Norman O. Brown explains that this process of "becoming-prodigal" runs counter to the tenets of techno-scientific capitalism where "possessive mastery over nature and rigorously economical thinking . . . have become tyrant organizers of the whole of human life; abstraction from the reality of the whole body and substitution of the abstracted impulse for the whole reality are inherent in *Homo Economicus.*" Brown's antidote to this system is remarkably similar to the ideas often expressed by Miller: he envisions a "nonmorbid science" which would be "erotic rather than (anal) sadistic in aim. Its aim would not be mastery over but union with nature. And its means would not be economizing but erotic exuberance. And finally, it would be based on the whole body and not just a part; that is to say, to would be based on the polymorphously perverse body" (*Life* 236).

13. The term "nigger" used in this sense stands as yet another mythological label for the monster. Here Miller links himself with the subcultural notion of "the white negro" previously discussed in Chapter 2.

14. Henry Miller, in his use of the autobiographical, episodic, "picaresque" novel form in which he is the main character, functions as an artistic conduit between the styles of Europeans Huysmans and Genet and the later Anglo-American line of gutter-dandies including Jack Kerouac, Alexander Trocchi and Charles Bukowski; such a method Nietzsche praises under the heading "*A section of our self as an artistic object.*" For Nietzsche, "it is a sign of superior culture when men consciously remember and sketch a true picture of certain periods of their development, which lesser men live through almost without thought, wiping them off their soul's tablet." Such an aesthetic--which seems to alienate a great many literary critics who feel that there should be more "distance" between an author and his characters--is viewed by Nietzsche as "a higher kind of painting" which only few people understand. "To do it" he continues, "it is necessary to isolate those phases artificially" (*Human, All Too Human* 166-7).

15. "Transgression" is a term thrown around rather loosely by contemporary academics of the left-wing persuasion, yet it seems that only certain rules are meant to be broken in the eyes of these "rebels." Miller is certainly one of the most "transgressive" writers ever in terms of challenging mainstream sexual mores and taboos, yet, as Camille Paglia points out, squeamish middle-class academic feminism has rendered him and other "transgressive" male writers nearly invisible in the academic realm. "Many of our most talented women students are graduating from college without having read not only Freud and Lawrence but other major figures like Ernest Hemingway, Henry Miller, and Norman Mailer. . . . This is scandalous" (*Vamps* 328-9). In Miller's case, Kate Millett's at times laughably wrongheaded and contradictory attack on him in *Sexual Politics* was enough to render his work off limits, not to be seen in the collection of the enlightened, politically correct academic transgressor of the 1990s.

16. See St. John 1:14. "And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father)." This notion corresponds to Miller's view of himself as Messianic figure. Miller gives a perverse spin to the notion of the word made flesh, taking the implications of this to their logical--sexual--limit. Jesus Christ's incarnation as a human who is also a king, for whom the full realization of one's humanity, "the flesh," is the only path to true sovereignty, is also very appealing to Miller's sensibilities. The Christ archetype itself certainly has many facets of what I have defined as key gutter-dandy tenets: voluntary poverty, a spiritually rather than a materially-based sovereignty (cf. "the crown of thorns"), and so on. Miller merely "fleshes out" the archetype to remake Christ in his own image, adding the missing element of sexuality which must accompany "the word made flesh." Ralph Waldo Emerson, another key influence on Miller, also employs this biblical passage: "Let a Stoic open the resources of man," he writes, "and tell men that they are not leaning willows, but can and must detach themselves; that with the exercise of self-trust, new powers shall appear; that a man is the word made flesh, born to shed healing to the nations; that he should be ashamed of our compassion, and that the moment he acts from himself, tossing the laws, the books, idolatries and customs out the window, we pity him no more, but thank and revere him;--and that teacher shall restore the life of man to splendor, and make his name dear to all history" (156-7). Clearly, for Emerson, he who embraces the full implications of "the word made flesh" is both sage and sovereign: "And truly it demands something godlike in him who has cast off the common motives of humanity, and has ventured to trust himself for a taskmaster," he writes (156).

17. Miller feels a spiritual kinship with the Gnostic idea of the worldly order as *heimarmeme*, a cruel and oppressive spiritual prison. "Sometimes I really do think the world is a cosmic error of a false god," he says. "Life is great and beautiful . . . but we have made of the world a horrible place . . . everything about it is absurd and wrong and it deserves to be wiped out. . . . I think there is such a thing as the end of the world or the end of this species of man. It could very well be that another type of man will come into being." As for the Gnostics themselves, Miller expresses admiration for their (in Foucauldian terms) "limit-attitude," their willingness to push their worldly alienation to the very limit in the effort to liberate the spirit, the *pneuma*. Referring to the "revolutionary" youth culture of the 1960s, Miller comments: "The hippies were like toilet paper compared to the Gnostics. They *really* turned the world upside down. They did fantastic things. They were deliberately amoral, unmoral, immoral, contra the government and establishment. They did everything possible to increase the insanity." See *Conversations with Henry Miller* 199-200.

18. Seen, for instance, in the poem which opens the tract:

> Behold, the King of glory now is come
> T' reduce God, and the Devil to their Doom;
> For both of them are servants unto Me
> That lives, and rules in perfect majesty: . . .
> Fie then for shame, look not above the Skies

> For God, or Heaven; for their your Treasure lies
> Even in these Forms, *Eternal Will* will reigne.
> Through him are all things, onely One, not Twain:
> Sure he's the Fountain from which every thing
> Both good and ill (so term'd) appears to spring . . .

See *The Pursuit of the Millennium* 312-316.

19. The destructuralist process of "deterritorialization"--the Dionysian dissociation of the Apollonian boundaries which constitute the limits of persons, things, even concepts--and "reterritorialization"--their reappearance in new forms--can for Deleuze and Guattari "never go far enough" (321). Sounding distinctly Mille(r)narian, they exclaim: "'More perversion! More artifice!,'" and contend that this process should reach the "point where the earth becomes so artificial that the movement of deterritorialization creates of necessity and by itself a new earth, . . . a world created in the process of its tendency, its coming undone, its deterritorialization. The movement of the theatre of cruelty . . . [is] not at all a hope, but a simple 'finding,' a 'finished design,' where the person who escapes causes other escapes, and marks out the land while deterritorializing himself. An active point of escape where the revolutionary machine, the artistic machine, and the (schizo) analytic machine become parts and pieces of one another" (321-2). The authors also sound a suitably apocalyptic note: "What is at stake," they claim," is not merely art or literature," but the human (Dionysian) spirit, which otherwise risks becoming entombed "in the deadening framework of the system of social and psychic repression." Alternatively , Deleuze and Guattari happily conjure a millennial scenario of "so many local fires patiently kindled for a generalized explosion." (137). This is exactly how Henry Miller sees himself: as a *firestarter*, a Dionysian sage whose escape from the clutches of the Machine will cause other escapes, thus eventually uniting the rekindled masses toward a new realm of communicative--and possibly apocalyptic--enLIGHTenment.

20. Emerson observes that the infant enjoys a state of non-conformist sovereignty: "Infancy conforms to nobody; all conform to it, so that babe commonly makes four or five out of the adults who prattle and play to it" (140).

21. The Marquis de Sade also propounds a very similar view. "Of what are composed the beings which come into life?" he asks. "Do not the three elements of which they are formed result from the prior destruction of other bodies? If all individuals were possessed of eternal life, would it not become impossible for Nature to create any new ones? . . . Now, once we observe that destruction is so useful to her that she absolutely cannot achieve her creations without drawing from the store of destruction which death prepares for her, from this moment onward the idea of annihilation which we attach to death ceases to be real; there is no more veritable annihilation; what we call the end of the living animal is no longer a true finis, but a simple transformation, a transmutation of matter. . . " (*Philosophy* 330). Like Clarkson and Miller, Sade thus sees the decomposing / recomposing activity of the body after death as a form of immortality: "Feeble portions of

a vile crude matter, upon our death, that is to say, upon the conjointure of the elements whereof we are composed with the elements composing the universal mass . . . we will pass for an instant into Nature's crucible thence to spring up again under other shapes . . ." (*Justine* 497).

22. "He attains the unknown, and if, demented, he finally loses the understanding of his visions, he will at least have seen them! So what if he is destroyed in his ecstatic flight through things unheard of, unnameable: other horrible workers will come; they will begin at the horizons where the first one has fallen!" (102-3).

23. Bataille further explains that knowledge "can't in any way be confused with the last moment or *end* of the operation; it is the entire operation. The end of a useful operation may be an object devoid of utility, for an example an automobile employed . . . for contemplative drives. By becoming useless, that automobile detaches itself rather clearly in thought if not in mechanical reality) from the operation that produced it" (*Accursed* 3: 202).

24. Vaneigem locates this same philosophy at the heart of the Brethren of the Free Spirit, which "emanated from the ***materia prima*** of life as much as it escaped the grasp of ecclesiastical and secular authorities. It consciousness was rooted there, through an alchemy in which nothing, in the end, is any different than it was already in the beginning. . ." (*Movement* 241). The alchemical formula of the Free Spirit was thus a Dionysian inversion of the Apollonian abstraction, "guided by a different reality--not the reality shaped by the economy, but the reality underlying the living being. Beneath the prevailing stream of words, used by the majority to proclaim that power was the only reference point, ran a living undercurrent: original sexuality, the cosmic womb where freedom was gestating, the subjective consciousness where body and spirit came together in the unity of each orgasm" (243). The parallels with Miller's guiding philosophies here are striking.

25. Cf. Huysmans's mouthpiece Durtal in *Là-Bas*: "I learned long ago that there are no people interesting to know except saints, scoundrels, and cranks. They are the only persons whose conversation amounts to anything. Persons of good sense are necessarily dull, because they revolve over and over again the tedious topics of everyday life. They are the crowd, more or less intelligent, but they are the crowd, and they give me a pain" (194).

26. This phenomenon Deleuze and Guattari refer to as "free disjunction,' explained as "a disjunction that remains disjunctive, and that still affirms the disjoined terms, that affirms them throughout their entire distance, without restricting one by the other or excluding the other from the one." Such "differential positions," they explain, "persist in their entirety . . . but they are all inhabited by a faceless and transpositional subject," the subject which has become destructured. See *Anti-Oedipus* 76-7.

27. Cf. Foucault on the experience-book: "When I write, I do it above all to change myself and not to think the same thing as before" (*Remarks* 27).

28. Perhaps no greater confirmation of the continued "black sheep" status which "official culture" (university professors and publishers usually being the custodians of such) has conferred upon Henry Miller and his Dionysian offspring is the near-total absence (with the exception of Paul Bowles' tangentially-related novel *The Sheltering Sky*) of any of their works from Harold Bloom's recent *The Western Canon: The Books And School Of The Ages*. No *Tropic of Cancer*, no *Junky*, no *Cain's Book*, no *On The Road*. Bloom, it seems, feels much the same squeamishness regarding these gutter-dandies and their anti-novels as does "respectable" author John Updike, a member, of course, of Bloom's Canon who once said of Miller's classics, "Strangely, I don't believe I read either of the *Cancers* through . . . just a peek inside and the perusal of a paragraph, was, well, inflammatory" (Jong 113). Curiously, Bloom allows himself to include works by Jean Genet; perhaps the cultural distance and *au courant* French bloodline of Genet render him less odious than a Miller or Burroughs.

29. Hence the title of the seminal Beat novel *Go* (New York: Scribners, 1952), by John Clellon Holmes.

30. What Stephenson calls Kerouac's central tenet--"the beat-beatific process"--is in fact very similar, if not identical, to what I have described as the movement of *destructuralist depowerment*. See Stephenson 23.

31. Neal Cassady is referred to as a "psychopath in the traditional and most rigorous sense of the term" by John Clellon Holmes, and is similarly described in a *Playboy* article called "The Coming of the Psychopath" by Alan Harrington. See Stevens 106; Stephenson 159, 168.

32. While Moriarty no doubt operates on the level of the psychopath--episodes of which are scattered throughout *On The Road* and which include his eventual abandonment of Sal--his rebellious, selfish, irrational actions nevertheless have broader implications for society as a whole, beyond the realm of human ego. As Bataille explains, "Human life, distinct from juridical existence . . . cannot in any way be limited to the closed systems assigned to it by reasonable conceptions. The immense travail of recklessness, discharge, and upheaval that constitutes life could be expressed by stating that life starts only with the deficit of these systems; at least what it allows in the way of order and reserve has meaning only from the moment when the ordered and reserved forces liberate and lose themselves for ends that cannot be subordinated to anything one can account for. It is only by such insubordination--even if it is impoverished--that the human race ceases to be isolated in the unconditional splendor of material things" (*Visions* 128). Nietzsche refers to this concept as "Ennoblement through degeneration," where a primal Dionysian force, or "free spirit," punctures the static Apollonian girding of a stable society. "The danger in these strong communities . . . is an increasing, inherited stupidity, which follows all

stability like a shadow," warns Nietzsche. "In such communities, *spiritual progress* depends on those individuals who are less bound, much less certain, and morally weaker; they are men who try new things, and many different things . . . they loosen things up, and, from time to time, deliver a wound to the stable element of the community. Precisely at this wounded, weakened place, the common body is *inoculated*, so to speak, with something new. . . . Wherever progress is to ensue, deviating natures are of the greatest importance. . . . It is precisely the weaker nature, as the more delicate and free, that makes progress possible at all" (*Human, All Too Human* 138-9). Nietzsche thus overturns Darwin's "survival of the fittest theory," positing the "degenerate," the *Untermensch*, as perhaps the key element of human evolution. Moriarty's gutter-dandyism is a stylized, "ennobling" kind of philosophical psychopathology which dovetails with the tenets of *destructuralism*. He is The Holy Goof.

33. Stephenson relates Cassady's Beat *ascesis* to Bergson's concept of "pure duration," in which "the self . . . could, by means of a union of intellect and intuition achieve a state of consciousness in which its own inner essence and its identity with the cosmos, become fused in a single experience of perpetual becoming" (163-4). Cassady = *chaosmos*.

34. One of Kerouac's rock and roll disciples is guitarist Peter Buck of the rock megastars R.E.M. Speaking of *On The Road*, Buck, who claims to have "read everything [Kerouac] ever wrote," notes that "We all read that when we were 14 or 15. It was a real thing, where you could spot the heart of America." The band's early days were spent touring America in a van, emulating as far as possible the spirit of Kerouac's novel (Liner notes, *The Jack Kerouac Collection 7*).

In this world, the man of sovereign art occupies the most common position: that of destitution. Whether or not he enjoys paltry resources, destitution is his lot, only the bottom of the ladder is the right level for him. . . . The sovereignty of art requires that anyone who bears that sovereignty within him come down in the world. Indeed, sovereign art signifies, in the most exact way, *access to sovereign subjectivity independently of rank*. This does not imply the meaninglessness of the behaviours that raised men above themselves as well as above animals, but rather their complete *dislocation* and their constant calling into question.

--Georges Bataille

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The point is that rock and roll, as I see it, is the ultimate populist art form, democracy in action, because it's true: anybody can do it. Learn three chords on a guitar and you've got it. Don't worry about whether you can 'sing' or not . . . For performing rock and roll, or punk rock, or call it any damn thing you please, there's only one thing you need: NERVE. Rock and roll is an attitude, and if you've got that attitude you can do it, no matter what anybody says. . . . Not that brilliant rock *hasn't* been made by musicians whose technical chops were and are the highest. But see, that's JUST THE POINT. Just because something is simpler than something else does not make it worse.

–Lester Bangs

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I'm never gonna work
Another day in my life
The Gods told me to relax
They said I'm gonna get fixed up right
Now I'm never gonna work
Another day in my life
I'm way too busy powertripping
But I'm gonna shed you some light

–Monster Magnet, "Powertrip"

In *Sexus*, Henry Miller had posed the question which popular--and especially rock--culture would both implicitly and explicitly attempt to answer: how to become a sovereign without followers, a King in a world of Kings. In Miller's view, the increasingly outmoded Apollonian World of The Word, of elitist high art, was exemplified in the false sovereignty of writers like Joyce, "content to rule insidiously--in the fictive world of symbols--because the very thought of contact with rude and brutal realities frightens him" (18). In contrast, Miller imagines what sounds like an impossible paradox: a democratic form of mass aristocracy. "I wanted to enchant, but not to enslave; I wanted a greater, richer life, but not at the expense of others," Miller writes. "I wanted to free the imagination of all men at once because without the support of the whole world, without a world imaginatively unified, the freedom of the imagination becomes a vice." Having achieved the freedom of artistic self creation, Miller explains, the artist, rather than attempt to *lead* or *direct* others in the manner of a businessman or a politician, must instead make himself useless, *seducing* others to uselessness in the manner of an *objet d'art*, finally completing the spiral by returning whence he came to "the common stream, to become a fish again and not a freak of nature" (19). He envisions a new form of democracy, one composed of similar, sovereign beings emancipated from labour, for whom the universe is the raw material for the experiential, transmutational art of creative everyday living: "The art of dreaming when wide awake will be in the power of every man one day," Miller theorizes. "Long before that books will cease to exist, for when men are wide awake *and* dreaming their powers of communication (with one another and with the spirit that moves all men) will be so enhanced as to make writing seem like the harsh and raucous squawks of an idiot" (20).

For Georges Bataille, this line of thinking defines the attitude of the sovereign artist in the age of hypercapitalism and bourgeois accumulation: he or she must strive, in an middle class-dominated era where one's social status and rank is attained through the accumulation of wealth, through one's "usefulness," to ultimately *fail*. To *lead* is finally to justify the prevailing system, which means, no matter one's political orientation, eventual co-optation; therefore, as is the case with Miller's oppositional gutter dandy, "those who lead or intend to lead are opposed to him. He remains on the side of the *led*" (*Accursed*

Vol. 3 422). The teeming Dionysian mass thus offers refuge from the Apollonian machinations of the business-suited men perched high above it in panoptic office towers. Sovereign subjectivity, states Bataille, "can never tie itself to such [capitalistic] behaviours, except on the condition that they do not raise any objection to existence at the bottom of the ladder. Not that they do not differ from that existence, but the one who upholds them can never feel free of the abhorrence of contrary behaviors." On the contrary, Bataille explains, the "enlightened" contemporary gutter-sage, who has turned his life into art, "can never regard himself as being above another, even if this were a criminal or someone repugnant to him, except insofar as the other would himself imagine he had some superiority of rank or race" (323).

Here, then, is a blueprint for Foucault's theory of inverse exaltation as a paradoxical, spiraling *ascesis* of sovereignty wherein the attainment of power continually gives way to its loss: the *destructuralist* cycle of *depowerment*. In Dionysian transgression, Foucault explains, "the limit is forced to face the fact of its imminent disappearance, to find itself in what it excludes . . . to experience the positive truth in its downward fall" (*Language* 34). What better way to oppose a system where "success" is all than to self-destruct, to fail spectacularly while exalting failure as the only *real* form of success? In his key experience-book *Opium: The Illustrated Diary of His Cure*, Jean Cocteau proposes this notion in a set of key aphorisms:

> The aesthetics of failure are alone durable. He who does not understand failure is lost. The importance of failure is capital. I do not speak of what fails. If one has not understood this secret, this aesthetic, this ethic of failure, one has understood nothing and fame is empty. . . . It transforms cathedrals into chapels. (99, 100)

As forecast by Jack Kerouac's prescient coining of the term "bookmovie," the gutter-dandy, whose primary artistic artifact (along with his very being) has to this point been his singular form of rhetorical writing (the experience-book), finds in the Dionysian popular culture of the latter half of the twentieth century--where the Judeo-Christian Word is knocked off its pedestal in favour of a multi-track "rock and roll" sensibility where images, sounds, and words intermingle freely--an ideal site for his subversive, seductive,

kaleidoscopic presentation of *destructuralism*. "Words are not the only measure of mental development," states Camille Paglia, who sees popular culture as an extension of the great pagan past of the West. "To believe they are is a very western or Judeo-Christian illusion. It stems from our invisible God, who talks creation into existence. Words are the most removed of human inventions from things-as-they-are. The most ancient conflict in western culture, between Jew and Egyptian, continues today: Hebrew word-worship versus pagan imagism, the great unseen versus the glorious thing" (*Sexual* 61). In this new cultural dispensation of what Alexander Trocchi calls "transcategorical inspiration" (*Invisible* 195), it is the musician who is most opportunely situated : "I pity the poet or novelist in this age of mass media," Paglia opines, "but my envy is frank and unconcealed for *the musician*, who is able to affect the audience with emotional directness, a pre-rational manipulation of the nerves" (*Sex, Art* 116). "No art form," she correctly observes, "not even Greek tragedy in Athens Theatre of Dionysus, ever gave full voice to the Dionysian until . . . rock and roll" (106). "Your view of society / screws up my mind like you'll never know / lead me away, come inside, see my mind / in kaleidoscope," wails glam-rocker Steve Harley of Cockney Rebel correspondingly on his existential epic, "Sebastian," before finally dissolving his narrative into the gibberish of madness.

The gutter-dandy, drawn by this potent new opportunity to ply his subversive, rhetorical art, infiltrates a media-driven, equal-access culture where, as Andy Warhol famously hypothesizes, everyone can be a star (for at least 15 minutes) in order sensationally to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory, and act out his singular version of the *destructuralist* spiral in a manner which, in its over-the-top manner, often verges on camp.[1] This Mille(r)narrian praxis is perhaps best described by punk rocker and novelist Richard Hell, who theorizes that the essence of being a rock and roller is that "you can create your own world . . . in spite of what everybody else thinks." An originator of such gutter-dandyish punk fashion statements as torn t-shirts held together by safety pins, Hell contends that contentious modes of dress which open one to ridicule and perhaps even physical danger are acts of courage: "It's saying, 'I don't give a fuck if somebody says I'm a jerk; I'm *deliberately* removing myself from them.'" This paradoxical ascesis of inverse elitism, he says, actually informs the more revolutionary democratic notion that rock and

roll ultimately posits; namely, "that if you amass the courage that is necessary, you can completely invent yourself. You can be your own hero, and once everybody is their own hero, then everybody is gonna be able to communicate with each other on a real basis rather than a hand-me-down set of societal standards" (italics mine, qtd in Bangs, *Psychotic* 264-5). In Hell's view, rock and roll is the art of dreaming while wide awake.

ROOTS OF THE POP DANDY: ALEISTER CROWLEY -- THE BEAST 666

> **I have died often enough; died to calf-love, to stamp-collecting, card-playing, first-edition hoarding, society-fluttering, chess-excelling, tiger-hunting, salmon-fishing, golf-loafing, woman-bagging, rock-scrambling, ice-maze-threading, sight-seeing, power-grasping. I have tried the hashish-life, the opium-life, the alcohol-life, the ether-life, the heroin-life; none of them has interfered with any of the other lives. . . .**
>
> **--Aleister Crowley**
>
> **********
>
> **'The Beast 666' was an apt appellation for a man who defied limitations and stood every convention on its head. During the first decade of this century, he lived out the undercurrent of Victorianism, and by the age of 30 he had become what he had set out to be--The King of the Shadow Realm.**
>
> **--John Symonds**

While the manifestation of the (post)modern gutter-dandy would in the main come from its spawning ground in America, in the persons of writers such as Henry Miller and Jack Kerouac, jazzmen like Charlie Parker and Miles Davis, "The King of Rock and Roll" Elvis Presley, and successors such as Jim Morrison and Lou Reed, it is from Britain, the country which (ironically enough) produces perhaps the most influential and successful rock band ever--The Beatles--and which generally establishes a symbiotic relationship with African-American popular culture through its Anglofied reinterpretations of American rhythm and blues in the form of bands such as The Rolling Stones (named after a song by black American bluesman Muddy Waters), The Animals, Cream, and the early Beatles themselves, that we find perhaps the original rock star, the man who first synthesizes The Great Subcultural line of the Assassins, the Free Spirit, Sade, and Nietzsche for mass

media consumption: Aleister Crowley, the self-proclaimed Beast 666 from the Book of Revelations. Crowley's publicly lived out series of personae, his theoretical insistence on his own–and by extension, everyone else's–sovereignty, and concomitant desire to explore every kind of limit-experience no matter how extreme or degrading, provides the blueprint for the pop gutter-dandy of the twentieth century. His experience-book, *Diary of a Drug Fiend* (1922), with its maxims "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of law" and the less familiar but equally important "Love is the law, love under will," becomes a virtual Rock and Roll Bible, generating a flock of musical adherents ranging from the famous, such as David Bowie and Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page, to the more underground and obscure, such as Peter Perrett of The Only Ones,[2] Jaz Coleman of Killing Joke, Rozz Williams of Christian Death and Genesis P Orridge of Psychic TV. Of these types, perhaps the motivation of Bowie, as outlined by biographers Henry Edwards and Tony Zanetta, is typical: the singer "forged a link between Crowley's concepts and his own brief flirtation with Tibetan Buddhism during the 1960s," they write. "Buddhist doctrine enabled one to transcend one's reality; Crowley enabled one not only to transcend that reality, but to control the universe in the process" (315).

The following passage from the *Diary*, in which Crowley appears thinly-veiled under the name "King Lamus" (the name typifying his obsession with the notion of sovereignty that so attracts Bowie and many other Crowleyites), exemplifies his importance as a key conduit of the previously examined *destructuralist* practices found along The Great Subculture's left-hand path. Lamus's experiential philosophy--an *ascesis* which includes a heady mix of polymorphic sexual experimentation, drugs (cocaine and heroin), and asceticism (the last not taken much notice of, alas, by many of the previously noted adherents)--we are informed, "forces one to come to . . . the point of death," a *limit-experience*, in Foucauldian terms, wherein "the whole of life is reviewed in perspective, and its meaning seized. But instead of being snatched away to face the unknown, as in the case of death, one has the opportunity and the necessity to take up the old life from the point at which one left off, with a clear apprehension of the past which determines the future" (324). In Crowleyanity, one is born-again as the sovereign of one's existence in which "Thou hast no right but to do thy will" (325). And, while his own exploits are in

and of themselves worthy of a separate study, it is Crowley in this role as a major contemporary theoretician of *destructuralism* whom I wish to focus upon here.

THE SUPREME AND HOLY KING

> **I am the Devil who has overcome polarity by having looked God in the eye and found the inner truth. I am from a world which foundered a millennia ago and I have written the scripts for the first person to read these lines. For I am the last of a self-destroying culture which has left a message for the first individual of a new culture to arise.**
>
> **--Baphomet, *The Light Of Hell***

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> **And I believe in the Serpent and the Lion, Mystery of Mystery, in his name *Baphomet*. And I believe in one Gnostic Catholic Church of Light, Love and Liberty, the Word of whose Law is THELEMA.**
>
> **--Crowley, *Gnostic Mass***

Juan Garcia Ponce writes that, in *The Baphomet*, Pierre Klossowski creates a medium wherein "everything is a spectacle, and where language allows the creation of a series of images that can be admired by listening to that language." Ponce elaborates that in this realm of spectacle, "anything can happen if language is capable of making it visible, and indeed, anything will happen until a new gnosis is created, a new form of knowledge that is in fact spectacle and as such offers itself to us" (xvi-xvii). Just such a "magickal" project is indeed put into real-life praxis by Crowley, who counted among his polymorphous personae the title of "Baphomet, the Supreme and Holy King of Ireland, Iona, and all the Britains that are in the Sanctuary of the Gnosis," conferred on him in 1912 by the *Ordo Templi Orientis* or O.T.O., an occult society founded in Germany in the early stages of the twentieth century which claimed a loose mystical lineage with the medieval mystics such as the Brethren of the Free Spirit and the Assassins of Rashid al-din Sinan.[3] The Baphomet is "The Self-Recognizing God" who unites all binary polarities: "He embodies

the two aspects of a single face which simultaneously penetrate and intersect one another, always taking on new form like the reflection in a kaleidoscope" (Akron 11). Although, as part of this praxis of persona-shifting, Crowley had aspirations to being a great poet and novelist, he actually and more importantly forms a break with the previous literary line of *destructuralist* gutter-dandies to embrace fully the notion of a life lived out in public view as a subversive spectacle, a work of art: for Crowley, literary output takes second place to public image. What eventually becomes the hipster credo of the rock lifestyle, "sex, drugs, and rock and roll," is intensely lived out by Crowley--reportedly a model for Huysmans' über-dandy Des Esseintes--as an *ascesis*. Correctly describing him "a famous drug fiend who had an enormous influence on rock 'n' roll," Simon Reynolds also notes that being "pharmaceutically indulgent, sexually charismatic and promiscuously polysexual," Crowley himself "was a rock star before the fact" (127).

More specifically, while they may have appreciated his overall dictate "Do What Thou Wilt Shall Be The Whole Of The Law" (an update of Rashid al-din Sinan's "Nothing Is True; Everything Is Permitted") as a kind of "do your own thing" ideal, the hippies of the 1960s, the period when rock and roll truly became a world-wide cultural force, and their previously-noted philosophy of "getting back to the garden" (a line from Joni Mitchell's "Woodstock"), an evocation of the notion of a benign, Edenic Rousseauian brotherhood peacefully existing outside of the hierarchical shackles of society ("I'm gonna camp out on the land / I'm gonna try to get my soul free"), are actually in conflict with Crowley's own Sadean view of "doing one's will" as a calculated, transgressive foray into the omnipresent dangers of chthonian reality in which one pits the possibility of seizing power against the real possibility of being wiped out forever. For Crowley, "enlightenment" is dependent upon the ability to ritually access the "beast" or "monster" in oneself through inversion, as evidenced in his maxim, "I wrenched DOG backwards to find GOD; now GOD barks" (qtd in Parfrey, "Lycanthropy" 21). This maxim, writes Adam Parfrey, is in part a reference to "the seeking of dishonor and the crawling through the abyss to break through to illumination" (21), a theme that is echoed later in the Velvet Underground's "Waiting For The Man" and "Heroin." Crowley's philosophy has been both consciously and unconsciously seized upon by many of the most transgressive jazz and rock stars, gutter-

dandies such as Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, Jim Morrison and Lou Reed, all for whom a Rousseauian version of society is repellent (Reynolds 127). For Crowley (as for Georges Bataille), what is uncovered when man's societal bonds are stripped away is not a levelled form of benign equality, but the "genius" of the sovereign, animal self: The Beast. Such contact with Dionysus, however, is never to be engaged in lightly or in an unthinking manner, as is epitomized in Crowley's aforementioned Sadean credo "Love is the law, love under will."

STAR POWER

> **Every man and every woman is a star. You, being a man, are therefore a star. The soul of a star is what we call genius. This fact is obscured by either the moral complexes which enmesh it, or lack of adequate machinery to express it.**
>
> **--Aleister Crowley**
>
> **********
>
> **Everybody is a star / I can feel it, when you shine on me. Everybody is a star / One big circle going round and round**
>
> **--Sly and the Family Stone**

In theory and in practice, the theme of sovereignty emerges as the key to Crowley's life and work, which he attempts to fuse into a singular, intentional work of art. As will both Miles Davis and Lou Reed many years later, Crowley rejects his bourgeois roots, including his family's fanatical brand of Christianity and a "childhood listening to statements about the will of God," statements which he found went against his own innate desire for personal power expressed through action. In response, he develops a philosophy of freewill based partly on the thought of the philosopher Fichte, who stresses that "as soon as man launches himself into action, he becomes conscious of his freedom--a freedom that eludes him while he contents himself with mere thinking" (Wilson 165). In this effort to create a new gnosis, Crowley's *magick* subordinates language to action: it is in the *act* of doing one's will that one discovers true freedom, and words, while not unimportant, are only part of the entire mechanism necessarily leading to experience. In his *Magick in Theory and Practice*, a rhetorical call for and guide to transgressive limit-

experience, Crowley contends that "all discussions upon philosophy are necessarily sterile, since truth is beyond language. They are, however, useful if carried far enough . . . to the point when it becomes apparent that all arguments are arguments in a circle" (6), a remark which finds correspondence in Bataille's previously cited assertion that the final result of all philosophical speculation should be a burst of laughter.

Crowleyanity's millennial gnosis for seizing power is thus based on what he calls "the Formula of I.A.O.," a three-stage process which is his version of the gutter-dandy's *destructuralist* spiral. "I," he explains, "is Isis, Nature, ruined by A, Adophis the Destroyer, and restored to life by the Redeemer Osiris" (*Magick* 28). Or to frame it in *destructuralist* terms: from the "natural" (societal) self and its worldly ties and imposed inhibitions to the locus of power in the the non-self (the void), and then back to the self, now newly reconstituted as an intentional, "willed" work of art. This process is described by Trocchi–one of Crowley's most direct philosophical descendents--as an *ascesis* in which one must first "arrive at a point where he is entirely alone and the external world is merely an incoherent and contradictory mass of detail," and then "begin at the beginning and build all over again his whole world structure" (*Invisible* 219). In this spiraling (re)constructive process, the original condition "is not restored," says Crowley, but instead, "a new and superior condition is created, a condition only rendered possible by the process of death" (*Magick* 29). Anticipating the muscial and theatrical motifs of pop dandies like Miles Davis, Jim Morrison, Marvin Gaye and Lou Reed, Crowley suggests that this process may be enacted in the form of an imagistic self-spectacle consisting of "robing yourself as a king, slaying yourself, and rising from that death to the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel" (30). Through the *destructuralism* of the I.A.O., then, one achieves through loss enLIGHTenment: the "preeminence" and "exorbitant incandesence of being" of the star.

The threefold spiral I.A.O. Crowley likens to alchemy: like the alchemist, the magician or occultist "is to take a dead thing, impure, valueless, and powerless" (in this case the stupefied self caught like a fly in the web of the material world), and "transform it into a live thing, active, invaluable and thaumaturgic . . . , a vital and powerful being of truth and beauty" (185-6). This notion is also outlined by Situationist author Raoul Vaneigem in a

prescriptive chapter called "Outline for an Alchemy of the Self," from his study of millenarianism, *The Movement of the Free Spirit*. For Vaneigem, as for Crowley, men and women are led away from the path of authentic existence by a world which demands that the deadening dictates of "survival" take precedence at all times over creativity and passion. "The idea of vitality also makes no sense if the fears accompanying the preoccupations of survival--finding enough money or credit to get food, clothing and a place to live--do not give way to a dialectic of life, to the demands of desires rooted in the heart, to an existence that reveals its uniqueness," Vaneigem argues (247). In the world of survival, the process whereby "everyone, without exception, is an alchemist, distilling his own substance at every moment, " is finally inverted and corrupted: "the best becomes the worst, creativity becomes work, the richness of being dwindles into possession. . . ." To break the bonds of survival, it is necessary for the individual to enact a powerful Dionysian "treatment" which "uses alchemy to rid life of the effects of survival, radically remaking the human from what is most human: namely the search for pleasure" (247-8). In *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, Vaneigem envisions this form of *destructuralist* therapy as an initially individualistic, creative experience where personal contact with the transformative *materia prima* of true nature initiates a process that in its latter stages flows back outwards, toward society: "What marvels of energy must be expected from the qualitative shock waves and chain reactions that will occur when the spirit of freedom still alive in the individual reemerges in collective form to celebrate the great social fête, with its joyful breaking of all taboos," he enthuses (199). To "get back to nature," then, for thinkers like Crowley and Vaneigem, is to locate the sovereign "beast" within and learn how to let him roar in public.

ELVIS PRESLEY: KING OF ROCK AND ROLE

> **My mission is, in short, to bring everyone to the realization and enjoyment of his own kingship. . . . In the New Aeon, each man will be a king.**
>
> **--Aleister Crowley**
>
> **********
>
> **This is the mystery of democracy, that its richest fruits spring up out of soils which no man has prepared and in**

circumstances where they are least expected.

—Woodrow Wilson

Crowley's thinking also corresponds to the paradoxical version of democratic elitism previously examined in the work of Henry Miller, a notion which now begins to take root within the arena of popular culture. Crowley believed his *Book of the Law*, with its elevation of the concept of "thelema" (literally, "will") to the highest of human functions, to be the foundation upon which a new society could be built, a "new age" commenced.[4] Crowleyanity's "main ethical principle," he writes,

> is that each human being has his own definite object in life. He has every right to fulfill this purpose, and none to do anything else. It is the business of the community to help each of its members to achieve this aim; in consequence all rules should be made, and all questions of policy decided, by the application of this principle to the circumstances. We have thus made a clean sweep of all the rough and ready codes of convention which have characterized past civilizations. . . . Their authority rested on definitions of right and wrong which were untenable. As soon as Nietzsche and others demonstrated that fact, they lost their validity. . . . Nothing can save the world but the universal acceptance of the Law of Thelema [which] admits that each member of the human race is unique, sovereign, and responsible only to himself. In this way it is the logical climax of the idea of democracy. Yet at the same time it is the climax of aristocracy by asserting each individual equally to be the center of the universe.[5] (*Confessions* 848-9)

The Law of Thelema, Crowley goes on to explain with great perspicacity, "no doubt will be resented by all those who like to interfere with other people's business," as it sanctions all individual idiosyncrasies of self presentation and expression. Sexuality in particular needs to be un-repressed: "Mankind must learn that the sexual instinct is in its true nature ennobling," he declares, bringing to mind Bataille's assertion that it is the animal in man who is sovereign, that "sexuality, thought of as filthy or beastly, is still the greatest barrier to the reduction of man to the level of the thing" (*Erotism* 158).

The notion of the individual Crowley espouses here is labelled by Foucault as *le roi anti-roi*, an *anti-European* creed designed to challenge the repressive culture Crowley had

grown up despising. Unsurprisingly, then, the philosophy first blossoms in America: we need look no further than to the case of the archetypal Dionysian rock and roll rebel, hip-swinging, lip-curling peacock Elvis Presley, an American hillbilly-dandy who discovered his "true will" and went on to become "The King of Rock and Roll"-- to see the Crowleyan version of alchemy put into praxis.

"To anyone who was alive at the time," writes Peter Guralnick of the emergence of Elvis,

> Presley was, and remains, a truly revolutionary force. Country singer Bob Luman . . . described . . . what might almost be considered a typical first reaction. 'This cat came out in red pants and a green coat and a pink shirt and socks, and he had this sneer on his face and he stood behind the mike for five minutes, I'll bet, before he made a move. Then he hit a guitar lick, and broke two strings . . . So there he was, these two strings dangling, and he hadn't done anything yet . . . and then he started to move his hips real slow, like he had a thing for his guitar. That was Elvis Presley when he was nineteen . . . He made chills run up my back, man, like when your hair starts grabbing at your collar.' (*Rolling* 23).

Presley's revolutionary spectacle of self, then, posits a form of sovereignty available to everyone, based as it is not on power conferred from the *outside* (the privileges of birth), but on the individual act of will in *destructuring* the "given," imposed self, locating one's "genius" and then reemerging as a "star" (for Crowley, as we have seen, one's Dionysian star quality is luminious, the *materia prima* of the self unfettered by imposed Apollonian restraints [6]). "As a poor white Southern boy, Elvis created a personal culture out of the hillbilly world that was his as a given," Greil Marcus explains. "Ultimately, he made that personal culture public in such an explosive way that he transformed not only his own culture, but America's" (*Mystery* 129). Guralnick's description of Presley illuminates Vaneigem's contention that creativity, though equally distributed to all, in the current order only finds direct, spontaneous expression on specific occasions. Such epiphanic expressions are "prerevolutionary moments, the source of the poetry that changes life and transforms the world, and most importantly, are expressed in a gesture, an attitude, perhaps merely a word, all of which may suffice to show that poetry's chance is at hand"

(*Revolution* 196-7).

These incendiary signifiers are seen, for instance, in Elvis's very stance--his peacock clothing, his curled lip sneer, his swinging hips--as well as heard in his unleashed rock and roll. Speaking of the recording studios where Presley cut his classic recordings like "Good Rockin' Tonight," Lester Bangs observes that "Sun Records at its peak was like punk rock at its best, the premise and principle of American democracy brought right back home: I / you can do it too. Anybody can do it. All it takes is the spirit and a ton of gall" (*Psychotic* 326). Presley's spectacular stardom in fact functions doubly as both an individual assertion of sovereignty and a mass invitation toward sovereignty--his is Foucault's *limit-attitude* in praxis. "Elvis takes his strength from the liberating arrogance, pride, and the claim to be unique that grow out of a rich and commonplace understanding of what 'democracy' and 'equality' are all about," Marcus writes. "No man is better than I am" (*Mystery* 175). Yet paradoxically, at the same time as he is claiming his kingship, Elvis "takes his strength as well from the humility, the piety, and the open, self-effacing good humor that spring from the same source, encompassing the opposite pole of self: I am better than no man" (175). Presley's initial Dionysian presentation, from his clothing to his physical gestures to his lyrics, are rooted in the pleasures available in the present: the idea that right here, right now, can be heaven if we demand it ("Have you heard the news? / there's good rockin' tonight"). As such, he becomes the living embodiment of Vaneigem's democratic hedonistic credo: "I want to exchange nothing--not for a thing, not for the past, not for the future. I want to live intensely, for myself, grasping every pleasure firm in the knowledge that what is radically good for me will be good for everyone" (*Revolution* 116). Thus, Elvis's rhetorical call to pleasure: "Have you heard the news. . . .?"

Moreover, it is by the paradoxical creation and yoking of the poles of high and low *within popular culture itself* that Elvis, as well as many of the more self-consciously revolutionary gutter-dandies that follow in his wake, cultivates a strong element of camp's "failed seriousness." Presley's most powerful moments, Marcus observes, stem from "an overwhelming outburst of real emotion and power, combined with a fine refusal to take himself with any seriousness at all." This *destructuralist* process of "finding that power

within himself, and making it real," Marcus contends, "was part of the liberation he was working out in his music; standing off from that power with a broad sense of humor and amusement, was another" (*Mystery* 162). Such a limit-attitude dovetails with Susan Sontag's contention that camp "involves a new, more complex relation to 'the serious'" wherein one can be equally "serious about the frivolous, frivolous about the serious," a notion that also lies at the heart of the "sex, drugs, and rock and roll" ethos (288). Presley's paradoxically potent, yet self-mocking, brand of kingship as defined by Marcus thus advances Crowley's "thelemic" society of masters without slaves, an intuitive recognition of the idea that "to proclaim oneself God is to fatally inherit his lie, or, if you prefer, his authoritarian truth," and that in the process of personal alchemy, "the stuff of deified being is made not of metal, but consists merely of power whose leadened weight has been gilt with the superficial brilliance of freedom" (Vaneigem, *Movement* 246). A true sovereign, then, declines the ultimately servile responsibility of ruling over others; he is *le roi anti-roi*, a King at odds with the notion of Kingship. This "camp" consciousness goes beyond a binary "either/or" divide and achieves Deleuze and Guattari's "disjunctive synthesis" wherein the Other is known to be the Same yet at the same time remains distinct from it. *Free disjunction*: Elvis as Rock King *and* hillbilly, not either/or, but either . . . or . . . or. . . . He's the King, yet he's one of the people; he's Divine, yet he's dirt. And a wholesome movie star . . . leather-clad punk . . . Las Vegas entertainer. *The King of Rock and Role*.[7] "This is free disjunction; the differential positions persist in their entirety, they even take on a free quality, but they are all inhabited by a faceless and transpositional subject" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* 78). If camp is, as Philip Core contends (via Cocteau), *a lie that tells the truth* (9), then here is its essence: fictional personae are all in one sense "lies," "daemonized" Apollonian constructions which frame projections of the truth, the chaos of true nature. " There is no-being in the outermost Abyss," Crowley writes, "but constant forms come forth from the nothingness of it" (qtd in Symonds 119).

Presley, then, fits Henry Miller's description of the monster as being "not hideous, but prodigious," as a polymorphous *haecceity* emanating evershifting images of itself, upsetting "the norm, the balance," of circumscribed, everyday reality, disrupting its

superimposed limits, its preformatted boundaries of being (*Time* 31). In America, a country "made out of a clash of languages and regions and religions," explains Marcus, the open-ended notion of what it is to be American often gives way to reactionary forces of both left and right wing persuasions who hunger for "a nice, neat definition." The prefab slots of identity politics, where the subject is provided with an identity whose boundaries must be strictly respected and protected, are offered as a safer alternative to authentic self-creation on the level of both self and society; "Now we ask," Marcus observes, "what does it mean to be a black American? A white Southern American? An Italian American? A Jewish American?" The "relatively comfortable" parameters of questions such as these, however, are "blow[n] apart" by an encounter with a *destructuralist* monster like the ***rhizomatic*** Elvis, whose prodigality throws all categories into question (*Dead* 30). Presley, Marcus continues,

> was too big, too complex, too much for any of us to quite take in, to see all at once, to understand. He was too big . . . for us to incorporate into ourselves. He confounds us. Like Medusa, you can't look at him head on. So we look sideways. From one angle, we see the young man who untangled and rewove the strands of American identity with 'Good Rockin' Tonight'; from another angle, we hear that same young man declare Kay Starr his favorite female singer insisting, in not so many words, that such an image of American identity, fixed and sterile, will do just fine. We may not be comfortable with such a contradiction, but what we're truly uncomfortable with, I think, is bigger still: the possibility that this is no contradiction at all.[8] (*Dead* 28)

Ultimately, an American public that had fallen under the rhetorical call of the wild, sung by the man they call King, followed him into a *destructuralist* spiral which is ongoing, recalling Sade's dream in *Justine* of creating an artwork which would continue to disturb the order of things long after his death. A *destructuralist* culture bomb, Presley initially liquifies "the symbols that America had put together," Marcus contends. "As his career went on," however, inevitable Apollonian re-formation takes place and

> those symbols regained their shape, and surrounded him, trapped him, made it hard for us to see him at all, made it nearly impossible to see him as anything more than a simple symbol of all the other symbols. But the grain of his voice

> remained--that element in his voice that rubbed against, that rubbed raw, so much that we had taken for granted, as finished and sealed. That element told its own story: it changed, it disappeared, it reappeared, it kept making symbols, submitting to old symbols, then casting them off. And we can still hear it happen. Today, we did. (*Dead* 38)

On some level, Presley seems to have been aware of the inner workings of his own revolutionary redefinition of kingship; his ascendence functions as an example of Crowley's Thelemic law: the harnessing of one's *true will*. Elvis belongs in the genealogical line of The Great Subculture, Marcus argues, "because he was . . . conscious. He knew what he was doing. If he redefined what it means to be American, it was because he meant to. He wanted change. He wanted to confuse, to disrupt, to tear it up. He was not, in any important manner, a folk artist . . . he was not an exemplar of 'the people.'" Presley's rhetorical art isn't limited to music; instead, his music is part of an overall personal style imbued with revolutionary potential: "Watch him as he first appeared on television in 1956, watch the way he moves, what he says, how he says it: the willfulness, the purpose, is unmistakable," writes Marcus, who sees in the very being of Elvis "a performance, not of what it means to be American--to be a creature of history, the inheritor of certain crimes, wars, ideas, landscapes--but rather a presentation, an acting out, a fantasy of what the deepest and most extreme possibilities and dangers of our national identity are" (*Dead* 31).

King Elvis, then, is also the Anti-King, whose spectacular and contradictory self presentation constitutes a form of cultural contestation which, instead of denying existences or values, "carries them all to their limits . . . to the empty core where being achieves its limit and where limit defines being" (Foucault, *Language* 36). Most importantly, he helps to create a new cultural space where the democratization of the individual journey toward sovereignty is initiated, a place where one's own elevation doesn't automatically necessitate the oppression of others, a move away from the "retro-version" of the Sadean style of sovereignty identified by Foucault. "Popular culture has the function of purging politics of many of its potential demagogues," Paglia theorizes. "Elvis Presley, an enormously charismatic figure, was able to build his empire in the

politically neutral realm of pop culture. . . . Today, you have other ways for extraordinarily charismatic people to create their worlds. There are other ways to rule the universe. Before popular culture, the only realm that allowed that kind of power of personality was politics" ("She Wants" 50).

STAGOLEE: SOVEREIGN COOL AND THE BLACK GUTTER-DANDY

> **I named my son Malik Nkrumah Staggerlee Seale...He's named after his brother on the block, like all his brothers and sisters off the block. Stagger *lee*. Staggerlee is Malcolm X before he became politically conscious. Livin' in the hoodlum world. I guess I lived a little bit of Staggerlee's life too, here and there. That's where it's at. You move yourself up from a lower level to a higher level...That's life. And all the little Staggerlees, a lot of em. Millions of 'em, know what I mean? And so I named that brother, my little boy, Staggerlee, because... that's what his *name* is.**
>
> **--Black Panther Party President Bobby Seale**
>
> **********
>
> **In the ghetto . . . your ranking system ain't based on what you got, because you ain't got nothing. It's based on who you are. Now, the whole idea of who you are comes from what little you got and how resourceful you are at making it into something. That's why you see all those sneakers when you go to New York City. You'll never see so many sneaker stores anywhere else. Why? Because the kids don't have cars, so their cars are their sneakers.**
>
> **--"Gangsta" Rapper Ice T**

Generalizations, of course, are by definition inaccurate, but nevertheless it seems safe to say that whatever his own contribution to it, Elvis Presley has also served as a cross-cultural-conduit for a sensibility and praxis closely correspondent to the Crowleyan notions of sovereignty examined here, namely the African-American posture of cool so enamoured of by white American writers from Jack Kerouac to Norman Mailer: as African-American culture analyst Donnell Alexander writes, "It wasn't until Elvis that cool was brought down from Olympus (or Memphis) to majority white culture" (52). I have

already examined the notion of "The White Negro" hipster and the Beat infatuation with jazz in earlier chapters, but perhaps the most crucial manifestation of The Great Subculture in the twentieth century is to be found not from *without* but from *within* African-American culture (with side trips to Jamaica) itself.

What might be called the *ascesis of cool* in Afro-American culture functions, as Alexander explains, as a form of inverse exaltation: literally, "Making a dollar out of 15 cents" (52), an inversion which lies at its very core as a creative response to the dire situation of a people in slavery. The Afro-American alchemical praxis of cool came about, Alexander continues,

> when the first plantation nigga figured out how to make animal innards--massa's garbage, hog maws and chitlins--taste good enough to eat. That inclination--to make something out of nothing and then to make that something special--articulated itself first in the work chants that slaves sang in the field and then in the hymns that rose out of their churches. It would later reveal itself in the music made from cast-off civil war instruments (jazz); physical exercise turned to public spectacle (sports); and streetlife-styling, from pimp's silky handshakes to the corner crack dealer's baggy-pants. (52)

While culture theorists such as Dick Hebdige, coming from a more traditionally liberal academic viewpoint, have tended to see in the views of white subcultural figures like Mailer and Kerouac a romanticization of the "Black Man" as a mythological inhabitant of "another order . . . a beautifully intricate system in which the values, norms and conventions of the straight world were inverted" (54), a closer examination of Afro-American culture reveals that such an order is not merely myth, but reality. Hebdige's depiction of a mythological black realm of inverse exaltation envisioned by white hipsters, a subculture where "work was insignificant, irrelevant; vanity and arrogance were permissible, even desirable qualities, and a more furtive and ambiguous sense of masculinity could be seen to operate" (54), is in fact a world that iconic black subcultural figures such as pimp-turned-writer Iceberg Slim and jazz legends Charlie Parker and Miles Davis literally inhabit. "See, I can't stand a black man who wants to be bourgeois," Davis--from a bourgeois background himself–tellingly opines. "That's a pitiful

condition to be in" (Kent 274). Davis thus undertakes a *destructuralist* praxis, becoming a street-level heroin addict and a pimp before going on to attain stardom, and then continuing to follow the spiral, breaking down and reconstructing both his music and his image (the two in actuality inseparable) a number of times.

Davis's characteristic attitude toward black cool is rooted in the history of African-American slavery, where an inter-racial divide opens up in black responses to white oppression. "At the historical core of black lives in this country is a clear understanding that deviation from society's assigned limitations results in punitive sanctions: lynching, hunger, homelessness," Alexander contends: "It's where the shoeshine-boy reflex to grin and bear it was born" (53). While those such as Mailer and Kerouac, then, could theorize a very real, tangible black cool and even partake in its attitudes, it must be kept in mind that for blacks themselves, the stakes were much higher, that "black rebellion in America from slave days onward was never based on abstract, existential grounds," but on the lived experience of oppression and marginalization (53). Among blacks themselves, the options were (and are) servility or sovereignty, *co-optation* or *rebellion*. For those such as Eldridge Cleaver, who believed that African-Americans were a kingly race who found themselves forcibly dis-empowered, but who would nevertheless persevere and continue the historical spiral back to a state of sovereignty ("But I would ask you to recall, that before we could come up from slavery, we had to be pulled down from our throne," he writes [199-9]), the choice was clear. Gangsta rapper Ice-T illuminates the situation:

> I don't have a problem with the word "nigger." Early on, it was only used as a derogatory term for a black person. You had the house niggers and the field niggers. The house nigger would be the one who was inside making the beds, cooking the food, kissing ass. The field nigger was in the field, fuckin' shit up. They wouldn't conform. They were the real niggers. I wear that term like a badge of honor. If some square Tom politician is not a nigger, then I am a nigger, you understand? I am not what you want me to be. I'm the worst side of it. The field niggers are my niggers. (104-5)

This divided response within African-American culture to the reality of white domination and dehumanization results in a paradigm that cultural theorist Greg Tate calls

"Stagolee Versus The Proper Negro"[9] with Stagolee (variously spelled Staggerlee, Stack O Lee, StackerLee, and a.variety of other mutations), a real-life figure become American folkloric myth and back again, equating to Ice-T's "field nigger," and the Proper Negro to the "house nigger." The latter archetype's main characteristic is servility, the desire to please, the willingness to accept white society's predetermined definition of him; the former archetype, in contrast, equates to the rebel, the"gangsta," the underlord who lives by his own rules, and alchemically turns an imposed situation of powerlessness into one of glory. The Staggerlee myth revolves around a homicidal encounter between Stagolee and a man named Billy Lyons--also variously called Billy the Lion, or Billy the Liar--in a bar called The Bucket of Blood. Stagolee shoots a kneeling Billy through the head for an incident ranging from cheating at cards to spilling something on his white Stetson hat (a transgression against style that any dandy might appreciate).

The Stagolee myth, writes Marcus, "is a story that black America has never tired of hearing and never stopped living out. Locked in the images of a thousand versions of this tale is an archetype that speaks to fantasies of casual violence and violent sex, lust and hatred, ease and mastery, a fantasy of style and steppin' high. At a deeper level it is a fantasy of no-limits for a people who live within a labyrinth of limits everyday of their lives" (*Mystery* 66). As such, the "murderously elegant psychopath" Staggerlee, explains Simon Reynolds, "is the pre-eminent model for black sovereignty, and as such the archetype that connects Robert Johnson, the Black Panthers, Muhammad Ali, Jimi Hendrix, Miles Davis, Sly Stone, and the superfly guys of the early '70s blacksploitation movies," as well as today's gangsta rappers such as Ice-T and their Jamaican counterparts, the "rude boys" and "ragga" (from"raggamuffin") reggae stars (136-7). In African-American culture, such figures come to constitute a form of royalty through the alchemical transmutation process of cool: "I come from kings and queens too, only mine have . . . names like Howling and Muddy, Bukka and Blind, Leadbelly, Lightning, Big Mama and Bessie, Papa Joe and Mississippi Fred," Tate declares, elevating the blues singers of black America's past to the status of royalty (67).

Reynolds's description of Stagolee as a "murderously elegant psychopath" also evokes Genet's descriptions of the gutter-dandy Armand from *The Thief's Journal*--who, upon

merely rising from a chair, "reigned over the world," and who possessed "the elegance, not of what is called manners, but of the manifold play of attitudes" (221, 222)--and Querelle, who attains "perfection" through the act of murder (*Querelle* 59). Indeed, the ascesis of African-American cool is closely linked to Genet's notion that "the only criterion of an act is its elegance" (*Thief's* 242), the gestures and attitudes which accompany it. In the story of Stagolee, the original Ice-man, it is the *style* of the killing that matters, the *attitude* with which it is carried out: "Stagger Lee shot Billy, in the words of a Johnny Cash song," Marcus explains, "*just to watch him die*" (italics mine, *Mystery* 66). This same outlook is reflected by Miles Davis: "See, attitude, that's what the black man's got. Attitude! The white man wants it so bad, he can't help but be jealous" (Kent 277). Similarly, Ice-T's determination to invert the meaning of the derogatory term "nigger," to wear it "like a badge of honor," finds correspondence in Genet's determination, if he "cannot have the most brilliant destiny," instead to embrace "the most wretched, not for the purpose of a sterile solitude, but in order to achieve something new with such rare matter" (*Thief's* 244). This inverse alchemy, "the finding of the essential soul while being essentially lost," Alexander explains, becomes the formula of black cool, "which is about turning desire into deed with a surplus of ease" (52). It's not just *what* you do, but *how* you do it: gutter-dandy style as Foucault's "experience of the author-function." Ultimately, the myth of Stagolee--"Nobody's fool, nobody's man, tougher than the devil and out of God's reach" (Marcus, *Mystery* 67)--is a rhetorical call to a particularly (African) American democratic version of sovereignty: "The coolness construct might tell us otherwise, " Alexander writes, "but we're all handed the same basic tools at birth; it's up to us as individuals to work on our game . . . everybody who drops out of their mama has the same capacity to take a shot" (53).[10]

COOL AS ICE

> **I thought, "Sweet" sure has caught lightning in a thimble. He came up out of the white man's cotton fields. He's pimped himself up to this. He's living high in the sky like a black God in heaven with the white people. He ain't no Nigger doctor. He ain't no hot-sheet Nigger preacher but he's here.**

--Robert Beck aka Iceberg Slim

A key notion in the development of black cool is the term "ice," signifying what I have previously identified as an "ascesis of apathy," an active application of the will in which, for example, one might "make oneself a criminal in order to avoid being evil, as is a volcano or a member of the police" (de Beauvior 53). One of the definitive literary examples of this appears in the autobiographical experience-book *Pimp* by Robert Beck aka Iceberg Slim, in which the author lays bare the inverse exaltation process of Stagolee.

At age fifteen, Slim relates, "I had graduated from high school with a 98.4 average. There was a sizable alumni of Tuskagee, a Southern Negro college, who insisted upon Mama letting them underwrite all expenses for my education at their Alma Mater" (41). Yet despite his intellect and opportunities, Slim soon finds that, as a black man in the America of the early 1930s, there is seemingly only one route to the kind of sovereignty he desires--the path of Stagolee. "It was like the poor chumps had entered a poison horse in the Kentucky Derby and were certain they had a cinch winner," Slim relates. "They couldn't know they had bet their hearts and blood money on a 'born loser'" (41-2). Slim quickly squanders his academic potential, finally ending up in prison for Grand Theft. There, he begins his apprenticeship to the Stagolee's gutter-dandy realm. "It was there in that dormitory that I got the insatiable desire to pimp. I was a member of a clique that talked about nothing but whores and pimping" Slim writes (74). Exposed to such talk, Slim soon begins to develop a new, dandified attitude: "I began to feel a new slickness and hardness" (74). Finally, Slim meets an old convict,"Drag," who initiates what he calls his "Degree In Pimping," instilling in him the beginnings of a Sadean "ascesis of apathy," involving an "active," Crowleyan application of the Thelemic principle of will: "Always remember whether you be sucker or hustler, in the world out there, you've got that vital edge if you can iron-clad your feelings," Drag lectures Slim.

> I picture the human mind as a movie screen. If you're a dopey sucker, you'll just sit and watch all kinds of mind-wrecking, damn fool movies on that screen, Son, there is no reason for anybody to project on that screen anything that will worry him or dull that vital edge. After all, we are the absolute bosses of that whole theatre and show in our minds. We even write the script. So always

> write positive, dynamic scripts and show only the best movies for you on that screen, whether you are pimp or priest.[11] (74-5)

What Blanchot calls in relation to Sade "the spirit of negation applied to the man who has chosen to make himself supreme," resulting in the development of "true energy" (67), is reinvented here in the street code of Stagolee. In true Sadean fashion, Drag's narrative functions as a rhetorical call to transgression, infecting Slim with what the latter calls "street poisoning" (41). Soon, he is dreaming of a sovereign, kingly.existence: "I would see myself gigantic and powerful, like God Almighty," Slim recounts. "My clothes would glow. My underwear would be rainbow-hued silk petting my skin. My suits were spun-gold shot through with precious stones. My shoes would be dazzling silver. The toes were as sharp as daggers. Beautiful whores with piteous eyes groveled at my feet" (77). Later, when he obtains his first prostitute, Slim's dream begins to become reality, and his alchemical mutation commences: "It sure was a thrill to have a young fine bitch humping for me," Slim recounts. "I dabbed a sponge into the box of Sun Glow face powder in the glove compartment. I made my face up into an even, glowing tan. . . . I felt the raw tenderness of first April winds lashing at the hem of my white alligator. I felt the birth stirrings of that poisonous pimp's rapture. I felt powerful and beautiful" (117).

In *Pimp*, we see Iceberg Slim *literally* inhabiting Hebdige's mythological "Black Man's" realm of inversion that is supposedly the fantasy of people like Kerouac and Mailer. WASP liberal-humanist sentiment may strive to depict such as realm as a wish-fulfilment fantasy constructed by disaffected members of its own race and class--perhaps yet another subtle way of neutering black culture and maintaining control--yet within black culture itself, such a world is indeed tangible: there, the transgressive myth of Stagolee is made flesh. As Alexander explains, "the hard road of getting by on metaphorical chitlins kept the sons and daughters of Africa in touch with the world and what it takes to get over in it: People are moved, not convinced; things get done, they don't just happen." To take on a role then, in the realm of *Afro-American* cool, is to *live out* its implications fully, as "real life doesn't allow for much fronting, as it were" (53).

SWEET

> **'Slim, all whores have thing in common just like the chumps humping for the white boss. It thrills 'em when the pimp makes mistakes. They watch and they wait for his downfall. A pimp is the loneliest bastard on Earth. He's gotta know his whores. He can't let them know him. He's gotta be God all the way.'**
>
> **–"Sweet" from *Pimp***

The ultimate portrait of the black gutter-dandy in *Pimp*, however, comes in the form of Slim's main teacher, a "super-pimp" named "Sweet." Slim's description of his first sighting of the legendary Sweet is perhaps the finest literary depiction of Stagolee:

> A gleaming black custom Duesenberg eased into the curb in front of me. A huge stud was sitting in the back seat. He had an ocelot in his lap dozing against his chest. The cat was wearing a stone-studded collar A gold chain was strung to it. He was sitting between two spectacular high-yellow whores. His diamonds were blazing under the street light. Three gorgeous white whores were in the front seat. He looked exactly like Boris Karloff in black-face. I couldn't believe what I saw. This was only nineteen-thirty-eight. Those Duesenbergs cost a fortune. He must have been the only black pimp in the country that owned one. My peepers 'jacked off' just watching him and those high-powered whores. It was as exciting as maybe watching Christ make his encore. (118-119)

As seen in the previous chapter, the gutter-dandy's presentation of the self as spectacle functions as a tool of conversion: here, as gutter-sage, Sweet's spectacular image makes a "convert" of the neophyte Slim, whose perception of the *world qua world* is altered permanently by this sovereign, stoically cool figure. "I sat there studying 'Sweet,'" Slim marvels. "He had to be six feet six. His face was like a black steel mask. Not a flicker of emotion played over it. He kept smashing the heels of his brute-sized hands together like he was crushing an invisible throat" (120). As the living embodiment of Stagolee, Sweet exists at the limits of society; by "breaking all the rules," he "escapes the fate assigned to blacks (servitude, anonymity, death) by a white society, and wins it all: women, drugs, wealth" (Reynolds 137). This transgressive criminal ascesis "functions as a potent metaphor for black pop rebels because it signifies total possibility," along with a dark

underside of "solipsism, psychosis, a Sadeian indifference to others' right to exist" (Reynolds 137).

Indeed, it is a Sadean styled ascesis of apathy that is Sweet's main "lesson" as he attempts to turn Slim into his "protégé." "I'm gonna watch how you handle yourself," Sweet tells Slim. "You gotta be icy; understand, Kid, icy, icy? You gotta stop that grinning. Freeze your 'map' and keep it that way" (162). Later, Sweet divulges the "book" of pimping to Slim, describing the original black pimps as an organized sub-culture, the first Afro-Americans to wrest any kind of power away from the white man:

> There are thousands of Niggers in this country who think they're pimps. . . . There ain't more than six of 'em who are hip to and pimp by the book. You won't find it in the square-Nigger or white history books. The truth is that book was written in the skulls of proud slick niggers freed from slavery. They wasn't lazy. They was puking sick of picking white man's cotton and kissing his nasty ass. . . . They went to the cities. They got hip fast. . . . Those first nigger pimps started hipping [black women] to the gold mines between their legs. They hipped them to stick out their mitts for the white man's scratch. The first Nigger pimps and sure-shot gamblers was the only Nigger big shots in the country.
>
> They wore fine threads and had blooded horses. Those pimps was black geniuses. They wrote that skull book on pimping. . . . You gotta pimp by the rules of that pimp book those noble studs wrote a hundred years ago. When you look in a mirror you gotta know that cold-hearted bastard looking at you is real. (194-6)

Here, we see Ice-T's previous inter-racial divide between the square blacks, the "house niggers," who play by the white man's rules ("Square-ass Niggers will try to put shame inside you. Ain't one of 'em wouldn't suck a mule's ass to pimp," Sweet tells Slim. "They can't because a square ain't nothing but a pussy" [196]), and the "field niggers," who eventually, as Sweet explains, migrate to the cities and there find a way to become sovereign, to seize power through a meticulous combination of slick street style and attitude mixed with pure atavistic ruthlessness.[12]

Sweet eventually accepts Slim into the exclusive fold of the true pimp. Slim finds that his own ascesis includes the injection of cocaine, which gives him a "superman's surge of

power" (132), and allows him to adopt the proper "cold" demeanour, prompting another pimp officially to give him the moniker "Iceberg Slim" (221). He then embarks on a seven-year journey during which he devotes himself "to getting hip to that pimp's book," finally reaching the pinnacle of his profession. "I had labored with the zeal of a Catholic Brother agonizing for the Priesthood," Slim recounts. "I had thought and acted like a black God" (232). Finally time and the law catch up to him, however, and Slim discovers the limits of his sovereignty, which are evoked through his recounting of the mighty Sweet's fall from grace, in reality a retelling of the myth of Stagolee:

> "Sweet" had lost his glory. He looked a hundred years old. . . . He had killed some pretty jerk from St. Louis who had insulted him in the "Roost." The poor chump had called "Sweet" an ugly, gray-ass bastard. "Sweet" had drawn his pistol on him. He prodded him into an alley. He made him kneel and then he pissed on him. This was too much to take, so the kid lost his temper. "Sweet" shot him through the top of the head. "Sweet" was laughing, in a good mood as he told me about it. It had cost him five grand to beat it. (280)

Finally time also catches up to Slim, as Stagolee finally "runs into the limits his role was meant to smash" (Marcus, *Mystery* 77). "At almost forty I was ancient as a Pimp," Slim recounts. "I looked like a black, fat seal in my expensive threads. For the first time in many years I had rediscovered my appetite for good food. I was slowing down. . . . The end of my pimping career wasn't far in the future" (291). At such a moment, writes Marcus, Stagolee is forced to confront himself, slowly sinking "alone in a slow bacchanal" (*Mystery* 77), a "disaster" from which he "who lives it sometimes emerges whole . . . dies young [or] cops out" (78). Of these three options, the first is Iceberg Slim's fate: he survives to take the raw experiences of his life and alchemically transmute them, becoming the writer of experience books named "Iceberg Slim" in the style of those gutter-dandies before him such as Henry Miller and Jean Genet. For Bruce Benderson, the "radical" street-life novels of Iceberg Slim and similar writers such as Donald Goines repudiate "the absurdity of the entire American liberal literary discourse" characterized by an obsession with "identity . . . 'finding oneself'" (Internet article). On the streets, there exists out of necessity a "peculiar aesthetic democracy" (Marcus, *Mystery* 77) which

values creativity in its various forms ("making a dollar out of fifteen cents") rather than conformity to preformatted conceptions. Gutter-dandies such as Iceberg Slim, Benderson explains, remain true to such ideals even as they leave the realm of the streets, seeking "their own rehabilitation in writing, rather than accepting it from the prison systems and social agencies to which they were relegated" (Internet article). *Pimp*, "written both as entertainment and as the voice of defiance," thus functions as subversive spectacle, a function taken up even more spectacularly within the musical realm of popular culture by a succession of stylish Staggerlees.

STAGOLEE VS THE TECHNOCRATS: CHARLIE PARKER AND MILES DAVIS

> **The endless fantasies piled onto the Staggerlee myth over the years were simple proof of the force of those limits, of the need to transcend them, but the fantasy, remade again and again, had its own force: it created new Staggerlees.**
>
> **--Greil Marcus**

His influence criss-crossing virtually all areas of twentieth-century culture, both high and popular (and in fact problematizing that divide more effectively than any dozen cultural theorists), jazz legend Miles Davis is in fact the American *destructuralist* gutter-dandy *par excellence*, with a career that literally spirals through a number of musical innovations and persona mutations, all fueled by the trumpeter's intense, intentional exploration of the limits of experience. Tate goes so far as to write that is impossible to "interpret Miles's work if you don't acknowledge his syncretism of life and music. This has less to do with trying to read his music though his clothes or his sex life or his choice of pharmaceuticals than with him being . . . a Stagolee figure who makes the modern world deal with him on his own terms if it's going to deal with him at all" (88). Yet Davis's advanced version of Stagolee goes even further than does Iceberg Slim's in closing the gap between art and life, as he first adopts the persona and then sets it loose in the world under the brand name "Miles Davis," a process vividly described in *Miles*, which is really less an autobiography than an experience-book detailing the theory and practice of gutter-dandyism as developed by the author, told in the unmistakable street-

slang voice of Stagolee.

FLIPPIN' (OVER) THE BIRD

> **Bird was the supreme hipster. He made his own laws. His arrogance was enormous, his humility profound.**
>
> **--Bob Reisner**
>
> **********
>
> **When Bird played, it was totally another ball game, totally something else, something different every time. Among masters he was *the* master.**
>
> **--Miles Davis**

If, as Greg Tate contends, Miles Davis eventually comes to be the "warrior king" of black culture (87), he first learns his sovereign moves from another legendary jazzman, saxophonist Charlie "Bird" Parker. As described in *Miles*, Davis's first New York encounters with the originator of "bebop" -- an improvisational form of jazz which roughly corresponds to Norman O. Brown's "Dionysian consciousness" in that it is a liberation of musical content in the service of in-the-moment existential expression, chaos loosely encased within a flexible outer skeleton[13] -- find him entranced by the effect not only of Parker's music, but of his very *being*, the saxman coming across as a contemporary version of Hadot's classical sage whose "spectacle of wisdom" compels those who encounter toward a new perception of the "world as it is":

> I turned around and there was Bird, looking badder than a motherfucker. He was dressed in these baggy clothes that looked like he had been sleeping in them for days. His face was all puffed up and his eyes were swollen and red. But he was cool, with that hipness he could have about him even when he was drunk or fucked up. Plus, he had that confidence that all people have when they know their shit is bad. (57)

Upon entering a jazz club called the Heatwave, Davis recounts not only the notoriously Dionysiac Parker's air of utter sovereignty,[14] but also an amazing feat of alchemical mutation which takes place as soon as the saxophonist, constantly on the edge of dissolution from his usual polypharmaceutical intake, begins playing:

> [Parker] took me into the Heatwave, where everyone greeted him like he was the king, which he was. . . . I was

> amazed at how Bird changed the minute he put his horn in his mouth. Shit, he went from looking real down and out to having all this power and beauty just bursting out of him. It was amazing the transformation that took place once he started playing. He was twenty-four at the time, but when he wasn't playing he looked older, especially off stage. But his whole appearance changed as soon as he put that horn in his mouth. He could play like a motherfucker even when he was almost falling-down drunk and nodding off on heroin. Bird was something else. (58)

For jazzman Gene Ramey, Parker exuded a kaleidoscopic, *haecceitical* presence: "He shouldn't have been nicknamed Yardbird or Bird Parker; he should have been called Chameleon Parker," says Ramey. "Man, that guy could change directions and presentations on you!" (Ramey in Crouch, "Bird Land" 259). This applied equally to Parker's life and to his art, which were intertwined to the highest degree. Parker would often converse in a hifalutin English accent and put on aristocratic airs, even in advanced states of dissipation (and indeed he was a remarkably gifted intellect who could converse with authority on most academic topics); musically, Parker's penchant for yoking the high and the low could be seen in his ability to render popular tunes of the day in the most advanced musical vocabulary possible, turning them *upside down and inside out* in an act of artistic inversion which was part of his personal *ascesis*.[15] "Bird would sit in anywhere we went," recounts Ramey,

> Bob Wills, Lawrence Welk . . . . We used to practice together often . . . . We would take "Cherokee," and he would ask me to tell him when he repeated something so he could meet the challenge of staying fresh and fluent. Bird liked to take one tune and play it for a couple of hours. Then he would know every nook and cranny of the melody and the chords. He was very scientific about those things. (259).

Likewise, Davis recounts that the effect on him and other young musicians of the era after viewing performances at Minton's jazz club by Parker and his equally influential bandmate, bebop trumpeter "Dizzy" Gillespie, was a life-altering one: "At the time I was hanging around with musicians like Fats Navarro . . . and Freddie Webster," he explains. "We was all trying to get our master's degrees and Ph.D.'s from Minton's University of Bebop under the tutelage of Professors Bird and Diz . . . that's how much everybody was

into Bird's and Dizzy's music. We lived and slept it every day. . . . We really studied what they were doing from a technical point of view. We were like scientists of sound" (*Miles* 61-3). A sound, it should be added, as freeflowing and expressive as had yet been heard by human ears, riding astride and perhaps even occasionally puncturing the border of chaos yet somehow remaining rooted: the alchemical manipulation of the ***materia prima***, the framing of Dionysus.

Charlie Parker, then, was a Stagolee with a purpose: "getting over" as a black man in an everyday world which "belonged" to whites, surely, but something more as well. His was the rhetorical sound and vision of an Afro-American form of "equal access" sovereignty which functioned as a siren's song toward a society of masters without slaves. "The African work of art," writes Vaneigem, "is not considered complete until it has become a form of ***speech***, a word-in-action, a creative element which ***functions***" (*Revolution* 201). Thus we have Parker as a musical Stagolee, a black man whose overall style was akin to "the gangster hero, the charming anarchist that Cagney introduced in *Public Enemy*,"[16] his imagination the ammo fueling his main weapon, the saxophone, its "tommy gun velocity" inverting and finally imploding clichés and reinvigorating the jazz medium at a single stroke (Crouch, "Bird Land" 257). Akin to Deleuze and Guatarri's previously discussed notion of "free disjunction" (multiple personae reflected from a "faceless and transpositional subject" [*Anti* 77]), Parker, Crouch contends, denies societal predestination and identity politics, his existence traversing the poles of high and low and most points in between, "at once aristocracy and the rabble, the self-made creator of a vital and breathtakingly structured jazz vernacular and an anarchic man of dooming appetites" ("Bird Land" 256). Yet the most important point here is the direct relationship between art and life: for Parker, finally, such binary divisions are imploded and reconfigured in a sovereign, *creative* individual endowed with a Dionysian consciousness. "At its best, improvisation in everyday life has much in common with jazz," says Vaneigem (*Revolution* 195); for Parker, there was no distinction between the two, as jazz vocalist Earl Coleman explains:

> You could look at Bird's life and see just how much his music was connected to the way he lived. . . . You just

> stood there with your mouth open and listened to him discuss books with somebody on philosophy or religion and science, things like that. Thorough. A little while later, you might see him over in a corner somewhere drinking wine out of a paper sack with some juicehead. Now that's what you hear when you listen to him play: he can reach the most intellectual and difficult levels of music, then he can turn around--now watch this--and play the most low down, funky blues you ever want to hear. That's a long road for somebody else, from all that high intelligence all the way over to those blues, but for Charlie Parker it wasn't half a block; it was right next door. (Crouch, "Bird Land" 256)

The fluidity with which Parker, as Stagolee armed with a sax instead of a pistol, moves through life, as recognized by Miles Davis, forms a direct challenge to the rigid Apollonian structures of white society, positing a curative for "the curse of a technological civilisation of quantified exchange and scientific knowledge [which] has no means of freeing people's spontaneous creativity *directly* [and] does not even allow people to *understand* the world in any unmediated fashion" (Vaneigem, *Revolution* 197). Parker himself places the emphasis on his art as a direct transmutation of experience, meant to *affect* the average listener in a specific sense: "I think it's just rather more or less the way a man feels when he's playing his instrument," he told one interviewer. "Most people fail to realize that most of the things they hear, either coming out of a man's horn ad lib, or else things that are written . . . I mean, they're just experiences" ("Interview 1953" 115, 119). Parker stresses that musical communication is the key, "something [the people] could understand, something that was beautiful, you know? There's definitely--there's stories and stories and stories that can be told in the musical idiom, you know? You wouldn't say idiom either, it's--it's so hard to describe music other than the basic way . . . harmony, melody, and rhythm. But, I mean, people can do so much more with music than that--it can be very descriptive in all kinds of ways, you know? All walks of life" ("Interview 1954" 122, 123). As Coleman's recollection makes clear, Parker's "art of existence" ultimately was a rhetorical denial of *all* societally imposed limitations, his "story" a public declaration that "finally there was no law" (Crouch, "Bird Land" 258). Crowley, delineating the nature of the Baphomet, sounds as if he could just as easily be

describing Charlie Parker: "He rejoices in the rugged and the barren no less than in the smooth and fertile," says Crowley. "All things equally exalt him. He represents the finding of exstasy in every phenomenon, however naturally repugnant; he transcends all limitations: he is Pan; he is All" (*Book of Thoth* 106).

MILES DAVIS: DARK MAGUS

Miles Davis *is* the black aesthetic.

--Greg Tate

****

My ego only needs a good rhythm section.

--Miles Davis

Of all the Stagolees that the sovereign figure of Charlie "Bird" Parker undoubtedly "gave birth" to, both within the musical world and outside of it, none surpasses his "student," Miles Dewey Davis III, who refines the advanced version of "masters without slaves" gutter-dandyism for a mass media that Parker--whose zealous predilection for limit-experience via narcotics and alcohol results in his death at 34 in 1954, and who enjoys little public recognition during his lifetime--is unable to utilize fully. Throughout his long career, Davis constantly utilizes the *destructuralist* spiral as an ascesis by which to reinvent himself, coining a number of influential musical styles and corresponding variations of the Stagolee persona, both of which would sire myriad offspring in non-jazz popular culture, musical genres such as rock and hip-hop / rap.

Davis's version of gutter-dandyism is both inspired by and a critique of his life-altering contact with Charlie Parker. While Davis proceeds to work Parker's lawlessness, his sex-and-drug fed exploration of limit-experience into his own *destructuralist ascesis*, this is tempered by what he sees as flaws in Parker's overall design, in his "cool": in particular, what he repeatedly calls Parker's "greed," his overall disregard for "taking care of business," for "getting over" in a hostile world, akin to Alexander's credo of "making a dollar out of 15 cents."[17] Too often lacking *any* semblance of Apollonian control, Parker's flagrant indulgences limited his audience and finally ensured that his influence would be to a large degree posthumous. In a key passage from *Miles*, Davis relates the attitude that would see him become the most influential "jazz" musician of all time:

> I saw what happened to other great musicians, like Bird. One of the basic things I understood was that success in this industry always depends upon how many records you sell, how much money you make for the people who control the industry. You could be a great musician, an innovative and important artist, but nobody cared if you didn't make the white people who were in control some money. . . . As a musician and as an artist, I have always wanted to reach as many people as I could through my music. And I have never been ashamed of that. Because I never thought that the music called "jazz" was ever meant to reach just a small group of people, or become a museum thing locked under glass like all other dead things that were once considered artistic. I always thought it should reach as many people as it could, like so-called popular music, and why not? (205)

Davis's attitude here exemplifies both the Afro-American imperative to "get over"[18] and the African notion of art as a living entity, a, force, something that *functions*, as opposed to an object to be contemplated, a "thing," a commodity.[19] As we will see, Davis as Stagolee indeed demands it both ways: he conflates the "serious" and the "popular" and in doing so becomes the Dark Magus, embodying "the two aspects of a single face which simultaneously penetrate and intersect one another, always taking on new form like the reflection in a kaleidoscope" (Müller, *Baphomet* 11). As poet and jazz scholar Amiri Baraka explains, Davis's "music was a constantly shifting expression of his whole self . . . he could play, would play, whatever he wanted to, always with that provocative 'Me-ness' that allows us to identify his playing instantly." Davis, says Baraka, is "psychologically wired to the whole mad spectrum of Americana (as in the flight with Bird), his personal antics reflect a self-conscious desire to be 'outside' even while, in some ways, being inside (except he was Black)" ("Miles After Miles").[20] Davis, however, is not only both simultaneously "inside" and "outside," and in fact travels past such binary conceptions to a space Foucault locates at the "frontiers" of consciousness, "beyond the inside-outside alternative" (*Foucault Reader* 45). In this way, he fits Jessica Feldman's definition of the dandy as a figure who "casts into doubt, even while he underscores, the very binary oppositions by which his culture lives" (4).[21]

BIRTH OF THE COOL

In this life, therefore, it is our chief endeavour to change the body of infancy, so far as nature permits and assists, into another body which is fitted for many things.

--Spinoza

****

If I don't have something on I like, I can't play.

--Miles Davis

As he recounts in *Miles*, Davis was from an early age attracted to the notion of a *limit-experience*, of a possibly transgressive contact with a life-altering force. He recalls at age three being transfixed by the blue flame from a gas stove: "I saw that flame and felt that hotness of it close to my face," he writes:

> I felt fear, real fear, for the first time in my life. But I remember it also like some kind of adventure, some kind of weird joy, too. I guess that experience took me someplace in my head I hadn't seen before. To some frontier, some edge, maybe, of everything possible. . . . The fear I had was almost like an *invitation*, a challenge to go forward into something I knew nothing about. That's where I think my personal philosophy of life and my commitment to everything I believe in started, with that moment. (italics mine, 11)

As he matures, the "flame" periodically reappears to Davis in the form of music and the men who play it. Raised in the city, Davis recounts trips to his grandfather's farm in Arkansas at "about age six or seven," when he and and his relatives

> would be walking on these dark country roads at night and all of a sudden this spooky music would seem to come out of nowhere . . . somebody would be playing guitar the way B.B. King plays. And I remember a man and a woman singing and talking about getting *down!* . . . that kind of stuff stayed with me, you know what I mean? . . . That *kind* of sound in music, that blues, church, back-road funk kind of thing . . . after dark when the owls came out hooting." (29)

Dionysian nature, free from the constrictions of middle-class urban life, thus becomes for Davis inextricably interwined with his notion of music, so much so that even at such an early age he "already had some idea of what I wanted my music to sound like" (29).

As he ages and begins playing the trumpet, Davis then finds, in the person of one Levi Maddison, a fellow trumpet student, the other part of the equation crucial to his developing art: *style* and *attitude*. "Levi had that air about him when he picked up the horn that you were going to hear something you'd never heard before in your life," he explains. "Only a few people had that attitude. Dizzy [Gillespie] had it and I think I have it. But Levi was the man" (35). The crucial thing for Davis is not merely the accessing of, but the stylization, the presentation, the framing of Dionysus. For Davis, the two processes were really one: when Baraka questions him as to "how he knew it was music he wanted and why the trumpet," Davis replies: "Basically, it was how they looked when they were playing," referring to the *sovereign* air of jazzmen such as Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, whom he would see play in St. Louis. "I liked that. I wanted to look like that, too. I liked the way they held the horn, the way they stood. I wanted to do that" ("Homage" 45). Here again was the flame, issuing its siren song, its invitation to come forward, toward the edge. Such is the confluence of personal style and artistic content for Davis, he explains to Baraka, that "I have to hold my horn a certain way . . . When I went to . . . check out how a band looked, I could tell by the way a musician holds his horn. If he don't hold it right, he can't play" (45).

Davis's alchemical transmutation into Stagolee really begins when, lured by the rhetorical call, the "invitation" of the jazzmen and their art, he journeys to New York City in September, 1944--leaving behind the trappings of his upper-middle class roots in St. Louis as the son of a dental surgeon--ostensibly to attend the Juilliard School of Music. Like Iceberg Slim, who throws away a scholarship in order to gain access to the transformative street-sovereignty he craves, Davis soon discovers that in order to begin the work of self-transformation, truly to become the sovereign author of himself, he first needs to *lose*, to "come down in the world" and jettison the cultural expectations and encumbrances of his upbringing. As Tate puts it, Miles "was a bourgeois boy who opted to become a street fighting man" (73), a path that will be followed by key gutter-dandy rock and rollers such as Mick Jagger, Jim Morrison and Lou Reed. Davis's real education, however, takes place in the streets and the jazz clubs of New York City: "Juilliard was only a smokescreen, a stopover, a pretense I used to put me close to . . .

Bird and Diz," he writes (*Miles* 52). Hanging out at famous clubs like Minton's, "the black jazz capital of the world" (53), Davis is as affected by the fashion sense of the musicians and their acolytes as he is by the music itself; even a street hood and petty drug dealer named "Collar" from Davis's hometown has been alchemically transformed through contact with the scene: "So . . . here's Collar up in Harlem, clean [22] as a broke-dick dog, white-on-white shirt, black silk suit, his hair all slicked back and down to his shoulders," Davis marvels (53). Soon, after some style lessons from famed saxman Dexter Gordon,[23] Davis himself becomes renowned as a natty dandy of the Baudelairean ilk, this functioning as a central component of the new musical style he ushers in.

Along with fashion, another key component of Davis's developing *ascesis* is his soon-to-become legendary intake of drugs. Basically abstemious upon arrival in NYC, Davis soon discovers that the "King" of the entire scene, Parker, is usually high on heroin while he's playing; during a recording session after he joins Parker's band, for instance, Miles notes that the saxman would take breaks and "come back all fucked up and shit. But after Bird got high, he just played his ass off" (76). Taboo in the middle-class world of Davis's upbringing, drugs are a *destructuralist* tool, giving Parker access to that crucial imaginative realm beyond the petty everyday world, the prepersonal chaotic flux that he is able to transmit back into the world through his art. Davis, too, soon develops what Reynolds calls a "voracious" appetite for drugs, though, as he notes, only "the most regal ones, heroin and cocaine" (135). Touring with another of his idols, dandified jazz singer Billy Eckstine, Davis has his initial drug experiences, and explains that for him and many others, drugs were seen not merely as an escape, but as part of an overall *ascesis*, a quick route to that Dionysian realm over which Parker was ruler and sovereign:

> I remember when I snorted cocaine for the first time. I didn't know what it was, man. All I know is suddenly everything seemed to brighten up and I felt this sudden burst of energy. The first time I used heroin, I just nodded out and didn't know what was happening. Man, that was a weird feeling. But I felt so relaxed. Then the idea was going around that to use heroin might make you play as great as Bird. A lot of musicians did it for that. I guess I might have been waiting for his genius to hit me. (96)

Years later, Davis would clarify his thinking concerning drugs as creative tool along Crowleyan lines: "Certain drugs might help you make up your mind, you know? They don't help you to play. . . . But if you're hesitating about playin' something, sometimes it can help you to go ahead and do it without any hesitation" ("My Ego" 164). However, Davis warns, drugs must be used *actively*, their paradoxical ability to dissociate the Apollonian lines of "reality" and provide focus applied in a purposeful manner: "When you take drugs and you got nothin' to do, that's when you get into trouble," he warns. "If you don't put all your energy in something, you get paralyzed" (165).[24] In this, as with most things, Davis speaks from experience.

Seasoned with these instructive experiences gleaned from New York jazz scene, and driven by his own yearning for sovereignty, Davis is not content to play second fiddle to heroes like Parker and Gillespie for long, and sets about leaving his "proper" middle-class self behind, creating his own version of Stagolee by launching what Francis Davis calls "an ongoing critique of bop" which lasts until his death, a critique which encompasses both the music and the personal styles of his trumpet-playing forebears. This critique--which yields a number of kaleidoscopic shifts in musical style, fashion and persona--is predicated upon Davis's metamorphosis from Charlie Parker's talented sideman into a sovereign Stagolee who will rule the jazz world for decades. Tellingly, the first recordings where he breaks into his own are sessions with his "Nonet" from the years 1949-50 that will eventually be released under the title *Birth of the Cool* in 1957, recordings in which Davis, in both style and persona, emerges with his own unique version of black sovereignty. Both musically and stylistically, *Birth of the Cool* is based on Davis's "critique" of his heroes and mentors like Louis Armstrong, Parker and Gillespie, an application of *a* Sadean *ascesis of apathy* seen earlier here in "Sweet's" tutelage of Iceberg Slim: "You gotta be icy; understand kid, icy, icy?" (162).

On the musical side, Davis's move is from the heated, frenzied fury of bebop, with "its impossible combination of the breakneck and the Byzantine" (F. Davis 204), toward a "cooler," minimalist sound. "*Birth of the Cool* came about as "a reaction to Bird and Dizzy's music," Davis explains. "Bird and Diz played this hip, real fast thing, and if you weren't a fast listener, you couldn't catch the humor or the feeling in their music. Their

musical sound wasn't sweet, and it didn't have harmonic lines that you could hum out on the street with your girlfriend trying to get over with a kiss. . . . But *Birth of the Cool* was different because you could hear everything and hum it also. . . . And that's why I think it got over like it did" (*Miles* 110). The Davis formula on songs such "Budo" and "Deception" is a slowed, chilled version of bebop that allowed the musicians to "put their own personality on certain chords" (Davis, *Miles* 119), a merger of personal style and content that begets the label "cool jazz." "For me, music and life are all about style," Davis reflects. "Like if you want to look or feel rich, you wear a certain thing, a certain pair of shoes, or shirt, or coat. Styles in music produce certain kinds of feeling in people. If you want someone to feel a certain way, you play a certain style" (398). In the case of *Birth of the Cool*, Davis brings Parker's Dionysian fire under the impassive yoke of Stagolee: the result is not a "cool in the sense of being dispassionate," but rather "focused emotional power all the more effective for being so low-keyed, so apparently subdued in character" (*Birth* liner notes).

Around this time, Davis also begins to formulate an approach to his personal and performing style that also functions as a critique of his idols. In response to what he considers a kind of "Tomming," or acting childishly subservient to white audiences, on the part of many black musicians, Davis develops an antithetical (some at the time might have said "heretical") approach: to present audiences not with a grinning, bumptious Buckwheat, but with a surly Stagolee. "I ain't never been no grinner, or someone who went out of his way to kiss somebody's ass," Davis declares. "As much as I love Dizzy and Louis 'Satchmo' Armstrong, I always hated the way they used to laugh and grin for the audiences" (*Miles* 83). He reacts similarly to Parker's onstage decline, as the deleterious effects of the saxman's overindulgent lifestyle take hold: "I didn't like whites walking into a club where we were playing just to see Bird act like a fool, thinking he might do something stupid, anything for a laugh" (120). In response, Davis goes out of his way to remain impassive, even dour, onstage (recall here "Sweet's" admonition to Iceberg Slim: "You gotta stop that grinning. Freeze your 'map' and keep it that way" [*Pimp* 162]).[25] He also violates the stage decorum of the day by refusing to announce the names of songs and turning his back to the audience when not playing.[26] All his

movements are now filtered through a dandified sensibility: "I was into whether I should stand like this or that, should I hold my trumpet this way or that way when I played. Should I do this or that, speak to the audience, tap my right foot or left foot. Should I tap my foot inside my shoe so nobody would see me doing it?" (*Miles* 133).[27] Here is a framing of Dionysus akin to Baudelaire's "burning need to create for oneself a personal originality" (*Painter* 27), a "daemonization of the Apollonian" in action in the re-creation of the self as a "manufactured object," or "product of biology manipulated for art" (Paglia, *Sexual* 391, 489-511).[28] Davis himself later tacitly acknowledges this journey down the left-hand path of self-creation by calling himself the "Dark Magus" on an album of the same name. With *Birth of the Cool*, Stagolee Davis has his cake and eats it too, as he paradoxically "commodifies" himself for public consumption while also staking out a form of defiant sovereignty, becoming a "black aesthetic signifier in the flesh" (Tate 87) who will continue to "corrupt" many generations to come.

THE JOURNEY TO *AGHARTA*

> **As in the '50s and '60s, in the '70s, [Miles] emerged as chief prophet of musicality for the next 20 years. Punk, hiphop, house, new jack swing, worldbeat, ambient music, and dub are all presaged in the records Miles cut between 1969 and 1975.**
>
> **--Greg Tate**
>
> **********
>
> **One half of Davis's soul was pure *punk*: his rage against white society, his coke-fuelled arrogance, his misogyny. But the other half was pure psychedelia, full of mystical yearnings to be drowned in ego-dissolving immensity. Miles Davis's late '60s / early '70s music . . . seethed with the dread and the lure of oceanic feelings.**
>
> **--Simon Reynolds**

Davis's version of gutter-dandyism, however, is far from finished with his initial declaration of sovereignty on *Birth of the Cool*: he has plans for Stagolee, and ends up taking him where none had gone before and few have since, following the *destructuralist* spiral through a series of revolutions marked by remarkable musical innovations--such as the landmark "modal blues" of *Kind of Blue* (1959), perhaps the definitive "jazz" album of

all time--and transfixing variations of his gutter-dandy persona. Following the success of *Birth of the Cool*, Davis continues his "education" in the ways of Stagolee, becoming a street level heroin addict--going so far as to pawn his trumpet at one point--and a pimp, the final rejection of his genteel upbringing, a total embrace of the Other, The Monster, both prodigal and unholy.[29] "Shooting heroin changed my personality from being a nice, quiet, honest, caring person into someone who was the complete opposite," Davis writes (*Miles* 136).[30] From this point, until he reaches his artistic pinnacle[31] with his most experimental work in the period 1969-1975, culminating in albums such as *Live-Evil*, *Dark Magus*, *Agharta* and *Pangaea*, Davis's attitude in this era is encapsulated in the words of Gustav Meyrinck, who writes, "It may be so that the one whose neck has not been wrenched violently back by the Devil will never behold the stairway of light on the continual path to the land of the dead. The one who wants to ascend must first step down. Only then can what is below turn into what is above" (qtd in *Baphomet* 5). "I'm a number six in numerology, a perfect six," Davis writes, "and six is the number of the Devil. I think I have a lot of the devil in me" (*Miles* 136). Yet Davis's sights were also, paradoxically--as encapsulated in the very album title *Live-Evil*--set on the light, in, to quote rock group The Doors, "breaking on through" to the other side and achieving that lofty vantage point where the Devil and God are revealed to be The Same: the "view from above" Pierre Hadot locates in the sages of antiquity. "Miles worked black culture encyclopaedically," Tate writes, "from the outhouse to the penthouse and back again" (86), a remark whose connotations extend from the merely class-based and material to the metaphysical, invoking Davis's employment of Crowley's "magickal" Formula of the I.A.O.

THE PULSE OF ACTAEON

> **The dogs of madness must be the mad god himself; transform these dogs into gods. In heroic frenzy, the great hunter sees, and he himself becomes the prey. Actaeon, who with these thoughts, his dogs, searched for wisdom, beauty, and the wild beast outside himself, attained them this way; once he was in their presence, ravished outside of himself by so much beauty, he became the prey of his own thoughts and saw himself**

converted into the thing he was pursuing.

—Norman O. Brown

****

If thought is really to find a basis in lived experience, it has to be free. The way to achieve this is to think *other* in terms of *the same*. As you make yourself, imagine another self who will make you one day in turn. Such is my conception of spontaneity: the highest possible self-consciousness which is still inseparable from the self and the world.

—Raoul Vaneigem

****

Things take time, you know, you don't just learn something new and do it overnight. It has to get down inside your body, up into your blood before you can do it correctly. . . . Playing the new shit was a gradual process. You don't just stop playing the way you used to play. You don't hear the sound at first. It takes time. When you do hear the new sound, it's like a rush, but a slow rush.

—Miles Davis

If, until this period, Davis had refined a singular version of the Baudelairean dandy crossed with the Afro-American pimp-style of Stagolee[32] in the period 1969-1975, he moves through a new, transformative revolution of the spiral. Feeling hemmed in, trapped by his own success, with audiences and critics demanding that he replicate *Birth of the Cool* and *Kind of Blue* for the rest of his career, Davis enacts one of the most breathtaking individual acts of potlatch ever undertaken by an artist of his stature, an embrace of creative self-destruction correlative to the sentiments in Nietzsche's song of Zarathustra:

> What is great in a man is that he is a bridge and not a goal; what can be loved in a man is that he is a *going-across* and a *down-going*. I love those who do not know how to live except their lives be a down-going, for they are those who are going across. (*Thus Spoke* 44)

Previously, Davis had embraced this act of *down-going* in order to rid himself of the strictures of his upbringing and *go across* (which translates into Stagolee slang as a

metaphysical version of *"get over")*; now, he will employ a similar process to rid himself of the strictures of being "Miles Davis." Davis lays the groundwork for this radical change with his mid-'60s Quintet, featuring soon to be jazz legends Herbie Hancock (keys) Wayne Shorter (sax), Tony Williams (drums) and Ron Carter (bass). "The way I had been playing before these guys came into the band was kind of getting on my nerves," he writes. "Like a favourite pair of shoes that you wear all the time, after a while you've got to change them" (*Miles* 277). Taking his ongoing investigation of bebop to the limits with the Quintet over six studio albums inspired in part by the innovations of saxophonist Ornette Coleman, Davis finally exhausts the possibilities both of jazz as a "pure" art form and also of his icy, buttoned-down form of dandyism, and proceeds to turn both *upside down and inside out*. Opening his previously circumscribed, "uncontaminated" jazz world up to the more chaotic, Dionysian rhythms of contemporary black rock icons Jimi Hendrix and Sly Stone on the groundbreaking *Bitches Brew* (1969), Davis, contends Tate, "seems to have believed . . . that he would first have to lose some ego and enter their worlds not as a master but as a disciple" (74). Later, "as he became a master of their language," he continues, Davis "would affirm Jung's observation that in ritual sacrifice, the sacrificer gives of himself to become one with the sacrificee" (74). With *Bitches Brew*, Davis commences an ongoing act of musical potlatch that culminates in the recordings *Agharta* and *Pangaea*, in the process creating a ***musical*** language equivalent to Foucault's prose of Actaeon, "scattering the act of writing and the writer himself into the distance of the simulacrum in which he loses himself, breathes and lives" ("Prose" xxxviii).[33]

The journey to Agharta is thus accompanied by Davis's radical destructuring of psyche and image. Gone is the tightly button-downed dandy of the past: " I was changing my attitude about a lot of things, like the look of my wardrobe," Davis writes of this period. "I started wearing African dashikis and robes and looser clothes . . . I had moved away from the cool Brooks Brothers look and into this other thing, which for me was more what was happening with the times" (*Miles* 310).[34] The icy cool of Davis's previous musical units is also now supplanted by hot, sweaty live performances, fuelled by the leader's copious consumption of alcohol and cocaine. Yet so complete is Davis's ongoing "creative destruction" that the trumpeter never appears to be "an old jazz hand who was

trying to get hip to the Youth and Soul movements of the day," but instead comes across as if "he was redefining cool for that generation too" (Tate 88). In Davis, Stagolee is thus reinvented so as to "get over" to a new generation. Having kicked heroin in the past using the "cold turkey" method of sheer willpower, Davis now opts during this period of a rapidly spiralling *destructuralism* to utilize massive amounts of cocaine and alcohol both as psychic destructuring devices--"going inwards, tracing consciousness back to to its origins, working the spiral back through imploded galaxies" (Jeremy Reed, *Bitter Blue* 35)--and as painkillers for a chronic hip problem. Davis relates one particularly revelatory polypharmaceutical limit-experience from 1974 which leads to a musical breakthrough, including a telling reference to Charlie Parker:

> I was in Sao Paulo, Brazil, and had been drinking all this vodka and I smoked some marijuana--which I never did, but I was having such a great time and they told me it was so good. Plus I took some Percodan and was doing a lot of coke. When I got back to my hotel room, I thought I was having a heart attack. I called the front desk and they sent up a doctor and he put me in the hospital. They had tubes up my nose and IVs attached to me . . . everyone thought I was going to die. I thought to myself, This is it. But I pulled through that one. . . . They had to cancel the show that night and reschedule it the following night. I played and blew everybody's mind I was playing so good.
>
> They just couldn't believe it. One day I looked on the verge of death and then the next day I was playing my ass off. I guess they were looking at me the way I used to look at Bird, in total amazement. But that's the kind of stuff that makes legends. (*Miles* 330)

Lest sexual experience be left out of the equation, Davis adds that he "had a ball with all those beautiful women down in Brazil. They were all over me and I found them great in bed" (330).[35]

Musically, Davis turns his music upside down and inside out during this "electronic" period, until it is nearly unrecognizable. "As he progressed further into electronics," Tate contends, Davis was compelled to "overturn his prior aesthetic sensibilities, and to enter a zone of musical creation as topsy-turvy as the world of subatomic physics--which is to say, one governed by laws as seemingly random as those of material reality seem fixed and

eternally observable" (76). On key albums such as *On The Corner*, *Get Up With It* and *Live-Evil*, Davis's myriad influences range from the "low" (James Brown, Sly Stone, Jimi Hendrix and George Clinton's Parliament-Funkadelic, or P-Funk) to the "high" (avant-garde composers such as Paul Buckmaster and Karlheinz Stockhausen) as he and producer Teo Macero develop a cut and paste style wherein different takes and tracks from both live and studio situations are spliced together to form new compositions. Davis would also "direct, like a conductor" (*Miles* 299) as tracks were recorded, changing the direction of the music as it was being played by writing new parts on the spot or verbally requesting certain motifs as players often improvised around a single chord, usually anchored by a rock or funk rhythm à *la* James Brown. The result is truly a "music of the blood" (corresponding to Henry Miller's "writing of the blood"), or Dionysus framed, a "functional" music of flux and process rather than of polished, fixed form. "It was loose and tight at the same time," Davis explains, "casual but alert, everybody was alert to the different possibilities that were coming up in the music. While we were recording I would hear something I thought could be extended or cut back. So that recording was a development of the creative process, a living composition" (*Miles* 299).

Most importantly, underlying this "loosely tight" amalgam of high and low influences were the radical democratic philosophies of saxophonist Ornette Coleman, whose "harmolodics," a form of jazz as a way of life, were first heard on the 1961 album *Free Jazz*. Coleman's free jazz works toward the "collective polyphony" of early New Orleans jazz. On *Free Jazz*, "everyone is a soloist . . . relatively independent and equal with" one another. "Everyone is equal, and in a sense everyone is at all times simultaneously leading (soloing) and supporting (complementing)" (Schuller, *Free Jazz* liner notes). Extrapolating from this model, Coleman's "harmolodics" encompasses both the music itself and non-musical elements such as fashion (Coleman's theoretical concern with dress also adds to his credentials as a dandy), with the desired end result for "everyone to leave feeling themselves more of an individual" (qtd in Tate 117). In harmolodics, all players are "free" to solo at any time, a form of collective individualism that Coleman posits as a model for all of society, with "everyone making their contribution in perfect unison. That is the most radical thing that has to do with human expression, not only in music, but

clothes, cars, all things where you can bring your personal idea, seeing it make something better while everyone else is making theirs better" (117). Such a concept Vaneigem calls

> radical subjectivity: the consciousness that all people have the same will to authentic self-realisation, and that their subjectivity is strengthened by the perception of this subjective will in others. This way of getting out of oneself and radiating out, not so much toward others but toward that part of oneself that is to be found in others, is what gives creative spontaneity the strategic importance of a launching pad. The concepts and abstractions which rule us have to be returned to their source, to lived experience, not in order to validate them, but on the contrary to correct them, to turn them on their heads. . . . This is a necessary precondition of people's immanent realisation that their individual creativity is indistinguishable from universal creativity. The sole authority is one's own lived experience: and this everyone must prove to everyone else. (*Revolution* 196)

Davis's genius is to have his version of Stagolee, the Dark Magus, hijack Coleman's theory and get it across into popular culture in a way that Coleman never would, in the process remaking Stagolee into a vehicle for societal liberation, transcending the solipsistic individual sovereignty of the pimp. On the live albums *Dark Magus*, *Pangaea*, and *Agharta*, Davis goes beyond Coleman by "having an entire band of improvising composers creating a pan-ethnic web of avant garde music locked as dead in the pocket as P-Funk" (Tate 80). By allowing "one human being's voice to assume universal proportions through self-expression in a collective framework," Davis and his band "celebrate jazz as a way of life and an aesthetic model for the human community" (80).

PARADISE PLAYED

> **I knew what I wanted would come out of a process and not some prearranged shit . . . that's what makes jazz so fabulous. Any time the weather changes it's going to change your whole attitude about something, and so a musician will play differently, especially if everything is not put in front of him. A musician's attitude *is* the music he plays.**
>
> **--Miles Davis**

Recorded in Japan on the afternoon and evening of February 1, 1975, with an ailing

Davis reportedly wired on cocaine and acid, the double-live albums *Agharta* ("the name given to a spiritual center of power . . . whether it existed in the material world or not . . . a paradise of the future where earthly problems were resolved and transmuted to a higher plane" [Toop, *Panthalassa* liner notes]), and *Pangaea* ("the primordial continent into which all the present ones are ingeniously fitted in jigsaw fashion" [Toop, *Panthalassa* liner notes]) represent the apex of Davis's work. On these releases, Davis renders his studio experiments "on stage, in real time," the band constructing "cinematic dissolves and jump cuts similar to those previously achieved only at the editing block." The result is a polyrhythmic realm of radical subjectivity, a "temporary autonomous zone where music conventions did not apply and jazz critics were lost souls" (Toop, *Panthalassa* liner notes). In Miles's Agharta, high and low are melded, the Other finally revealed as The Same in music that "worked according to principles that were Utopian yet realistic: mystical yet plugged into the equally important world of platform shoes and hot pants" (Toop, *Panthalassa* liner notes). Here, on long, exploratory tracks like "Prelude (Part One)" and "Zimbabwe," a primordial stew of pan-global musical influences collide--wailing rock guitars, throbbing Indian percussion, and Davis's shrieking trumpet played through a wah-wah pedal and rendered unrecognizable from the mellow *Birth of the Cool* era--and Dionysus is reflected in a "loosely tight" kaleidoscopic framework defined by Reynolds [in reference to the music of the heavily Davis-influenced German group Can] as a form of "*fluid* architecture" which "defies the laws of geometry and gravity" and "ascends and descends between several plateaus: periods of calm alternate with turbulence like the agitation of molecules on the brink of the transition from water to gas" (196). For Tate, the *Agharta* / *Pangaea* ensemble's "cohesion amidst sonic chaos knows no parallel in fusion, funk, rock, or either the black or white avant garde," resulting in "the world's first fully improvisational acid-funk band" (82).

Finally, the outer "frame" which shapes this sonic chaos is Miles himself. Through the sheer force of his ever-evolving Stagolee persona, he fashions a vehicle by which others can free themselves; paradoxically, while Davis transforms his bands into "palettes which somehow work for him more like the democratic process than like pigments did for Picasso," Tate contends, "his charisma . . . has also made each band seem like the product

of his genius alone" (72). In this way, Davis's gutter-dandy persona now functions as an invitation to realm of Agharta, providing a passageway through which the listener may psychically pass into a freer, more truly democratic realm, spurring on him or her to "seize power" and begin the work of self-transformation. The siren's song of *Agharta* and *Pangaea* is the revenge of the Dark Magus upon the Apollonian bourgeois society he despises, in true Sadean fashion spawning a legion of insurgent jazzers, rockers and rappers in the years to come.

THE GUTTER-DANDY AS PUNK: LOU REED -- TRANSFORMER

> **I do not condemn the music of words and all that it brings with it by way of dissonance, harshness and new sweetness. But a modelling of the soul attracts me much more. To oppose a living geometry to the decorative charm of sentences. To have style and not *a* style. . . . A style which would only be born by cutting something from me, from a hardening of thought during its brutal passage from the interior to the exterior. . . . To expose our phantoms to the spray of a petrifying fountain, not to learn how improve on ingenious objects, but to petrify, in passing, anything shapeless which comes out of us. To make concepts acquire volume.**
>
> **--Jean Cocteau**
>
> ***
>
> **We, the creative ones everywhere, must . . . seize control of the human process by assuming control of ourselves. We must reject the conventional figure of 'unchanging human nature.' There is in fact no such permanence anywhere. There is only *becoming*.**
>
> **--Alexander Trocchi**
>
> ***
>
> **There are different parts to everybody's personality, you just amplify one. . . . There are a lot of different Lou Reeds . . . sometimes we have meetings.**
>
> **--Lou Reed**

Lou Reed's rock and roll career, both in his first major band, The Velvet Underground, and as a solo artist, combines aspects of the Crowleyan thread which runs through the gutter-dandyism of the second half of the twentieth-century, merging of the sovereign

primitivist appeal of early Elvis and the more conceptual *destructuralist* notions and Stagolee attitude of Miles Davis (whose bourgeois roots he shares) in one constantly shifting and mutating persona which collapses the mind-body dualism which permeates much of rock and roll to this day ("I'm like an Elvis Presley with brains, or a Bob Dylan with looks," is how a typically caustic Reed put it in 1978 [Cocks 61]). In Reed's music, primal three-chord garage rock meets the theories of Davis and Ornette Coleman, further democratizing and demystifying them, making them available to anyone with the inclination to pick up an electric guitar. Reed extends the genealogical line of The Great Subculture into rock and roll, manifesting the theory and praxis of Sade and Baudelaire in a form imbued with Crowley's democratic dictum "Do What Thou Wilt Shall Be The Whole Of The Law," where sovereignty is not a matter of class, of birth, but of the individual's will to obtain it, a notion made plain by Reed's constant recurring theme of "control," of "seizing power" from those outside forces that would mold you and using it to become the Creator of oneself, or, in the rhizomatic Reed's case, one*selves*. If, as Jessica Feldman writes, Baudelaire's formula of the "vaporization and centralization of the self" meant that "to chart its expansions and contractions was to trace the very shifting contours of dandyism," (3), then Lou Reed is surely Baudelaire's greatest twentieth-century heir, or as biographer Victor Bockris calls him, "the Baudelaire of New York" (*Transformer* 71).

KING OF THE VELVET UNDERGROUND

> **Make no mistake: the Velvets mattered. Take away The Velvet Underground and you remove the keystone of everything today we blithely dub 'punk rock,' and a whole lot else besides.**
>
> **--Keith Cameron**
>
> **********
>
> **So what do we blame The Velvet Underground for? EVERYTHING!**
>
> **--non Velvet Underground fan Steven Wells**
>
> **********
>
> **We all hated hippies.**

—Velvets guitarist Sterling Morrison

Like Miles Davis, Brooklyn-born Lou Reed is the product of a middle-class upbringing, the son of a Jewish tax accountant and a former beauty queen whose dream it was for her son to become a doctor or a lawyer. His childhood, however, was anything but idyllic, and by the time he turns seventeen in 1959, the rebellious Reed's perplexed parents have him committed for extensive electro-shock therapy in order to "cure" his "homosexual feelings" and "mood swings" (*Transformer* 13), a traumatic limit-experience he would document much later in a searing rock song called "Kill Your Sons."[36] According to Reed, this unwanted contact with the Dionysian, which left him blank, without memory for short periods, in fact put him in contact with the void, where found himself living amongst a myriad of personalities: "I think everybody has a number of personalities . . . 'From Lou #3 to Lou #8--Hi!' You wake up in the morning and say, 'Wonder which of them is around today?' You find out which one and send him out" (15). The treatments also inculcate in Reed a loathing of the "experts" later vilified by Foucault throughout *Discipline and Punish*, society's agents of control who would, in their "furious desire" to "judge, assess, diagnose, recognize the normal and abnormal and claim the honour of curing and rehabilitating" (304), come close to destroying him. These two factors would lead to a career in which Reed attempts to "seize control" over himself through the creation of numerous musical personae which are ultimately indistinguishable from the "real" Lou Reed. As he would sing on "The Black Angel's Death Song" from the first Velvet Underground album: "The myriad choices of his fate / Set themselves out upon a plate / For him to choose / What had he to lose?" (*The Velvet Underground and Nico*).

After graduating with a B.A. in the Arts from Syracuse University--where he dabbles in speed and heroin while the other students of the day puff marijuana--and spending time as an in-house songwriter for Pickwick Records in Manhattan, Reed forms the Velvet Underground, whose very name, taken from a pulp novel of the period, evokes the merger of high and low which marks the sensibility of the gutter-dandy, captured musically in the merger of his own brand of raucous rock guitar primitivism--a sort of intuitive take on the "free" sax playing of Ornette Coleman, whom he idolizes while in college [37]-- and the

trained, avant-garde virtuosity of Welsh multi-instrumentalist John Cale, his primary collaborator (the band is rounded out by Sterling Morrison on rhythm guitar and bass and Maureen "Moe" Tucker, rock's first female drummer).

From the beginning, Reed plows a songwriting furrow along the left-hand path, taking the route ignored in the utopian rock music that was cohering in American hippie culture, with its agrarian nostalgia that finds its ultimate expression in the infamous Woodstock concert in 1969. While supposedly "organic" drugs like marijuana and hashish are the main sacraments of the middle-class, heterosexually-oriented, colourfully adorned hippies, who look toward a Rousseauian society of human "equality" (at least for the men) in nature, Reed, coolly remote in dark sunglasses and leather, and his black-clad cohorts detail an urban realm of alienated loners, drag queens, whores, and junkies who instead inject methedrine (speed) and heroin, indulge in transgressive and fetishistic sex, and seek not equality, but the satisfaction of their ever-gnawing appetites. In early Reed songs such as "Waiting For The Man," "Venus In Furs" and "Heroin" are the "strategies, secret codes, impossible ambitions and loosed ids" of those "new urban hunters and gatherers . . . who have little connection to the surveilled corporate and suburban citadels" of America's ascendent bourgeois class (Benderson, n. pag.).[38] Sterling Morrison recounts the reaction to the band's first concert, at Summit High School in November, 1965: "The murmur of surprise that greeted our appearance as the curtain went up increased to a roar of disbelief once we started to play 'Venus' and swelled to a mighty howl of outrage and bewilderment by the end of 'Heroin'" (Bockris and Malanga 22).

On both disc and in performance, then, Reed and the Velvets are the antithesis of everything the nascent peace and love generation in America at the time stood for: by the time of their first album in 1967, "while most of the rock world was celebrating the Summer of Love, with its attendant emphasis on peace, the transformative power of hallucinogens, and harmony," writes Larry McCaffery, the Velvets "laid down the blueprint for many of the musical and thematic directions punk rock would pursue a decade later. The chief departure made by Reed and his VU cohorts has to do with the brutal honesty and sense of empathy brought to their depictions of a series of shocking character types and situations . . . Reed presented people and situations that either never

had appeared in popular music before or whose appearances had been utterly disguised or romanticized" (304). Equally disturbing to audiences, however, is the band's "icy" image and attitude, in large part derived from Reed's musical heroes from the world of jazz, Stagolee types like Charlie Parker and Miles Davis--whose practice of playing with his back to the audience the Velvets adopt--combined with a fashion sense which hearkens further back, to Baudelaire, whose notion that black clothing, "from his lustrous high hat to his impeccably polished shoes," was symbolically "appropriate . . . to an age in mourning," and that society was not moving toward some imagined utopia, but rather was on "a declining path, not upwards toward progress"(Moers 272), the band shares.[39] "The general attitude" of the Velvets, recalls associate Ronnie Cutrone,

> was fuck you which was very punk but nobody knew what punk was. The Velvets hated everything. . . . Before The Velvet Underground almost without exception all groups came out and said, 'Hey, we're gonna have a good time, let's get involved!', faced the audience, said, 'This is a time of love, peace, happiness and sexual liberation and we're gonna have a wonderful time.' The Velvets on the other hand came out and turned their backs to the audience. . . .
>
> For the performances they wore all black. Everyone [else] was wearing balloon-sleeve Tom Jones shirts, necklaces, high boots. The Velvets were into amphetamine. They wore total black, white face. They were totally electric, extremely loud. They got run out of Provincetown on a rail. (Bockris and Malanga 54)

The key to Reed's gutter-dandy persona can be seen in one of his most enduring songs, "I'm Waiting for the Man," a choppy, angular rocker which draws on his experiences scoring heroin in Harlem while in college. "I'm waiting for my man / Twenty-six dollars in my hand / Up to Lexington, 125 / Feel sick and dirty, more dead than alive" (*The Velvet Underground*), Reed intones in a voice unlike anything heard in rock music until this point. The subject matter here is delivered raw, and as Jeremy Reed points out, the song's meaning "is not allegorical, as it is with Pink Floyd's 'See Emily Play,' or The Rolling Stones' '2,000 Light-Years From Home,' or the acid trip explored in The Beatles' 'Strawberry Fields': on the contrary, Reed is coolly disinterested in the information he imparts" (*Waiting* 29). Here Sadean apathy, in the appropriated voice of Stagolee, makes

its debut in a four-minute rock song, as the singer takes his listeners on a tour of the mean streets of New York, depicting a world where one can live in direct opposition to the bourgeois conventions of accumulation, investment, and the deferment of pleasure. As he makes the drug connection, the singer takes note of the funky, gutter-dandy attire of the dealer, "all dressed in black," with a "big straw hat," as if taking notes for his own future version of this street-hustling Stagolee. In the final verse, the singer has achieved his goal, and in his euphoric state tells his lover, "Baby don't you holler, darlin' don't you bawl and shout / I'm feeling good I'm gonna work it on out / I'm feeling good, I'm feeling so fine / Until tomorrow, but that's just some other time" (*The Velvet Underground*). In "I'm Waiting for the Man" and other early to mid-period Reed songs, narcotic usage is described as an *ascesis* wherein, in the words of Bataille, sovereignty is recovered in the practice of joy before death in an "apotheosis of that which is perishable" resulting in a renewal of the "tragic jubilation that man 'is' as soon as he stops . . . glorifying necessary work and letting himself be emasculated by the fear of tomorrow" (*Visions* 237). The "pure existence" of the heroin nod is ultimately implied to be worth the inevitable "wait." No *caveat emptor* is given. This was a stance that virtually guaranteed that the Velvet Underground would never be accorded radio play, even in the supposedly "liberated" atmosphere of the late 1960s, one that frightens benevolent liberal-humanists as much as it does right-wing conservatives. Reed's remarks later during his solo career, spoken in the same blunt, blackly comic Stagolee street-language seen earlier in *Miles*, reveal a man who revels in his role as a gutter-sage, a "corrupter" of the youth of America who operates through the conversion vehicles of both the rock song and his own transgressive persona:

> The Velvet Underground were banned from the radio. I'm still being banned. And for exactly the same reasons. Maybe they don't like Jewish faggots. . . . No, it's what they think I stand for they don't like. They don't want their kid sitting around masturbating to some rock-and-roll record—probably one of mine. They don't want their kid ever to know he can snort coke or get a blow job at school or fuck his sister up the ass. They never have. . . . With or without the radio, I'm still dangerous to parents. (*Transformer* 294)

A DANDY WARHOL

New York was about drag queens and junkies, small-town freaks transforming themselves into gutter-aristocrats as they revolted against America's repressive homophobia. Warhol made these people 'superstars', and the Velvets . . . hymned them in speed-freak anthems like 'Sister Ray'.

–Barney Hoskyns

****

The great thing about the 'Exploding Plastic Inevitable' was that it left nothing to the imagination. We were onstage with bullwhips, giant flashlights, hypodermic needles, barbells, big wooden crosses. . . . There was a clear image of what the group was conveying.

–Ronnie Cutrone

****

Andy would show his movies on us. We wore black so you could see the movie. But we were all wearing black anyway.

–Lou Reed

Reed and the Velvets soon find their mentor in someone who shares their view that the true royalty of a bourgeois-dominated American life is to be found in the gutters of its largest urban centres: Andy Warhol. Warhol's Pop Art aesthetic, the elevation of consumer society's refuse, such as the Campbell's Soup can, into "high art," was also put into practice in "real life" through his elevation of a variety of guttersnipes, transsexuals, drug addicts and middle-class dropouts into "Superstars" who appeared in his many films.[40] This dovetails with the aesthetic Reed and Cale are already developing, and, along with the Warhol's own propensity for gutter-dandyism, with his black leather jackets, black jeans, shades, silver wigs, taste for amphetamines and apathetic Sadean demeanour,[41] leads to a marriage made somewhere south of heaven. "The Pop idea was that anybody could do anything," Warhol writes of his democratic strain of gutter-dandyism. "Nobody wanted to stay in one category . . . that's why when we met the Velvet Underground at the end of '65, we were all for getting into the music scene too" (*Popism* 134). A collaboration is thus quickly struck up, with the artist conceiving the

first conceptual touring show in the history of rock music in the form of the Exploding Plastic Inevitable, or E.P.I., a name which in itself suggests the movement between formless chaos and malleable form which comprises the *destructuralist* spiral.

IMAGES: THE E.P.I.

> **I love images worth repeating,**
> **project them upon the ceiling**
> **Multiply them with silk screening**
> **See them with a different feeling**
> **Images / Images / Images / Images. . . .**
>
> **Mechanical precision or so it's seeming**
> **Instigates a cooler feeling.**
>
> **--Lou Reed and John Cale, "Images"**

In the form of the E.P.I., Warhol and the Velvets put into practice in a live performance situation a state described by Foucault as "the sudden illumination of multiplicity itself–with nothing at its center, at its highest point, or beyond it," found in the artist's mass-produced pop cultural images (*Language* 189). The mixed-media E.P.I. is an electrified Dionysian conundrum, a chaos of swirling music, dancing and film images projected expertly by Warhol himself to create a maximal sense of vertigo described by Foucault as "a flickering of light that travels even faster than the eye" revealing "the eternal phantasm" of the void (189). With the addition of icy German actress, model and chanteuse Nico on occasional lead vocals, the effect was complete. A kind of mass invitation to *destructuralist* conversion, the E.P.I. was, Bockris writes,

> for the mid-60s, an incredible sight. Two of Warhol's films were projected behind the band. The Velvets, all dressed in black, often turned their backs to the audience. Nico, all in white, sang under a harsh spotlight. In front of them, two Warhol dancers in black leather, Malanga and Woronov (a Warhol actress), one often brandishing a whip, acted out images from the songs. Over the stage Warhol hung a spinning mirrored ball. From a balcony at the other end of the hall, Warhol focused colored strobe lights on the stage. The colored lights played across the whole ensemble, and the spinning mirror ball sent slivers of light splintering in a hundred different directions. This created a flickering effect, which, combined with the loudest rock music ever heard at the time, disoriented the audience, with mixed-up

> messages of love, peace, hate and revenge. . . . Warhol's show filled the space with images as disturbing and abrasive as Reed's songs. (*Transformer* 121)

While many of Warhol's special effects would be soon pirated by more peace-and-love-oriented performers in rock and roll's "psychedelic" era, only the E.P.I. presented the full picture, creating an unsettling, transformative environment where the Other was, as writer and queasy participant Steven Koch points out, revealed to be the Same in a loosely structured Sadean frenzy. "The effort to create an exploding (more accurately, imploding) environment capable of shattering any conceivable focus on the senses was all too successful," he recounts: "Seeing it made me realize how deeply the then all-admired theories attacking 'ego' as the root of all evil . . . had become for the avant-garde the grounds for a deeply engaged metaphor of sexual sadism, for 'blowing the mind'. . . . Liberation was turning out to be humiliation, peace was revealing itself as rage" (*Transformer* 122). For Rousseauian-minded hippies, this was a revelation that was tantamount to heresy: that "getting back to the garden" was not about sunny, pot-smoking brother/sisterhood in the bosom of a benign nature, but rather an immersion in forces beyond the realm of good and evil, an Artaudian "signalling through the flames" bringing to mind Camille Paglia's admonition to such types that "the Dionysian is no picnic" (*Sexual* 5). In part, Bockris writes, this was fuelled by the E.P.I.'s drug of choice: "Methamphetamine hydrochloride–speed," he contends, is "a key to understanding what set Reed and Cale's sound aside from the mainstream of American pop in the second half of the 1960s, which was based more on soft and hallucinogenic drugs" (*Transformer* 95).[42] Speed is "artificial," an urban drug, a chemical produced in cheap labs, inorganic, in every way antithetical to marijuana, the hippies' sacred herb, and when used as a creative tool, it yields results that, when combined with Warhol's own speed-fed mentality, are deemed unacceptable by a large part of society, both "straight" and "countercultural." Just how antithetical the Exploding Plastic Inevitable is to the flower child mentality of the day is brought home when the show goes on the road to San Francisco--the home of the hippie movement and its mainstay bands such as The Jefferson Airplane and The Grateful Dead--and the Warhol contingent are accosted by the famed promoter of the rock scene

there, Bill Graham, who, incensed by the band's *laissez faire* approach to hard drugs, explodes inevitably: "You disgusting germs from New York! Here we are, trying to clean up everything, and you come out here with your disgusting minds and *whips*!" (*Popism* 170).[43] It should be pointed out, however, that one Los Angeles-based group, The Doors, led by singer-songwriter Jim Morrison and inspired by the lives and words of Rimbaud, Artaud and Kerouac,[44] were pursuing a path very similar to that of The Velvet Underground, albeit one more commercially rewarding.

"HEROIN"

Poppy! best flower whose bud
Sends dreams to men that die,
I drain thy drowsy flood
That our impatient blood
May mingle utterly.

So, Hermes, thou art wed,
So, Aphrodite, mine,
In one sweet spirit shed
In one ambrosial bed,
In one fair frame divine.

–Aleister Crowley

****

We want to journey without steam or sail!
Liven our prison cells' monotony. . . .
And the least dim, who love Delirium
Escaping the great flock which fate enfolds
And taking refuge in vast opium!

–Baudelaire

****

All I wanted to do was write songs that somebody like me could relate to. Why not have a little something on the side for the kids in the back row?

–Lou Reed

The songs that Lou Reed proffers as part of the E.P.I. experience could hardly have provided comfort to Graham and his ilk. In addition to "I'm Waiting For The Man," Reed

and the Velvets essay other treatises which appear on their 1967 debut album, *The Velvet Underground and Nico*, characterized by both their lyrical and sonic transgression as encouraged by the album's nominal "producer," Warhol, who insists on realism: that the band draw on life experience and not clean anything up for the recording, but instead leave all the "dirty words in" (*Transformer* 130).[45] "Andy Warhol told me that what we were doing with the music was the same thing he was doing with painting and movies and writing–i.e., not kidding around," Reed explains. "To my mind, nobody in music was doing anything that even approximated the real thing, with the exception of us. We were doing a specific thing that was very, very real . . . which was the only way we could work with him" (McNeil 7).[46] To this end, "Venus In Furs" couches a bleak tale of upper class ennui and sadomasochism to music which sounds like psychedelia's demonic Other; "European Son" features a noisy extended finale of harmolodic free jazz style jamming *à la* Ornette Coleman heretofore unheard of in rock and roll circles, as each member of the band solos in unison; "All Tommorow's Parties," sung by Nico, lyrically conveys a sense of very un-hip-pie urban ennui. Capping all of this is perhaps Reed's most infamous song ever, the flatly titled "Heroin."

Perhaps the ultimate *destructuralist* song, "Heroin" itself unfolds over seven minutes in a series of spirals which mirror the rush and the nod of the ritualistic intravenous heroin high as transcribed from the singer's experience. A musical version of Crowley's notion of narcotic-ingestion intentionally applied under the user's will as a form of mystical *ascesis*, "Heroin," writes Reynolds, is "rock's definitive smack hymn," with "imagery . . . uncannily appropriate to the notion of sovereignty" (*Sex* 127). As the song begins, Reed, accompanied by a subdued musical background of strummed electric guitars and a tom-tom drumbeat, informs the listener in a voice that radiates a cool detachment approaching impudence (well-described by McCaffery as a "bored-but-hyper-hipness" [20]): "I don't know, just where I'm going / But I'm gonna try for the kingdom, if I can" (*The Velvet Underground*). The guitars and drums then pick up the pace along with the lines, "'Cause it makes me feel like I'm a man / When I put a spike into my vein / Then I'll tell ya, things aren't quite the same / When I'm rushing on my run / And I feel just like Jesus' son / And

I guess that I just don't know" (repeated), before dropping back off to the subdued level of the song's start. This pattern repeats throughout "Heroin" until the singer's drug rush peaks in its final third, where in a *destructuralist* frenzy, the band breaks apart the song's structure amidst squalls of howling guitar feedback and frantic, arrhythmic drumming as the singer defiantly outline his icy narcotic praxis:

> Heroin, it's my wife, and it's my life (chuckle)
> Because a mainer to my vein
> Leads to a center in my head
> And then I'm better off than dead
> Because when the smack begins to flow
> Then I really don't care anymore
> About all the jim-jims in this town
> And all the politicians making crazy sounds
> And everybody puttin' everybody else down
> And all the dead bodies piled up in mounds.

On his heroin high, the user here has attained "the view from above," a sovereign space or as he calls it, "kingdom" beyond worldy concerns and "above the categories of space and time" (Hadot 240). The body now functions as a site for the mystical alchemy of the self, taking the user to a place where he's "better off than dead," dead to the world yet still sentient, a *limit-experience* Foucault characterizes as "interior and sovereign" (*Language* 32). As gutter-dandy/theorist and heroin enthusiast Alexander Trocchi writes in *Cain's Book*,[47] "To be familiar with this experience, to be able to attain . . . the serenity of a vantage point 'beyond' death, to have such a critical technique at one's disposal . . . my own sanity has from time to time depended [on]" (*Cain's* 41). On heroin, Trocchi explains in a key passage which links Reed to his black jazz heroes like Charlie Parker and Miles Davis, "the organism has a sense of being intact and unbrittle, and above all, *inviolable*. For the attitude born of this sense of inviolability, some Americans have used the word 'cool'" (11). Donnell Alexander's previously cited definition of black cool--"Finding the essential soul while essentially being lost"--then connects here with the "Heroin" singer's admission, "I don't know just where I'm going," and his eight repetitions (including the closing stanza) of the line, "And I guess that I just don't know,"[48] while also declaring that the injected drug makes him self-sufficient ("it's my

wife and it's my life" -- heroin nullifies the sex drive, eliminates physical craving) and "leads to a center in my head."

Here, then, are the workings of Baudelaire's main tenet of *dandysme*, the "vaporization and centralization of the self," packaged in an accessible rock song format for the kids in the back row. As Jeremy Reed explains, with "Heroin" Reed cultivates "an objective subversion by which social values are exposed for their inadequacy to make good individual grievance. . . . In 'Heroin' Reed's siding with the secular urban identity is apocalyptic" (*Waiting* 4).[49] On one level, 'Heroin' argues for the sovereign individual's democratic right to seize the "kingdom" for himself without interference from outside forces, the foolish "jim-jims" and "crazy" politicians with their agendas of mass control. As Trocchi passionately argues, "We cannot afford to leave the potential power of drugs in the hands of a few governmental 'experts,' whatever they call themselves. Critical knowledge we must keep in the public domain" (*Cain's* 41). This is an argument that could have come straight out Foucault's work: that notion that the "experience of the author-function" or "the sculpting of the self" must be the cornerstone of any worthwhile future human societies, this including the Crowleyan use under will of all manner of sex, drugs, and "the breaking of all the prohibitions that form and guide the development of a normal individual" (*Language* 222).

ROCK AND ROLL ANIMAL: LOU REED IN THE '70s

> **Journalist: Would it be correct to call your music gutter-rock?**
>
> **Lou Reed: Oh, yeah.**
>
> **********
>
> **I felt that meeting with Lou, somehow we had been corrupted forever. You felt it in some emotional, stark way. I mean Lou always seemed like he wanted to go darker than sex, murder, mutilation, further. And you always got the feeling that you were definitely an idiot around him.**
>
> **–Legs McNeil, *Punk* Magazine**

If with the Velvet Underground, who go on to produce three more masterful and low-

selling records,[50] but only one with the revolutionary Reed/Cale team intact--*White Light / White Heat* [1968], which includes the band's ultimate musical merger of free jazz expressionism with blaring metallic rock noise, "Sister Ray," which lyrically depicts an X-rated party between a group of drug-addicted and murderous transsexuals and some befuddled sailors on shore leave--Lou Reed remains a shadowy figure, his Warhol-inspired license to reinvent himself really takes off in the 1970s as he pursues his solo career, as if his immersion in the phantasmagoric conundrum of the E.P.I. and his concomitant (al)chemical experimentation frees him now to assume any number of forms and embrace a myriad of mutating attitudes to become the ultimate rock chameleon, a polymorphic prince of perversity reflecting seductive Dionysian images. As Bangs writes in his famous blackly humourous treatise on Reed in the mid-'70s, "Lou Reed is a completely depraved pervert and pathetic death dwarf and everything else you want to think he is . . . an artist continually in flux. . . . Lou Reed is the guy that gave dignity and poetry and rock 'n' roll to smack, speed, homosexuality, sadomasochism, murder, misogyny, stumblebum passivity, and suicide" *(Psychotic* 170-1). In the 1970s, Reed literally *becomes* Miller's prodigious monster, mutating reality into any number of blackly seductive shapes and sounds, a millennarian Rimbaud figure who navigates the parameters of an imagistic popular culture in spiraling *destructuralist* movements of attraction / repulsion in which he embraces the low--decadence, depravity--in order to become high: a *down-going* which is also a *going-across*.

Reed's past limit-experience had allowed him to dissociate the Apollonian lines of his upbringing and remodel himself, but at the dawn of the 1970s, with the Velvet Underground making little mass impact, he found himself in a paradoxical place of failure, of commercial obscurity, yet also one of pure *possibility*, and seemingly unlimited opportunities for further exploration / mutation. "The seventies were a chance for me to get in on it," Reed explains of the "glam-rock" aesthetic which briefly held rock in thrall. "Since no one knew me from Adam particularly, I could say I was anything. I'd learned that from Andy: nobody knows. You could be anything" (Hoskyns 35). Starting out tentatively and once again anonymously with his eponymous solo bow in 1970 (an album

which rehashed a few Velvets' classics, a trend that would repeat throughout the decade as Reed reshaped his songs to fit whatever persona he was living at the time) as a somewhat beefy, valium-becalmed singer-songwriter type newly married to a blonde named Bettye, Reed soon meets another galvanizing force *à la* Warhol in David Bowie, a British singer-songwriter enamoured of the Velvet Underground who has created a kind of Wildean dandy for the space-age in his alter-ego Ziggy Stardust, and also penned the song "Andy Warhol," the lyrics of which make the point that there is no discernable difference between Warhol and his art: "Andy Warhol looks a scream / Hang him on my wall / Andy Warhol, Silver Screen / Can't tell them apart at all," sings Bowie (*Hunky*). For Bowie, Warhol is the plastic man, the "manufactured object" or "product of biology manipulated for art" who "teems with inorganic seed" (Paglia, *Sexual* 391)--and indeed, the admiring singer applies this Warholian formula of "daemonization" to himself to create Ziggy Stardust, the persona for which he is still most famous.

Reinvigorated by contact with his more famous disciple, a newly glamourous, divorced Reed himself soon emerges with a new album whose title tells the story: 1972's *Transformer*.[51] But unlike Bowie--who, aside from his flirtation with Warhol's crowd to this point is still coming more out of an British camp lineage from Wilde to Noel Coward to Anthony Newley and music hall[52]--Reed's various personae are all informed by his New York-bred assimilation of the Stagolee myth, and here his darker version of glam-rock (he looks vampiric on the album's cover) really amounts to the offerings of a Stag in makeup[53] guiding his audience through a cool-minded trawl through the New York City back alleys where the superstars reside, all the while tossing off pithy Warhol-inspired hippie-liberal-baiting epithets like "Vicious, you hit me with flower" ("Vicious," *Transformer*). With the involvement of Bowie and his talented guitarist, Mick Ronson, Reed manages to pull off one of the more subversive acts of his career, landing his only Top 40 hit to date with "Walk on the Wild Side," a jazzy hymn for Warhol's superstars replete with references to transsexuals engaging in fellatio and also including one of Reed's most overt public identifications with the street-pimp style of Stagolee, as he laconically calls on his "colored girls" to take over the "doo-doo-doo" chorus (*Transformer*). Tellingly, the singer also

has high praise for those denizens of the demimonde who never blow their streetwise cool: Candy Darling "never lost her head / even when she was givin' head," while Little Joe the hustler (male prostitute) "never once gave it away / everybody had to pay, and pay." "There are moments in every artist's life when past and present synthesize," Jeremy Reed astutely opines regarding "Walk on the Wild Side," "and this seems to have happened for Lou Reed in writing this song. It might have belonged to Isherwood's Berlin, to thirties cabaret; it is timeless as it pays tribute to those who live on the outside and create a panache, an inimitable lifestyle in doing so" (*Waiting* 79). As such, the song is a virtual anthem of gutter-dandyism.

THE MONSTER AWAKES

> **The man really knew his own capacity. He would take pure methamphetamine hydrochloride and grind it down, and include the whole experience in his music. . . . The trouble is, coming off the drug makes you very nasty.**
>
> **--Steve Katz, producer of *Rock 'N' Roll Animal***
>
> **********
>
> **[Lou] was always trying to move mentally and spiritually to someplace no one had ever gone before. He was often very antisocial and difficult to work with, but he was *interesting*, and people were *interested* in the conflict and some of the good things that came out of it.**
>
> **–Sterling Morrison**
>
> **********
>
> **One day it dawned on me that it was all like a movie. And the thing about movies is that if you don't like 'em, you can walk out. As soon as that became clear, it was all very simple.**
>
> **–Lou Reed**

Reed's reaction to his first taste of commercial success is to reverse course, and head for the ditch. Much as songs like "Vicious" and "Walk on the Wild Side" are in retrospect quintessential Reed, after having been given license by Warhol to become his own Creator, he seems to overreact to Bowie's benevolent influence during the *Transformer* period, as

if he has relinquished his sovereignty to the reigning dandy of British rock through collusion. In response, Reed embarks upon a series of remarkable albums–*Berlin*, *Rock 'N' Roll Animal*, *Lou Reed Live*, *Sally Can't Dance* and the notorious *Metal Machine Music*--and tours unequalled in rock history wherein the singer, says Bockris, was "hitting the zeitgeist smack on the nose day after day" (*Transformer* 255).

The first post-*Transformer* release, *Berlin*, is now thought of by many as being Reed's masterpiece, but at the time of the album's 1973 release the novelistic album's excursion through the disintegrating marriage (based on Reed's divorce from Bettye) of Jim and Caroline, two speed freaks--with commentary provided by a icy, dispassionate narrator straight from "Heroin" who calls himself "the waterboy" ("The Kids"), the man on the sidelines, and breaks from his litany of spousal abuse, infidelity, drugs and suicide to inform us, "And me, I just don't care at all" ("Men Of Good Fortune")-- was met with harsh criticism and low sales figures. "Reed's delivery and material on this album have a self-centred indifference," Jeremy Reed writes of Reed's Stagolee stance on *Berlin*, "as if he really wouldn't bother to look up if someone was shot dead in the same room," this an extension of the "disengagement" characteristic of his Velvet Underground persona as the "cool leather cat who knows the whole scene" (*Waiting* 89, 91). Accordingly, Norman Mailer says of the hipster, the white Negro, that he "has almost no interest in . . . judging human nature from a set of standards conceived a priori to the experience" and thus "abdicates any sense of conventional moral responsibility because it would argue that the results of our actions are unforeseeable, and so we cannot know if we do good or bad [or] whether we have given energy to another, [or] what another would do with it" (*Advertisements* 353). This "beyond good and evil" stance, which pervades Reed's chilled sensibility on *Berlin*, is not only Warholian, Nietzschean and Sadean in tone, but in fact goes further back, to the medieval millennarian thought of the Brethren of the Free Spirit, who held that the "enlightened" soul "passes into a state of total indifference, in which it cares for nothing, not even God . . . not even . . . about its own salvation." Such souls "cannot see themselves as good or evil" and "cannot judge whether they are converted or perverted" (Cohn 185). Reed's words thus echo: "And me, I just don't care *at all*."

Supreme cool as enlightenment.

Rightfully stung by the negative reaction to a masterful, if difficult work, Reed, on his subsequent tour, his psyche fired by methedrine, to which he is now addicted, commences an ongoing act of *destructuralism* which lasts up to and including until 1978's iconoclastic *Take No Prisoners*, a personal and artistic *down-going* similar to the coke-fuelled journey of Miles Davis from 1969-1975 which sees him implode the line between art and life to, as Rimbaud advocates, "make himself a monster, " or, in Reed's case, a "rock 'n' roll animal." Eschewing much of his solo work, Reed hits the road with a band featuring two flamboyant hard rock guitarists from Detroit, Steve Hunter and Dick Wagner, and proceeds to mutate his classic Velvet Underground songs in concert, turning them *upside down and inside out* and finally into a heavy metal musical inferno, and then employing the same spiralling *ascesis* on himself. Stick thin from appetite-killing methedrine injections, his head shaven Genet-style with iron crosses dyed into it, clad in head-to-toe leather adorned with bicycle chains, sporting black lipstick, a studded dog collar and studded leather wristlets as well, Reed now embraces Rimbaud's dictum that the poetic monster should ingest poisons and implant warts on his face, with the added advantage of his having the mass media there every step of the way to transmit his corrosive images to the world. British rock critic Nick Kent's hyperbolic recollection of meeting Reed during this period is especially memorable:

> He (She? It?) stood there for all the world like one of those mangy half-starved Mexican dogs . . . but transformed by some hideous miscalculation of fate into human form. The hair was shaved as close to the head as possible, like Charles Manson's when he was graced with a prison cut, and went one step further, but mutilated by large random patches of diseased albino colouring. It was only when I got closer I noticed these areas . . . were specifically shaped like . . . iron crosses. Then there was the face which possessed not only the most uniquely grey and decayed fleshly pallor I've yet to witness on any human visage but also a fixed glazed look to the eyes like several hundred watts of electricity were being fired through his central nervous system. The body was skinny and emaciated almost beyond belief. . . .

> It took me a good minute of solid staring to visually equate this utterly dissipated apparition with any previous incarnation that was ever named Lou Reed. . . . I've never seen a man so utterly paralysed, so completely devoid of life while still managing to somehow keep breathing, as Reed had looked that night. (171)

For all of this, however, Reed remains, however loosely, in command of his *destructuralist* praxis: "The really amazing thing was his control," explains his road manager Barbara Falk. "No matter how he carried on . . . Sometimes I had to carry him to the stage . . . the moment he went on he'd appear fully awake, aware and ready. His stage presence was absolutely consistent" (qtd in *Waiting* 106). From 1973 until nearly the end of the decade, Reed makes a spectacle of himself in a series of publically lived-out dark images, his magnetically debauched persona functioning as a conduit to the shadow side of life, his aura "so concentrated that each syllable suggested a novel" (J. Reed, *Waiting* 142). The rock 'n' roll animal, writes Jeremy Reed, "had become an impenetrable black magus, a figure who, like Aleister Crowley, represented the taboo, the left-hand side of the magic spiral, the intersection with the Great Beast and his designation 666" (*Waiting* 142).[54]

Nowhere is this latter point better heard than on the stunning live *Rock 'N' Roll Animal* album of 1974, where Reed mutates "Heroin" into a gothic psychodrama described by Timothy Ferris of *Rolling Stone* as creating "the atmosphere of a cathedral at Black Mass, where heroin is God" (qtd. in Bockris, *Transformer* 237). Reed here becomes a raging, leather-clad, speed-soaked Dionysus offering his flock "the ideal of a total emancipation of the individual from society, even from external reality itself–the ideal . . . of self-divination" (Cohn 286). Mirroring the *destructuralist* journey of original "cool cat," Miles Davis, toward a "hot" dandyism in the first half of the '70s, Reed now also, in contrast to the diffident chill of the Velvet Underground and *Berlin*, turns his white Stagolee persona inside-out, stoking his emotional fires and melting away his icy past. "Faced . . . with the absurd notion that his years with the Velvet Underground were the apogee of his career, Reed did the best thing possible . . . have Hunter and Wagner detonate the originals," Jeremy Reed correctly contends. "The live version of 'Heroin' on

. . . *Rock 'N' Roll Animal* makes the recorded 1967 version sound sedate. So too does . . . 'I'm Waiting for the Man', in which the song is afforded a volatility of vocal drive absent from the original" (*Waiting* 95). On *Rock 'N' Roll Animal*, Reed continues, "the cold detachment of Reed's voice on The Velvet Underground recording is replaced by an energy dynamic which has a score to settle. Reed had gone public . . ." (95). Any distance between the public *gutter-artiste* and the private man was closed as the dark magus of New York City now lived out his songs nightly on stage, doing a psychic tightrope walk across the void; during *Rock 'N' Roll Animal's* subsequent tour, Reed is often found alone in his dressing room "sobbing uncontrollably" after performances, unable to face anyone but his road manager, overcome by raw emotion (*Transformer* 256). "He was such a romantic figure at that point," commented a friend. "He was as good as you can be . . . very much a Rimbaud figure" (261).

THE END: MMM

> **With Punk, rock 'n' roll had been reduced to its most basic pulse. . . . Rock needs these periodic returns to *reductio ad crudum*. Just plug directly into the main-line teen valve and let whatever's bottled up blast through.**
>
> **–David Dalton**

****

> **I realize that any idiot with the equipment could have made this record, including me, you or Lou. That's one of the main reasons I like it so much.**
>
> **–Lester Bangs on *Metal Machine Music***

From his Velvet Underground days through to his unleashed persona as a rock'n' roll animal, Lou Reed's career is an exemplary of an aesthetic that will eventually become known as "punk,"a movement born in the streets of New York City but popularized by a British band called the Sex Pistols, whose singer, Johnny Rotten, has been accurately described as the "archetypal punk as fop, a reverse fop if you will, but a fop nonetheless. A dandy who not only lives in front of a mirror, but is a kind of mirror himself, showing others their reflections" (Dalton 74). Closely examined, however, punk's underclass

philosophy of D.I.Y. (Do It Yourself) and its Crowleyan insistence on democratizing rock and roll and seizing creative license back from an elitist bourgeois business culture are mere extensions of the ideas put into play in both Warhol's pop art projects and Reed's own musical career. "I just empty myself out so what people see is a projection of their own needs," Reed had said in pre-Johnny Rotten 1974 (*Transformer* 50). So it should come as no surprise then that Reed should release perhaps the ultimate punk statement, *Metal Machine Music*, in 1975, one year before the Sex Pistols are formed. Basically an hour of totally unmarketable white noise generated in his bedroom with a guitar and two tape recorders and then foisted by Reed on RCA records, with whom he was embroiled in a financial dispute, *MMM*, as it is known, is the nexus connecting glam and punk rock, with Reed's own raucous "rock 'n' roll" animal persona having a foot in both camps. As such, *MMM* "neatly signalled the end of glam as a whole, while the emphasis of the record on nasty, unmusical noise heralded the punk explosion that was to erupt the following year" (Edwards qtd. in Bockris, *Transformer* 282). Jeremy Reed astutely sees the album as "the first attempt to interpret amphetamine through electronics" (*Waiting* 111), and one might also see it as Reed's overt attempt to direct the *destructuring* electroshock treatments he received back at the world: to *dissociate* the world.

MMM, then, is the democratic *reductio ad crudum* of rock, a swirling vortex wherein artist and art, style and content merge and from which new forms may emerge. It remains unsurpassed as a pure gesture of gutter-dandyism, of the sovereign individual's ability to seize power from any and all outside forces which might impinge upon him. In doing so, it paradoxically posits spectacular *failure* as the apex of success. *Punk* magazine founder John Holmstrom puts it best:

> I saw *Metal Machine Music* as the beginning of the punk-rock movement. It was the ultimate punk-rock album. It was the greatest punk statement ever made. It was fuck you to the record company and everyone who bought it. It was, 'This is what I want to do the way I want to do it.' How can you get more punk than that? It was more punk than the Sex Pistols, the Ramones, everything that came out afterward. I think he meant it that way. . . .
> (*Transformer* 287)

Reed ends the decade at the frontiers of gutter-dandyism, beyond the inside-outside alternative. As with Miles Davis following his initial *destructuralist* success with *Bitches Brew*, Reed's sales figures plummet as he follows this revolution of the spiral to its conclusion. "He had become a wealthy loser, and only from that vantage point could he maintain so uncompromising a position," writes Jeremy Reed of the culmination of this period. "Poor, he would have to conform to certain elements of commercialism, but he had long ago had a consistent revenue from a healthy back-catalogue of records combined with concert fees" (*Waiting* 178).

It seems only fitting, then, to conclude this study of gutter-dandyism in Western culture with one of its greatest practitioners immersed in the life-art of *destructuralism*.

Notes

1. Camp is a loaded and ambiguous term, but also an unavoidable one when dealing with the exploits of the gutter-dandy in the realm of popular culture. Susan Sontag defines camp as "Dandyism in the age of mass culture," (289) and connects the (gutter) dandy's "vaporization and centralization of the self," in Baudelairean terms, to camp when she writes: "To perceive camp in objects and persons is to understand Being-as-Playing-a-Role. It is the farthest extension, in sensibility, of the metaphor of life as theater" (280). Henry Miller's description of the enlightened, sovereign life as "dreaming when wide awake" also finds correspondence with the camp sensibility defined by Sontag as "the consistently aesthetic experience of the world" (287). Camp also has in common with the gutter-dandy the *destructuralist* inversion and ultimate collapsing of the distance between the polarities of high and low, which are finally seen as equivalent, The Same. Camp "makes no distinction between the unique object and the mass-produced object," Sontag contends, instead seeing *all* of reality as potentially transmutable, giving it a "democratic *esprit*" (289). Sontag's famous characterization of camp as possessing "the sensibility of failed seriousness" is also relevant here, but only if we add that the gutter-dandy sees his "failure," his public *depowerment*, as an essential component of his overall ascesis as an oppositional figure. His "failure" is thus contextual, taking place within and defined as such by a societal order which he, as part of the Great Subculture, contests. "Failure" as such thus forms part of his challenge to the status quo (see Genet, for instance, who sees harmony in bad taste as the height of elegance). The spectacular failure that throws the very idea of "success" into question can be seen more recently in the suicide of Nirvana frontman and gutter-dandy Kurt Cobain -- a definitive camp gesture.

2. Perrett, especially, influenced by Lou Reed's music and gutter-dandy persona and by Crowley's theories (he even incorporates Crowleyisms like "The Beast" and "The Whole of the Law" into rock song titles), is a fascinating example of contemporary gutter-dandyism taken to the limit: see Nina Antonia's excellent biography, *The One and Only: Peter Perrett: Homme Fatale*.

3. Like Crowley, who strove to create a "Dionysian consciousness" for himself by constantly changing his appearance and his name, Baphomet, the idol of the O.T.O., was itself a polymorphous God, described in "different and contradictory ways. He was a face; he was two faces; he was three faces; he had a beard; he was just a bare skull without any face or beard at all. Another opinion was that Baphomet had a beard, but that it was attached to the chin of a goat. A third opinion was that the idol was in the shape of a cat." See Symonds 159.

4. Crowley's "new age" or "aeon" commences in 1904, when he writes *The Book of the Law*. In this aeon, symbolized by Horus, "the emphasis is on the true self or will, not on anything external such as gods and priests." See Crowley, *Confessions* 22.

5. Foucault makes a very similar, if not identical, point to Crowley's when he extrapolates from Greek philosophy to imagine a future society where the sovereign subject "exercises

his power correctly, i.e., by exercising at the same time his power on himself . . . which will regulate the power over others" (*Final* 8).

6. This "star" quality, the ***materia prima***, "is within everyone's reach," writes Vaneigem. "Poets are those who know how to use it to best effect." See *Revolution* 200. The idea, then, is for everyone to become an artist--the same notion Foucault advances in "What Is Enlightenment?"

7. "If thought is really to find a basis in lived experience," Vaneigem writes, "it has to be free. The way to achieve this is to think *other* in terms of *the same*. As you make yourself, imagine another self who will make you one day in his turn. Such is my concept of spontaneity . . ." See *Revolution* 196.

8. Richard Hell also recognizes the paradoxical, ***haecceitical*** nature of the American gutter-dandy: Elvis "redeemed the poor and simple," he writes, "showed the big shots the beauty of a country boy set loose. The way he dressed and moved like a stud-sharp Negro, because he had the same tastes, but always with a disarming little smile that said, Ain't this funny, and he never left any room for doubt that first and most of all he loved his mama. Jack Kerouac worked along the similar lines, when you could still be an unapologetic poet of the U.S.A. and do it for your mother" (*Go Now* 44).

9. See "Stagolee Versus the Proper Negro: The Treacherous Three Cross Over–Prince, Wynton Marsalis, and Eddie Murphy." In *Flyboy in the Buttermilk* 48-55.

10. Bruce Benderson explains that such notions are diametrically opposed to contemporary liberal-humanist thought: "Street people speak of appetites and aggressions, rather than of identity," he writes. "In light of this, consider the absurdity of the entire American liberal literary discourse being about identity -- about 'finding oneself.' In underclass life, sexual identity and ethnic identity cannot be conveniently sifted out and defined. Hunger, homelessness, or drug addiction always take precedence" ("Toward the Degenerate Narrative" n. pag.).

11. Drag's advice to Slim here directly corresponds to William S. Burroughs' exhortation in *Nova Express* to "occupy the Reality Studio and retake their universe of Fear Death and Monopoly" (*Three* 189). In both cases, the subject "seizes control" of his own situation *creatively*, through sheer will, instead of having the will of others imposed by outside forces.

12. Interestingly, while the black prostitutes who provide this avenue to wealth are certainly doubly victimized here (by the customer, the "John," and the pimp himself) , Sweet discloses his own theory on the matter, explaining, "The broads were stupid squares. They freaked for free for the white man. They wasn't hip to the scratch in their hot black asses" (*Pimp* 195). In Sweet's view, the pimp is in a way ***empowering*** black women!

13. Parker, Davis explains, "was real spontaneous, went on instinct. He didn't conform to Western ways of musical group interplay by organizing everything. Bird was a great improvisor and that's where he thought great music came from . . . His concept was 'fuck what's written down.' Play what you know and play that well and everything will come together–just the opposite of the Western concept of notated music" (*Miles* 89).

14. In "Hip and the Long Front of Color," Andrew Ross notes the rhetorical, "corrupting" function of famous gutter-dandies like Parker, and descendants like Jim Morrison, Jimi Hendrix and Sid Vicious of the Sex Pistols within modern popular culture: "None were 'rebels' in overtly political ways," he writes, "yet the symbolic power of the sharp images they projected . . . exercises the kind of affect for the collective youth consciousness that intellectual activism, organized or not, has striven, without success, to harness" (*No Respect* 79).

15. Parker "used to turn the rhythm section around every night," Davis recalls. "Bird would start on the eleventh bar. As the rhythm section stayed where they were, then Bird would play when such a way that it made the rhythm section sound like it was on 1 and 3 rather than 2 and 4. . . . Eventually Bird would come back to where the rhythm was, right on time" (*Miles* 101). Parker's musical technique mirrors the movement of Crowley's I.A.O. *destructuralist* spiral: from form to chaos and finally back to form again.

16. Accordingly, today's "gangsta rappers" such as Ice-T can also can be traced back to Parker.

17. See *Miles*, 65, 68.

18. Amiri Baraka writes, "The night Miles called one of his oldest dearest friends to say, 'Hey, Jimi Hendrix gets thirty grand a gig!' was more like a farewell to one stage of himself than just awed information. After this, Miles told his agents he didn't want to be listed with the Jazz players. He felt he could do what he wanted musically and it would still be hip, AND he could get paid!" ("Miles After Miles").

19. This notion, as Simon Frith points out, even extends to black street slang or "talking black," which Davis as Stagolee does (to more than one jazz critic's chagrin) throughout the autobiography *Miles*. In such talk, he writes, "there is not (as in European and European-American cultures) a clear distinction between 'dramatic-type performance' and 'other types of interactional behavior.' Rather, workaday talk and conversation are constantly framed as performance," with the street becoming the stage in this life-as-art scenario, with both language and bodily gestures comprising what is called "styling," a democratic form of dandyism for all. Furthermore, Frith writes, "black slang (often misunderstood when taken over into white talk) systematically describes performance as a collective process--'doing your own thing' means taking your own part in a group drama; to 'dig it' means not to understand . . . but to get involved, to get into," placing *Miles* squarely in the rhetorical, "functional" tradition of both African art and the Foucauldian experience-book (209-210).

20. "Davis's music has always been just one component of a mystique that also involves his beautiful women, his up-to-the-minute wardrobe, his expensive taste in sports cars, and his scowling black anger," Francis Davis perceptively writes of Davis's dandyism ("Miles Agonistes" 205).

21. "The breaking through the barriers of perception is the highest goal of a bicephalous recognition which sees both inside and beyond its own vision . . . The goal is the true nucleus in all its forms of manifestation: the endeavour is in entering the dreams and establishing the truth in a state of waking consciousness. . . . " See Akron, *Baphomet: The Tarot Of The Underworld* 11.

22. "Clean" is the term of the period for the highest degree of hipness in wardrobe.

23. Davis had been wearing what he thought were hip, expensive Brooks Brothers suits, but Gordon advised him, "You can't hang with us looking and dressing like that . . . it ain't got nothing to do with money; it's got something to do with hipness. . . . You gotta get some of them big-shouldered suits and Mr. B. shirts if you want to be hip." See *Miles* 111. Davis promptly gets himself a "zoot suit," which Ross calls "a dandified expression of the social aspirations of the ghetto teenager" (*No Respect* 82), and is accepted. Also see Cosgrove, "The Zoot Suit and Style Warfare," where the author claims that the "zoot suit was . . . an emblem of ethnicity and a way of negotiating an identity. The zoot suit was a refusal: a subcultural gesture that refused to concede to the manners of subservience" (4).

24. Cf. Crowley: "Things like heroin and alcohol may be and should be used for the purpose of worshipping, that is, entering into communion with, the 'Snake that giveth Knowledge and Delight and bright glory' which is the genius which lies 'in the core of every star.' And, 'Every man and every woman is a star .' The taking of a drug should be a carefully thought out and purposeful religious act. Experience alone can teach you the right conditions in which the act is legitimate, that is, when it assists you to do your will" (*Diary of a Drug Fiend* 365).

25. Davis as Stagolee also shows disdain for what Ice-T calls "House Niggers," or blacks who act in way suited to middle-class convention: "I don't buy polish," he says. "With all the diction and shit you got to be saying something to me. Polished Negroes are acting the way they think white people want them to act, so they can be accepted." See Crawford, "Memories of Miles" 221.

26. "When we would go places to play," Davis writes, "I was just cold to the motherfuckers, pay me and I'll play. I wasn't about to kiss anybody's ass and do that grinning shit for nobody. I even stopped announcing tunes around this time, because I felt that it wasn't the name of the tune that was important . . . A lot of people thought I was aloof, and I was." See *Miles* 180.

27. As Simon Frith explains in *Performing Rites*, in a concert or music video context, a musician's dress and body movements, his or her overall *style*, function to manipulate and colour the music he or she is playing, becoming part of the entire package: "the musician's body," he explains, "is also an instrument" (219). For Davis, who unlike rock musicians can't rely on lyrics to convey attitude, this process is intensified. Comparing Davis's methods to those of Andy Warhol, Greg Tate astutely observes that "Miles came to use his visual presence and celebrity to manipulate the interpretation of his work and eventually made that stuff a part of the work as well" (87). Warhol's main musical protégé, Lou Reed, intensifies this process even further.

28. Davis also uses boxing--which, like music, employs Apollonian methods to achieve Dionysian results--training as an *ascesis*, first using it to help him kick heroin and then regularly returning to it throughout his career to offset his periods of extreme dissipation. Throughout *Miles*, Davis makes it clear that black boxers such as Sugar Ray Robinson were as important to his development as were musicians like Charlie Parker. For Davis, Robinson is a Stagolee figure exuding "the relaxed virility of the black *Übermensch*" typified by "a cool head attached to a hot body" (Tate, 134), exuding a quietly menacing air of sovereignty: "He'd be standing there," Davis recalls of times visiting Robinson's bar in New York City, "cleaner than motherfucker, grinning, his hair all processed back, smiling that crooked, cocky smile he used to smile when he was daring somebody to say anything out of the way . . . Sugar Ray was king of the hill, and he knew it." Such was the rhetorical power of Robinson's Stagolee style and charisma, Davis continues, that "I found myself even acting like him . . . taking on his arrogant attitude. Ray was cold and he was the best and he was everything I wanted to be in 1954" (*Miles* 180-3). Davis would later pay tribute to his favourite sport by composing *A Tribute To Jack Johnson*, the jazz-rock soundtrack to director William Clayton's 1970 biopic of another black boxing champion rife with sovereign Stagolee style. Juridically framed because he married a white woman, Davis writes, heavyweight champ Johnson, a man with a "truly sophisticated attitude," is exiled to Paris in the early 1900s, where "they say he had a pet leopard he'd walk while drinking champagne with crowds following." See liner notes, *A Tribute To Jack Johnson*.

29. Stanley Crouch on *Miles:* "[It] paints the picture of an often gloomy monster." See "Play the Right Thing" 39.

30. Simon Reynolds's theories on the relationship between heroin use and sovereignty are especially applicable to Davis: Reynolds theorizes that while on a heroin high, the junkie "feels like a king, omnipotent, cocooned and resplendent in his solipsistic invulnerability (especially if the heroin is cut with the ultimate megalomaniac euphorant, speed)," a stance that also applies to Davis's icy onstage demeanour when "cocooned" within the narcotic of his music. Reynolds conjectures that the notion of the junkie as a "twentieth-century king" is analogous to Bataille's "notion of sovereignty as *sterile splendour*," noting that the defining mark of a sovereign is that he *is*, rather than *does*." Heroin, its name derived "from the German word 'heroisch,' meaning strong, powerful, heroic,"

provides, says Reynolds, "a return to the invulnerable self-sufficiency of the foetus, a total escape from the ignominy of the productive world." See *The Sex Revolts* 124, 126. The latter state is one Davis seeks out especially when at the mid-point of the *destructuralist* spiral (the "A" point in Crowley's I.A.O. formula), usually preceding a striking stylistic shift on both the musical and personal level. In fact, prior to deploying his last incarnation, as a crowd-pleasing showman (!), Davis remains at point "A" for five years, from 1975-1980, engaged in a massive bender of polypharmaceutical indulgence and kinky sex during which time he eschews music altogether in a professional capacity.

31. An arguable position. Some jazz purists see this period of Davis's work as a sell-out. For this view, see Stanley Crouch, "Play The Right Thing."

32. Tate writes of Davis's posture: "To the aristocratic mind of this East St. Louis scion of a pig farmer/dentist, it naturally followed that if you were playing the baadest music on the the face of the earth with the baadest musicians living, then of course you were driving the baadest cars, wearing the baadest vines, and intimate with the most regal of women and celebrated of artists, thinkers, and athletes." See "Silence, Exile, and Cunning" 86.

33. Ironically, *Bitches Brew* becomes Davis's biggest selling record ever; however, the path it places him upon leads to a place of virtual commercial invisibility: *Agharta* and *Pangaea* are not even originally released in North America.

34. Tom Wolfe memorably details this mid-'70s black street dandyism (also depicted on Davis's Corky McCoy-illustrated album covers for *On The Corner and Live In Concert)*, in "Funky Chic," describing what he calls the archetype of the "high-heeled Pimpmobile *got to get over* look of Dixwell Avenue," a description worthy of Huysmans himself and worth quoting here at length: "Dixwell Avenue is the main drag of one of New Haven's black slums. There, on any likely corner, one can see congregations of young men . . .from the bottom end of the great greased pole of life . . . All the young aces and dudes are out there lollygagging around . . . wearing their two-tone patent Pyramids with the five-inch heels that swell out at the bottom to match the Pierre Chareau Art Deco plaid bell-bottom baggies they have on with the three-inch-deep elephant cuffs tapering upward toward the 'spray-can fit' in the seat, as it is known, and the peg-top waistband with self-covered buttons and the beagle-collar pattern-on-pattern Walt Frazier shirt, all of it surmounted by the midi-length piece with the welted waist seam and the Prince Albert pockets and the black Pimpmobile hat with the four-inch turn-down brim and the six-inch pop-up crown with the golden chain-belt hatband . . . and all of them, every ace, every dude, out there just *getting over* in the baddest possible way, come to play and dress to slay . . . so that somehow the sons of the slums have become the Brummels and Gentlemen of Leisure, the true fashion plates of the 1970's. . . ." See *Mauve Gloves & Madmen, Clutter & Vine* 206, 208, 213.

35. Davis's sex life is very active, but not particularly "transgressive" (though some insist he was actively bisexual) until the post-*Agharta* period of his "retirement" from the music

business from 1975-1980.

36. Jeremy Reed writes, "In the same year as Reed's birth, Jean Cocteau was writing of the perils of homosexual love in his *Diary of an Unknown*. He wrote of a society that endorsed 'humiliating interrogations and treating as mentally ill those whose embarrassment causes them to speak poorly in their own defence,' in which the outsider was 'cast as a monster by his family.' Reed was made into just such a victim with the shock therapy" (*Waiting For The Man* 24).

37. Reed hosted a college radio show called *Excursions On A Wobbly Rail*, named after a free jazz composition by Cecil Taylor. "I was a very big fan of Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor, Archie Shepp," Reed recounts in tracing his roots in black music. "Then James Brown, the doo-wop groups, and rockabilly. Put it all together and you have me" (*Transformer* 32). As famed rock critic and Reedophile Lester Bangs accurately points out in relation to punk's do it yourself attitude of democratic experimentalism, Coleman's *Free Jazz*, reflected in the Velvets songs like "Sister Ray" and Iggy & The Stooges'(of whom Miles Davis was a big fan) *Fun House* album, "practically started it all." See *Psychotic Reactions and Carburetor Dung* 48.

38. Reed's gutter-dandyism anticipates Bruce Benderson's millennial call for an alchemical "mental coalition" between the disaffected bohemian and the culture of poverty," a curative for "the gelded inhabitant of today's so-called counterculture." For Benderson, such a coalition is "the only possible action in the face of a voiceless, unacknowledged underclass and a strangulated middle class" where "dichotomy of middle class decency and urban degeneration" has never been greater. See "Toward the New Degeneracy" 51-2.

39. Throughout his career, as Jeremy Reed points out, aside from a brief period of peacock foppery while collaborating with David Bowie, Lou Reed's career has been characterized both sartorially and spiritually by black: "black leather, black glasses, black T-shirts. And a psychic backdrop coloured by a dark aura" (*Waiting* 38). Reed's wardrobe and attitude also intersect with rebellious 1950s film characters, most notably Marlon Brando's "Johnny" in *The Wild One*, (the leader of the Black Rebels Motorcycle Club, who coolly responds to the question "What are you rebelling against?" with "What've you got?") and James Dean's existentially brooding "Jim Stark" in *Rebel Without a Cause*.

40. Ingrid Superstar, Ultra Violet, transsexual Candy Darling, transvestite Jackie Curtis, Edie Sedgwick, Nico and Viva, among others, were some of the Warhol superstars, many of whom appear in Reed's biggest hit, "Walk on the Wild Side."

41. In the politically correct atmosphere of the 1990s, Warhol's reputation has come under fire for his role, or lack thereof, in the demise of a number of his "superstars," as seen in the movie *I Shot Andy Warhol*, which attempts to makes a heroine of radical feminist Valerie Solanis, who attempted to murder Warhol in 1968. Warhol addresses this

question in his book *Popism: The Warhol '60s*, delineating a Sadean attitude strikingly similar to the "icy" ascesis of black gutter-dandies like Iceberg Slim, one that also is a key for an understanding the Lou Reed persona throughout the 1970s: "Now and then someone would accuse me of being evil–of letting people destroy themselves while I watched, just so I could film them and tape record them. But I don't think of myself as evil--just realistic. I learned when I was little that whenever I got aggressive and tried to tell someone what to do, nothing happened . . . that you have more power when you shut up, because at least that way people will start to maybe doubt themselves." (*Popism* 108). In her account of her time as a Warhol superstar, Ultra Violet remarks that "Warhol is not interested in passion, I think, but the opposite . . . Indifference, frigidity, iciness." She goes on to characterize Warhol as "the first real plastic man. It is not a put-on. It is authentic. It is the truth of Warhol" (*Famous for 15 Minutes* 32, 265). Warhol's notions of power and realism are given expression in mid-'70s Reed experience-songs such as the gutter-epic "Street Hassle" and "Kicks," and his "plasticity" is taken to the limit by his protege during this time in a series of musical and physical transformations/mutations.

42. Bockris notes that while "Lou's most famous song may be 'Heroin' . . . the drug most often associated with his image was undoubtedly amphetamine," a drug he celebrates on the title track of the *White Light/White Heat* album, the title referring to "pure amphetamine." Bockris points to the *Amphetamine Manifesto* by Harvey Cohen to explain its attraction for Reed, a man drawn to limit-experience: "Methedrine rolls back the stone from the mouth of the cave. It is the most profound of all drugs, the most unexplored and the freakiest. It can be so many things; there's always a place to go behind methedrine that you've never been before." (*Transformer*, 117). Certainly speed's ability to "be so many things" manifests itself in Reed's kaleidoscopic personae throughout the 1970s.

43. E.P.I. dancer Mary Woronov's remarks make clear the split between the Velvets, who were extending the Sadean strain of the Great Subculture into rock and roll, and the Rousseauian West Coast hippies: "For one thing, we dressed in black leather, they dressed in wild colors. They were like, 'Oh wow man, a happening!' We were like reading Jean Genet. We were S&M and they were free love. We really liked gay people, and the West Coast was totally homophobic. So they thought we were evil and we thought they were stupid." See *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk* 17. Writer Ed Sanders sees this subcultural split as being in part class-based, a separating along a divide between bourgeois dilettantishness and a more desperate gutter-rebellion born of the need, to use the lexicon of black cool, to *get over*. "The problem was that there developed a hostility within the counterculture itself, between those who had, like, the equivalent of trust fund versus those who had to live by their wits. It's true, for instance, that blacks were somewhat resentful of the hippies . . . because their perception was that these kids could get out of there any time they wanted to. They could go back home. Where someone who was raised in a project on Columbia Street . . . can't escape. . . . So there developed another kind of lumpen hippie, who really came from an abused childhood–from parents that hated them . . . that threw them out. . . . And those kids

fermented into a kind of hostile street person. Punk types" (*Please Kill Me* 21-2). Both Reed, his bourgeois adolescence shattered by his parents' decision to make him take electroshock therapy, and Warhol, who grew up in an immigrant slum of Pittsburgh, PA, thus easily found common ground within this "punk" mileau.

44. The Doors' career encompassed a paradoxical blend of success and failure, the latter usually brought on by Morrison's sabotage of his own image (his self-bestowed moniker "The Lizard King" reveals his life-long obsession with a Bataillean, atavistic and erotic form of sovereignty); the singer, writes David Dalton, felt that his "failures were in some way as important to him as the triumphs. Success was, after all, part of the sickness, part of the platitudinous, cretinous American Dream. . . . And hadn't all the Saints of Decadence declared with their very lives that failure was the badge of authenticity for the creator-madman?" (*Mr. Mojo* 136). Morrison, who struck up a connection with Warhol's camp through an affair with The Velvets' singer Nico, also felt little in common with the West Coast hippie mentality, coming "from another tradition, the dark path, the poètes maudits. . . . Can you see Baudelaire and Rimbaud mouthing 'All You Need Is Love?" Dalton asks. "Neither could Jim. Miserable Miracles! Despised long-haired panhandlers. An era when everybody was singing about peace and love, Incense & Peppermints, and there's Jeremiah Jim wailing on about night darkness, drowning, the Big Sleep, unconsciousness" (87). Doors aficionado Eve Babitz significantly calls Morrison "showbiz meets Aleister Crowley" (Hoskyns, *Waiting* 158), highlighting his merger of pop culture with the left-hand path of The Great Subculture; the fact remains, however, that a significant part of Crowley was equally "showbiz." He was a pop star before his time.

45. Reed credits Warhol's powerful aura for allowing him the freedom to "seize control" over the creative process during the recording of *Andy Warhol Presents the Velvet Underground and Nico*, although the artist wasn't a producer in the music business sense. "He didn't want it to be cleaned up, and because he was there, it wasn't," Reed recalls: "And because of that, we always knew what it was like to have your way as opposed to these other assholes trying to do exactly the opposite of what Andy wanted. By producing that LP, he gave us freedom and power. He wasn't the record's producer in the conventional way, but when record company people would say, 'Are you sure that's the way it should sound?' he'd say, 'Sure, that sounds great.' That was an amazing freedom, a power, and once you've tasted that, you want it always." See Bockris, *Transformer* 130. The resulting raw, "punky" delivery of the Velvets' sound on disc ensured that the album would be denied radio airplay, but also that it would become one of the most influential rock albums of all time, a steady seller to this day. The album's influence on Iggy Pop (originally James Jewel Osterberg from Detroit, Michigan), another key figure in the evolution of the punk aesthetic, was central: "The first time I heard the Velvet Underground and Nico record I was at a party on the University of Michigan campus," he recounts. "I just hated the sound. You know, 'HOW COULD ANYBODY MAKE A RECORD THAT SOUNDS LIKE SUCH A PIECE OF SHIT? THIS IS DISGUSTING!' . . . Then about six months later it hit me . . . 'This is just a fucking great record!' That record became very key for me, not just for what it said and how great it

was, but also because I heard other people who could make good music--without being any good at music. It gave me hope" (*Please Kill Me* 18). Here, the democratic implications of rock's original gutter-dandy, Elvis Presley, are self-consciously reclaimed from a music business which had grown increasingly elitist, slick and professional, interested only in demographics and bourgeois aesthetics. The gutter-dandy's originary historical role seen in the Brethren of the Free Spirit, where the individual "seizes power" from God and becomes his own Creator, is replayed here as the rock musician wrests control away from the God-like corporate power of late twentieth century America. While its initial sales figures are minimal, the Velvets' debut album functions like a rhetorical Sadean experience-book which continues to corrupt long after its author has vanished (or, in this case, after the band breaks up), leading to the truism that although not many people bought it, everyone who did formed a band, as was the case with Iggy Pop and another punk precursor, Jonathan Richman: "I didn't start singing or playing until I was 15 and heard the Velvet Underground," he remembers. "They made an *atmosphere*, and I knew then I could make one too!" Richman in Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History Of The Twentieth Century* 61.

46. In this sense, Reed's songwriting from the first Velvet Underground album to the present day is the natural extension of the Great Subcultural line of literary gutter-dandies like Genet and Henry Miller into the Pop realm. Miller's pronouncement that "What I've strived to do is get away from the fictive and down to reality . . . embrace every aspect of one's being, look at it all clearly, boldly" finds its correspondence in Reed's remarks. See *Conversations* 91.

47. Although the Scotsman Trocchi hasn't gotten the press that the more famous junkie-writer and American William S. Burroughs, has received, *Cain's Book* and Trocchi's writing in general reveal him to be a more astute theorizer of *destructuralism* than the often ambivalent Burroughs, whose experience-book *Junky* (where he writes, "I have never regretted my experience with drugs. I think I am in better health now as a result of using junk at intervals than I would be if I had never been an addict. When you stop growing you start dying. An addict never stops growing.") is his finest work in this regard (and also Lou Reed's favourite Burroughs' work), rather than the more often cited but philosophically muddled *Naked Lunch*. See *Junky* xv-xvi.

48. In "Heroin, the Needle and the Politics of the Body," Martin Chalmers explains that "playing with the body with the needle is a means of breaking off speech. For the left and for liberals, defiance and the suffering out of which it comes, has to be brought to talk, to reason, in order to become meaningful suffering. The suffering has to be for something, for an end, for general principles, or for material needs," he continues. "It has to fit into a chain of cause and explanation. But the intensity of this play with pleasure and death, with the individual's own body, with conspicuous waste and an excess of sensation, can't be brought to meaning in that way; it remains illegible and beyond sense." For Chalmers, then, "heroin, perhaps more effectively than any other subcultural strategy, evades imposed meanings and understandings" (153). Thus Reed's repeated refrain, "And I

guess that I just don't know" in "Heroin," in part a denial of "victim" status on the part of the user, a breaking off of the dialogue which helps explain the general antipathy amongst 1960s liberals for the music of The Velvet Underground.

49. Chalmers sees IV heroin usage as a kind of form of technological sabotage, in which "the syringe, the most familiar emblem of medicine and prevention of disease" which helps keeps bodies fit for work, "is transformed into an instrument of excessive pleasure and self-destruction," a notion akin to Bataille's previously discussed "Practice of Joy Before Death." Here, "the needle is used to defy the good sense which aims to make the body a healthy working machine, ready for labour and the conspicuous display of consumer leisure time. Its transformed use defies the constant injunctions and orders on how to maintain and improve the body. It proclaims an excess of defiance to the healthy order and to good sense." See Chalmers 150-1. It is precisely this "excess of defiance" which informs Lou Reed's lyrics on "Heroin."

50. Ellen Willis explains that the "failure" of the Velvets commercially was built-in from the start: they were tailor-made to traverse the left-hand path of The Great Subculture. "The Velvets were the first important rock-and-roll artists who had no real chance of attracting a mass audience," she correctly explains. "This was paradoxical. Rock-and-roll was a mass art. . . . But the Velvets' music was . . . like pop art, which was very much a part of the Velvets' world . . . antiart art made by antielite elitists." Likewise, she connects Reed to the Stagolee myth, explaining that in contrast to the "prototypical rock-and-roll punk . . . the (usually white) working class kid hanging out on the corner," Reed's version was "closer to the bohemian (and usually black) hero . . . he wore shades, engaged in various forms of polymorphous perversity" and paradoxically utilized "a mass art form to express his aesthetic and social alienation from just about everyone" (72-3). Others, such as Peter Perrett of The Only Ones, would soon follow in Reed's footsteps.

51. "Very few artists are capable of the generosity David Bowie extended to Lou Reed in the summer of 1972," opines Bockris, noting that the former invited his hero to perform with him at a headlining concert that July, where Reed, "dressed in black," came onstage to perform "White Light / White Heat," "I'm Waiting For The Man" and "Sweet Jane." The next day, the two held a press conference to "publicize their music and images" where Reed appeared adorned in "make-up," a Bowie-designed "jumpsuit, six-inch platforms and black nail polish. With studied deliberation," Bockris writes, Reed "firmly planted a kiss on Bowie's mouth" and announced that the latter would be producing his next album, which turned out to be *Transformer*. See *Transformer* 204. It is generally assumed that Bowie and Reed were also sexually involved, something Reed seems to affirm in an obscene exchange with Lester Bangs in their infamous "Let Us Now Praise Famous Death Dwarves" interview. See *Psychotic Reactions And Carburetor Dung* 176.

52. Bowie, however, does embrace Stagolee cool and American black soul on 1975's *Young Americans*..

53. In fact, makeup was nothing new for Stagolee types: as we have seen, Iceberg Slim recounts in *Pimp* keeping Sun Glow face powder in the glove compartment and making up before hitting the streets (117), and speaks admiringly of a colleague's "blue mohair jacket" (156) and of another's "silver nail polish" (118). Foppish glamour, then, is nothing new to Stagolee, who after all *does* murder a man for messing up his hat. This mix of camp and street attitude is noted by Reed, who explains that "'Walk On The Wild Side' is about . . . you know, queens and hustlers and all that, and I wanted to do that, but that's a more dangerous thing, that's why it's done in a jive tone," the latter slang remark connecting the song to black street culture (*Waiting* 77). "Having an attitude was a big thing for Lou," adds his "drug associate" Bob Jones: "Attitude was the sort of drug equivalent of what is called in the black world 'signifying '" (*Transformer* 252).

54. Both Reed and Crowley share some rather arcane interests, taking the notion of debasement, of going low to become high, to the extremes of experience. Crowley, John Symonds notes, "Throughout his life, ate shit literally as well as figuratively. . . . This coprophagous habit, which he revealed in his first published work, *Aceldama*, 1898, remained with him until the end of his life." See *The King* viii. Duncan Hannah recalls being propositioned by Reed for an evening of similar adventures in *Please Kill Me* 97-8.

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