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NIGHT-GLORY:
CUT-UP LITERATURE, ANARCHISM, AND THE QUESTION OF THE SUBJECT

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the anarchic practices implicit to literary texts composed through the cut-up technique. It argues that the aleatory and processual experiments in Gertrude Stein's, William S. Burroughs', Kathy Acker's, and Kenji Siratori's cut-up works appeal to principles of embodiment, affect, and affinity foundational for anarchist practices of direct action, horizontal organization, and voluntary cooperation. Counter to anarchism's individualist and socialist traditions, which consistently install the humanist subject at the center of radical thought, the form of those cut-up works represents a post-anarchist ethics that assumes the subject's anarchic and unconditional relation to the figure of the neighbor. In other words, this dissertation argues that cut-up literature's extreme literary approach and eccentric formal effects exhibit a revolutionary language without a subject — without an "origin" or a "ruler" — in which the other speaks first and foremost. Repositioning the place of the neighbor in relation to the anarchic subject, this other, alien, cut up language radically re-imagines familiar political terms (race, gender, and sexuality) for the hyperconnected, globalized 21st Century.

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PREFACE: CUTTING TO THE QUICK

Earlier this year, a fresh copy of Joe Ambrose and A.D. Hitchin's 2014 anthology, *Cut Up!*, was lying on my office desk. When my colleague asked about it, we began a casual conversation about cut-up literature. He was amused. "The form is interesting," he said. "But what can you really say about something like that?" Then he added: "*That's just the kind of thing that a grad student writes about for a dissertation.*"

My colleague's attitude reflects the larger critical response to cut-up literature. For example, writing about Kenji Siratori's cut-ups, Andrew Wenaus considers his work a "semantically void literary space": "To look *in* to [Siratori's] work is a practical absurdity; rather, one must look outside his work to other literary and aesthetic figures [as] a means of situating [his] project in some kind of aesthetic trajectory" (31).¹ Based on the assumption that cut-ups produce texts that absolutely discourage meaningful direct engagements, my colleague's dismissive statement that the form is merely a subject for English dissertations attempts to consign cut-ups to the irrelevant fringes of literary gimmickry, reserved for the lowest rung of the most clueless scholars who are sufficiently self-loathing that they will waste their time studying such culturally elitist schlock.

Yet this dissertation shows not only that much *can* be said about the cut-up, but also that such commentary is vitally relevant. While the literature produced by this technique is relatively young — consensus agrees approximately 100 years old — it repeatedly emerges throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries at moments of political and cultural turmoil, when the actions of the state and other hierarchical institutions become incomprehensible. Further, it

consistently expresses both explicit and implicit alliances with the social and political ideas and practices subsumed by the fluid, equally misunderstood and underestimated term, anarchism. These facts point toward two hypotheses about American literature. First, the cut-up constitutes an integral form of literary modernism and postmodernism. Second, updating the arguments proposed by David Weir, David Kadlec, and Alan Antliff at the turn of the millennium, the form's political affinities manifest the largely unacknowledged anarchist impulses at the heart of literary fragmentation, collage, and pastiche.

The following study pursues those two hypotheses. Chapter 1 is a philosophical introduction to the relationship between anarchism and the aesthetics of the cut-up. Acknowledging that cut-up texts and anarchism historically share a critique of capitalism and the state, I argue that the cut-up technique is an anarchist practice that privileges the principles of embodiment, affect, and affinity. Indeed, cut-up literature opens the space of an ethical relation in which the other assigns the subject a responsibility for the neighbor to the extreme of being hostage. While this ethical relation is associated with the philosophical writings of Emmanuel Levinas, Chapter 1 contends that it constitutes the precondition for political anarchy, that is, horizontal organization, voluntary cooperation, and mutual aid. I develop this contention through an engagement with Saul Newman's postanarchist application of Levinas' notion of substitution to his own conceptualization of the anarchist subject, showing that Newman sidesteps the difficulties in Levinas' ethical thought that would radicalize anarchist theory and practice. Cut-up literature, I argue, represents an anarchic system that integrates those difficulties. It gives expression to a euphoria in the territory managed by capitalism and the state, and from that gap experimentally organizes populations without leaders and forms of hierarchy, exclusion, or

compulsion: a world without a political subject per se, except as the effect of an anarchic obligation to exist-for-the-other in the moment of death.

Following this critique of Newman's treatment of Levinas' thought, Chapter 2 argues that anarchism historically repeatedly fails to give priority to the place of the neighbor. In both classic and contemporary anarchist texts, the effort to theorize a practice that would act first and foremost on the other's behalf slips into the inherited language of liberalism, particularly as it is expressed in liberal democracies through the politics of identity and recognition, and multiculturalism. As a result, in each place that anarchism posits a subject responsible for the other, it inadvertently advances a self-interested, autarkic, autotelic subject implicitly designed to reinforce and serve hierarchical state and economic powers.

I retrace this slippage through the works of Mikhail Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin, Voltairine de Cleyre, and Lewis Call. This genealogical analysis highlights liberal language's historically integral function in the formation of anarchism's representation of freedom, equality, and the individual. I suggest that this language's retention of the humanist subject causes anarchists to overemphasize the roles of liberty and equality in their theorization of anarchy. Subsequently, every attempt to respect the primacy of the neighbor under the terms of liberty and equality affirms the subject's sovereignty over the neighbor. Anarchism founds itself on terms inimical to itself. Drawing on de Cleyre, I argue that an anarchist understanding of freedom and equality that successfully puts the other first, without relapsing into the metaphysics of the subject, accommodates an asymmetry and irreciprocity that reflects the subject's anarchic, traumatic relation to the neighbor. In de Cleyre's lush and neglected body of work, this relation is that of the hostage circumvented in Newman's theorization of the anarchist subject: a subject committed

prior to all commitment to put itself in the place of the other, to have its life given in sacrifice, because it is always already responsible for the other's murder.

The remaining chapters closely track the implications of de Cleyre's radical insights through several cut-up texts. In Chapter 3, I argue that Stein's *Patriarchal Poetry* uses *cut-up effects* indebted to Dada's aleatory, syntactic permutations that give place to the other through an asubjective mode of writing opposed to government and its obsession with identity. Contrary to deconstructive readings of *Patriarchal Poetry*, I argue that these cut-up effects distinguish the poem from an operation that parodies "patriarchal" literary conventions. Instead, *Patriarchal Poetry* positions such conventions in a non-dialectical, anarchic space where they persist as instances of violence within an infinite field of possibility, outside and encompassing the patriarchal order. In the poem, this positioning fulfills a double purpose. First, it critiques the institution of patriarchal poetry, which Stein's work identifies with a logic of identity and equivalence, suggesting that literary language contributes to the maintenance of male hegemony. Second, it suggests that an anarchic language produces a gender subject that does not rely on identity and equivalence. Instead, *Patriarchal Poetry's* cut-up effects produce "gender" as acephalous, led by no one, including itself.

Stein's acephalous, asubjective writing contests Weir's reliance on anarcho-individualism as a sole source of modernist "aesthetic politics." Further, it challenges several contemporary critical responses to the anarchic in Stein's writing that are formulated in liberal language. Counter to anarchism's classic magnetization around the principles of liberty and equality, *Patriarchal Poetry* suggests that anarchy begins prior to every beginning, in and for the other. Harkening back to de Cleyre's emphasis on a "hostage" relation, the poem's iterative,

transformational, and cut-upesque form models a claim true for all the other cut-up texts included in this study: the anarchic subject does not simply come from the other; it is the effect of disciplinary mechanisms grounded in practices that privilege embodiment, affect, and affinity.

In Chapter 4, I argue that Burroughs' Nova trilogy — *The Soft Machine*, *The Ticket That Exploded*, and *Nova Express* — anticipates anarchist anxieties that would identify this hostage relation with alienation. The Nova Mob and the Nova Police, I show, offer two distinct forms of substitution. The former reflects Althusser's notion of ideology ("the 'representation' of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence") and interpellation (the "hail" that intrigues the subject into reproducing conditions hostile to it). The latter mirrors Levinas' notion of assignation, which "calls" the subject forth to take responsibility for the other. In the Nova trilogy, Burroughs implies that the first serves Cold War superpowers, while the second endeavors to induce temporary relief from those power's psychological manipulations. These arguments build on Timothy S. Murphy's claim that Burroughs' "cut-ups were a form of practical demystification that could uncover the ideology at work in the political lines of the media" ("Exposing" 39). While Chapter 4 places Burroughs' cut-ups in historical political context for the first time, it also suggests that their "practical demystifications" promote an "anarchy without adjectives" reminiscent of de Cleyre's ethical project, which favors an "anarchism" unburdened of ideological restrictions.

I frame this "anarchy without adjectives" as an engagement between Burroughs, Raoul Vaneigem, and post-left anarchists Jason McQuinn, Wolfi Landstreicher, and Lawrence Jarach.² The post-left shares Burroughs' anarchic commitment to the abolition of ideology and state power: it aims to construct an anti-authoritarian and non-hierarchical anti-political program that

supports non-ideologically motivated revolutionary action. However, I maintain that post-left anarchists rely on a humanist notion of the subject to justify their claims to revolution, while Burroughs' cut-ups give primacy to the place of the other. Thus, the Nova trilogy effectively shows the post-left the "naked lunch" on the end of its fork: its cut-ups suggest that the post-left project contests forms of state ideology with a notion of the individual inherited from the history of those contested forms. Counter to ideology, the cut of the cut-ups interjects affect into ideological language that neutralizes its charge *and* anarchizes the subject. Such affectivity tips the sacred cow that Burroughs aimed to abandon the body; it registers in the skin of the subject a pre-conscious feeling that not only is the other but incarnates the subject as an anarchic subject, posterior to the neighbor.

The Cut-Up trilogy associates the incarnate subject's ethical responsibility with insurrection. While such an association resists Levinas' articulation of the self/other relation with the state, it also rethinks the post-left project. In his "Theses on Anarchism After Post-Modernism," post-left anarchist Bob Black states that "self-sacrifice is counter-revolutionary. Anyone capable of sacrificing himself for a cause is capable of sacrificing someone else for it too. Therefore, solidarity among the self-sacrificial is impossible" (n.pag.). In response to Black, the Nova trilogy does not simply suggest that every act of anarchist solidarity is based on "self-sacrifice"; it also shifts the place of "self-sacrifice" away from the autarkic subject, relocating it in the hostage relation. As a result, Burroughs' trilogy expands Levinas' ethical philosophy: it suggests that substitution finds expression in revolutionary action and, further, that political anarchy, not the state, complements the pre-ontological, non-ideological for-the-other.

Chapter 5 explores the responsibility to rebuild in the aftermath of anarchist insurrection.

There, I argue that Kathy Acker's *Empire of the Senseless* portrays race as the construction of a regime of visibility designed to discourage the racialized subject from encountering the other in its own skin. In the narrative, Acker cuts up texts that examine the subject of race, subsequently revising them to represent her central concern with sexuality and gender. Following Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks's Lacanian analysis of race, I show that these revisions confront racial discourse with the body repressed through the discourse's promise of Whiteness. In *Empire*, this body confronts race's imaginary regime with the real extraneous to the symbolic and imaginary, effectively exposing race as a myth. In the place of this myth, Acker's narrative *feels out* a racial formation that does not conform to the image: race dependent on the cut, the interruption of the other, and aleatory processes. (In this chapter's previous drafts, I compared this new racial mythology to the story that a peripatetic tribe would tell in order to mythologize its origins, identity, and values, and to transmit them across generations. In these terms, *Empire's* race myth embodies a new form of solidarity. It is a quest narrative addressed to outcasts who need a common narrative to establish a community.³)

Acker's racial critique, I argue, is anarchic. Placing *Empire* in dialogue with anti-imperialist anarchists Kwesi Balagoon and Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin, I tease out the narrative's kinship with an American strain of postanarchism committed to contesting U.S. neocolonialism and constructing autonomous communities of color. I propose that Acker's cut-up technique can be productively framed in terms of the anarchist tactic of "dual power" — a community-building practice analogous to the language that "a minority constructs within a major language," which Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari call a "minor literature" (16).⁴ Going against the grain of the critical tendency to view Acker's late capitalist works in terms of transnationalism and

tranhistoricism, I argue that her dual power cut-ups point to a concern with the local. In *Empire*, this local concern is “the struggle” — specifically the black urban plight in the United States during Ronald Reagan’s presidency in the 1980s.

Further, I argue that *Empire* critiques anarchist “race treason.” Based on the idea that white people are responsible for the oppression of people of color, anarchist race treason aims to disrupt the systemic machinery that automatically installs white people in positions of privilege and power counter to their consent. Acker’s cut-ups ingeniously indicate that such anarchist practices preserve a notion of Whiteness that saves the place of privileged subjectivity and assures the subject that the skin, hair, and bone of the racialized body guarantees their being. Rather than supporting anarchy, anarchist race treason harbors a deep phobia that forecloses a relation to the other. Efficacious race treason, *Empire* suggests, heeds the other: it removes the master signifier Whiteness, then constructs new racial forms — new myths — through practices based on citation, iteration, and conflation that randomly rearrange the terms of racial series.

Elaborating Acker’s cut-up serializations, my final chapter (Chapter 6) examines Kenji Siratori’s millennial adaptation of the cut-up method. While *Empire*’s anti-imperialist anarchism focused on the racialized body, *Blood Electric* gives expression to a *biopolitical postanarchism* that challenges the hierarchical scientific rhetoric that discursively constructs genes and genomes. Drawing on Rolando Perez’s anarchist critique of the rigidity of a genetic “blueprint,” I argue that Siratori’s novel deploys Stein’s asubjective writing in order to construct an anarchic notion of DNA sequencing based on spontaneous organization, random encounters, and perpetual mutation. Its fragmented strands, mercurial changes, and experimentally engineered forms point toward a responsibility for the other that does not simply incarnate the subject, but penetrates the

incarnate subject's molecular configuration.

Counter to the popular sense that Siratori writes “digital cut-ups,” I contend that Siratori’s genomic constructions adhere to a “post-digital” aesthetic. Coined by Kim Cascone in his study of electronic “glitch” music — a genre to which Siratori, a prolific “noise” musician, is indebted — “post-digital” refers to a physical interference with digital art forms: “it is from the ‘failure’ of digital technology that this new work [glitch] has emerged: glitches, bugs, application errors, system crashes, clipping, aliasing, distortion, quantization noise, and even the noise floor of computer sound cards are the raw materials composers seek to incorporate into their music” (393).⁵ Examining intersections between Siratori’s “japanoise” album *Gillsbreathing Byte Tragedy* and *Blood Electric*, I apply Cascone’s definition to place Siratori’s postanarchism into dialogue with Foucault’s characterization of biopower and racism in the late 19th century. While Foucault wonders how a biopower that aims “to make live and to let die” can function without sponsoring racism, Siratori’s “genetic” cut-ups suggest that a biopower that receives “the rights of murder” and “the rights of war” from the assignation of the other, rather than any juridical rights per se, introduces a glitch into biopower that deflects racism and relocates biopower for anarchism.

These chapters on Stein, Burroughs, Acker, and Siratori are chronologically organized in order to chart the cut-up method’s evolution from the period after World War I to the present. Building on Dada’s embittered anti-humanism, Stein’s mechanical iterations and permutations suggest a prose of gleaming steel, angular edges, and robotic gyrations, while Burroughs’ 1960s cut-ups and fold-ins reproduce a rich, colorful, violently sensuous psychedelic hallucination, replete with that experience’s dissociations, spatial distortions, and temporal compressions. In

further contrast, Acker's "plagiarized," deliberately cliché, vulgar, and un insightful prose exploits the cut-up's awkward pauses and non sequiturs to accentuate the late 1970's and early 1980's vacuity and lassitude. Then, circling back to and updating Stein's avant-garde experiments, what I call Siratori's "micromontages" — dense, pixilated, laser-beam-like verbal assemblages — reflect the 21st century's accelerated technological miniaturization and digitization (e.g., portable electronic devices, nanorobotics, and electromagnetic satellite transmissions). Hence, as a comparative analysis of the cut-up's stylistic development, this chronological chapter arrangement travels in an imperfect, elliptical circle. Further, responding to my colleague, it demonstrates that the cut-up is not a one-trick pony or one-time literary stunt, but a fluid, adaptive form that accommodates shifting historical circumstances.

In the following chapter, I provide a detailed elucidation of topoi common to all these cut-up writers. Here, I will only mark a similarity that I do not explicitly reckon until the last chapter: Excluding Stein, every cut-up text included in this study directly or indirectly inscribes the science fiction subgenre, cyberpunk. No doubt, a part of this coincidence can be ascribed to the fact that Burroughs' work imitates the conventions of sci fi and detective pulp stories, creating cyberpunk's dark atmosphere of futuristic, dystopian intrigue, and writers influenced by him, such as Acker and Siratori, pick up and remodel his motifs. Yet, here, in conclusion, I would submit for consideration the possibility that this cyberpunk theme also reinforces my hypothesis that anarchist principles guide the cut-up. As I note in Chapter 6, postanarchist Lewis Call connects the subgenre to that maligned "ideology": he claims that "the politics of cyberpunk is, in short, a politics for the new millennium: a politics of postmodern anarchism" (24). In the final analysis, Call's proposition holds true for cut-up literature, though the full implications of "a

politics for the new millennium” — “the idea that I am sought out in the intersidereal spaces,” as Levinas says — require further elaboration.

CHAPTER 1

MIDNIGHT:
ON THE HITHER SIDE OF IDEOLOGY AND LITERATURE

You may have to cut the flowers, but it will not stop the Spring.

— Che Guevara
qtd., in *The Parallax View*

Revolution must be defined by its content, by values: revolution takes place when one frees man; that is, revolution takes place when one tears man away from economic determinism.

— Emmanuel Levinas
Nine Talmudic Readings

The passion for destruction is a creative passion, too!

— Mikhail Bakunin
“The Reaction in Germany”

Be realistic, demand the impossible.

— Anonymous
Mai '68 graffiti

I. “THE DOMINANT IDEA”

This study examines the intersection between anarchism and cut-up literature. Throughout the twentieth century, the latter appears in response to trauma. Trench warfare, aerial bombardment, chemical weaponry, and tremendous fatality rates during World War I; the surveillance, repression, and paranoia that defined McCarthyism, wherein words and information became lethal; the laws, policies, murders, mutilations, rapes, and innumerable microaggressions deployed to reproduce patriarchy, white supremacy, and heteronormativity, whose memories, written in reflex, are older than their victims; and the patenting of genetic code, where multinational corporations take ownership of the building blocks of biological life through

increasing neoliberal deregulation and privatization, have all, at different moments in the last one hundred years, caused writers to tear texts asunder and to throw their fragments in the air, falling wherever they may. In the context of trauma and repression, the gesture would be a bid for control, an act of despair and purgation, an expression of pain.

Anarchism, perhaps, comes from the same grief. In “The Making of an Anarchist” (1903), for example, Voltairine de Cleyre narrates how news of the 1886 Haymarket Affair, resulting in the unjust executions of anarchists Georges Engel, Adolph Fischer, Albert Parsons, August Spies, and Louis Lingg, brought her to anarchism.⁶ Years later, in her 1901 May Day speech, she would say that their martyrdom “taught me to question [the government]” (“Eleventh” 168). More than that, however, she “sorrowfully and with self-disgust” situates this lesson in a “confession.”

Fifteen years ago last May when the echoes of the Haymarket bomb rolled through the little Michigan village where I then lived, I, like the rest of the credulous and brutal, read one lying newspaper headline, “Anarchists throw a bomb in a crowd in the Haymarket in Chicago,” and immediately cried out, “They ought to be hanged!” This, though I had never believed in capital punishment for ordinary criminals. For that ignorant, blood-thirsty sentence I shall never forgive myself, though I know the dead men would have forgiven me, though I know those who love them forgive me. But my own voice, as it sounded that night, will sound so in my ears till I die — a bitter reproach and shame. What had I done? Credited the first wild rumor of an event of which I knew nothing, and, in my mind, sent men to the gallows without asking one word of defense! In one wild,

unbalanced moment threw away the sympathies of a lifetime, and became an executioner at heart. And what I did that night millions did, and what I said millions said. I have only one word of extenuation for myself and all those people — ignorance. I did not know what anarchism was. I had never seen the word save in histories, and there it was always synonymous with social confusion and murder. I believed the newspapers. I thought those men had thrown that bomb, unprovoked, into a mass of men and women, from a wicked delight in killing. And so thought all those millions of others. But out of those millions there were some few thousand — I am glad I was one of them — who did not let the matter rest there. (164-5)

De Cleyre's pain is not empathetic. While she recognizes her complicity in the executions, the confession ascribes her pain to *her responsibility for the Haymarket martyrs' deaths*. Profound passivity pervades her suffering. Her voice, a sudden exclamation exiting her throat and penetrating her ear, utters its indictment before the chance to form her thoughts and speak for herself. That passivity, that involuntary vocalization, traumatizes her. It obsesses: "my own voice, as it sounded that night, will sound so in my ears till I die." There, in that traumatized immobility, de Cleyre's complicity is produced without her knowledge ("what had I done?"), and she "[becomes] an executioner at heart," guilty of taking the lives of the accused. Such responsibility comes from infinitely far away, beyond de Cleyre's own interiority, out of the other, prior to any acquaintance. Her indictment, before she is in her own head and thinking for herself, accuses her *in herself*. Further, founded in this traumatic moment of helplessness sufficiently powerful to take life, de Cleyre's lifelong commitment to anarchism is revealed *at its*

very origins to be an act of atonement for her violence against those lives to which she was committed prior to any commitment.

Today, does anarchism reassert itself out of similar despair? Social justice projects across the world recognize that our political, social, economic, legal, medical, and ideological relations are organized to guarantee our involuntary complicity in these systems, even (and especially) through refusals of involvement. In the United States, awareness of complicity is mainstream. The idea that we are all implicated in systems that depend upon and reproduce inequality and suffering is not limited to academic or politically fringe discourses; it shows up on major television programs and twitter feeds. It's inescapable, obsessional. At the supermarket, every purchase I make accedes to environmental degradation and catastrophe. My clothing, whether manufactured in America or abroad, affirms the acceptability of exploited labor. If I am black, I am vulnerable by virtue of my that racial identity to police brutality, regardless of compliance. If I am white, even if I reject whiteness in protest, I receive that identity's privileges. If, in the name of radical change, I refuse to vote, my refusal is a vote that empowers a party that I condemned. Perhaps, today, a fundamentally anarchist movement such as Occupy Wall Street — based on anarchist principles of direct action, affinity groups, and temporary autonomous zones — generates international appeal because it offers an alternative to these systems. Perhaps, hearkening back to de Cleyre's confession, there is a growing collective realization: *I have done terrible things, but I've done them all through systems to which I never voluntarily consented. Couldn't you and I, my friend, do this better? At least without inflicting so much suffering?*

Pain, I would like to argue, joins cut-up writing and anarchism. More specifically, this essay hypothesizes that anarchist principles and values generically and technically guide cut-up

literature. While no study of this association heretofore has been written, the connection invites additional parallels. Both cut-up literature and anarchism inhabit — and locate themselves on — the margins of culture and society, off the grid, underground. Both exhibit a punk rock, do-it-yourself aesthetic impulse. Indeed, both foster anti-establishmentarian attitudes that disavow conventional claims to authority and seek to redefine the world and its values directly. However, while the following study does examine these intersections, the fundamental alliance between anarchism and cut-up literature is that both recognize the individual subject's implication in systems of oppression and consequently experiment with radical alternatives for responsibility and justice. My central argument is that cut-up literature, guided by anarchic ideas and practices, explicitly and implicitly interrogates classical and contemporary anarchist ideologies in order to save them from obsolescence. In the final analysis, cut-up literature proposes a radical revision of anarchism. It suggests that anarchism is not founded on principles of liberty and egalitarianism, but on a traumatic ethical and social relation that prioritizes responsibility for the neighbor.

This project contributes to a conversation about “anarchist aesthetics” that has been growing during the last decade. Anarchist aesthetics are, in a nutshell, the study of artistic works that express and are influenced by anarchist values, principles, and practices.⁷ In literature, such studies are often committed to a notion of absolute freedom rather than anarchism *per se*. For example, in his 2006 *On the Anarchy of Poetry and Philosophy* (subtitled *A Guide for the Unruly*), Gerald L. Bruns proposes an “anarchist aesthetics” in which “anything goes, nothing is forbidden, since anything is possible within the historical limits of the particular situations in which modern and contemporary art and poetry have been created. It is as if freedom rather than

truth, beauty, or goodness had become the end of art” (xxv.). Such a definition of anarchist aesthetics reduces its aims to a negative freedom — a freedom *from* a power so absolute that, once that power has been left behind, it leaves only absence. One would do nothing with such freedom except “be” free, that is, survive in the aftermath of that power’s withdraw. This project affords a positive, historically informed approach to anarchist aesthetics. While liberty remains a part of my vocabulary, my attention to anarchist-inflected texts emphasizes the horizontal, voluntary, and direct social relations characteristic of anarchist principles, rather than softer (and historically bogus) “anything goes” attitudes.

This anarchist aesthetics builds on David Weir’s hypothesis in *Anarchy and Culture* (1997) that “anarchism succeeded culturally where it failed politically” (5). According to Weir, the modernist avant-garde assimilated the tenants of anarchist individualism, represented by Max Stirner’s *The Ego and Its Own* and Benjamin Tucker’s magazine *Liberty*, and adapted them in a depoliticized form to art. He states that “ideas particular to anarchism were adapted by poets and novelists in such a way that the outcome of those ideas was aesthetic rather than political” (161). For example, the order to create idiosyncratic works of art that express the artist’s unique perception implicit in Ezra Pound’s mantra “make it new,” while not explicitly critiquing the state or capitalism, can be traced back to Stirner’s claims about ownness. This study extends Weir’s insight beyond the early twentieth-century avant-garde. While I do examine Gertrude Stein’s work, I mostly focus on cut-up writers William S. Burroughs, Kathy Acker, and Kenji Siratori, whose work appears in the postmodern period after the Second World War.

Further, I diverge from Weir’s anarcho-individualist lens. Rather than Stirnerian or Tuckerite traditions, my analysis works within a “postanarchist” framework. In general,

postanarchism involves a theoretical, interdisciplinary approach to the discursive history of anarchism. In this postanarchist study, I analyze both cut-up and canonical anarchist texts in order to elaborate an incipient form of mutual aid that a few anarchist theorists have begun developing in the last decade. In a nutshell, while Kropotkin's conceptualization of mutual aid implies an egalitarian relation, cut-up literature suggests that anarchism's founding trauma installs a pre-ontological asymmetry and non-reciprocity prior to all social and political relations that interminably calls the principles of liberty and equality into question. To be an anarchist, if such is even possible, is to hold a vigil, at once solemn and joyful, over the body of a set of perishing sociopolitical practices that cannot, in spite of everything, die.

I would like to connect these interventions to the work of Voltairine de Cleyre — an anarchist whose work remains largely ignored in historical, anarchist, and literary discourse. De Cleyre, in many ways, is this essay's secret hero. Its title, *Night-Glory*, comes from her 1910 pamphlet "The Dominant Idea." In an effort to elaborate her work, I let that image vine throughout my argument, disrupting my analysis and giving it unity. My critical aim would be to increase interest in her work. But more immediately, beyond textual analysis, I hope to answer the call that obliges me to write in her place.

II. SKELETAL VINE

De Cleyre opens "The Dominant Idea" with an anecdote about a morning-glory that, after being cut from its root, blossoms in the dark amid rain and lightening.

Did you ever see a dead vine bloom? I have seen it. Last summer I trained some morning-glory vines over a second story balcony; and every day they blew and

curled in the wind, their white, purple-dashed faces winking at the sun, radiant with climbing life. Higher every day the green heads crept, carrying their train of spreading fans waving before the sun-seeking blossoms. Then all at once some mischance happened, some cut-worm or mischievous child tore one vine off below, the finest and most ambitious one, of course. In a few hours the leaves hung limp, the sappy stem wilted and began to wither; in a day it was dead, — all but the top which still clung longingly to its support, with bright head lifted. I mourned a little for the buds that could never open now, and tied that proud vine whose work in the world was lost. But the next night there was a storm, a heavy, driving storm, with beating rain and blinding lightening. I rose to watch the flashes, and lo! the wonder of the world! In the blackness of the mid-NIGHT, in the fury of wind and rain, the dead vine had flowered. Five white, moon-faced blossoms blew gaily round the skeleton vine, shining back triumphant at the red lightening. I gazed at them in dumb wonder. Dear, dead vine, whose will had been so strong to bloom, that in the hour of its sudden cut-off from the feeding earth, it sent the last sap to its blossoms; and, not waiting for the morning, brought them forth in storm and flash, as white night-glories, which should have been the children of the sun.

In the daylight we all came to look at the wonder, marveling much, and saying, “Surely these must be the last.” But every day for three days the dead vine bloomed; and even a week after, when every leaf was dry and brown, and so thin you could see through it, one last bud, dwarfed, weak, a very baby of a blossom,

but still white and delicate, with five purple flecks, like those on the live vine beside it, opened and waved at the stars, and waited for the early sun. Over death and decay the Dominant Idea smiled: the vine was in the world to bloom, to bear white trumpet blossoms dashed with purple, and it held its will beyond death. (79-80)

In the context of de Cleyre's pamphlet, these "white night-glories" offer a metaphor for the individual's capacity to overcome rigid socioeconomic conditions. Aiming her critique at socialists and anarchists who dogmatically accept "Materialist Determinism" and "the so-called Materialist Conception of History," de Cleyre argues that the claim that "men are what circumstances make them" neglects the opposing claim that "circumstances are what men make them" (81; 82). Following such ideological commitments, de Cleyre's contemporaries become "shifting, self-excusing, worthless, parasitical characters, who are *this* now and *that* at some other time" and thereby reveal them to be subjects who sanction capitalism's dominant ideas of "Much Making of Things" and "Thing-Worship," overproduction and mass consumption (82; 87; 90). In these terms, the "dominant idea" refers to ideology. However, rather than exclusively referring to a system of ideas, it also identifies a kind of intellectual Archimedean lever that can revolutionize existential conditions. While de Cleyre's contemporaries subordinate this force to material conditions, her pamphlet counters that such an "Idea" cooperates with "circumstances" in order to form unique material realities. Thus, de Cleyre's "white night-glories" represent proof that circumstances do not define the individual's limitations. The severed vine is a figure for material conditions, while the "white night-glories" are "the power and the role of the Idea," "the force of purposive action, of intent *within* holding its purpose against obstacles *without*", or "the

immortal fire of Individual Will” (82; 84; 94)

Is De Cleyre’s anecdote merely a naïve expression of individual power? Her apostrophe (“Dear, dead vine”), recalling Romanticism’s exaltation of the autonomous subject, praises the morning-glory for its insuppressible will (“will [that] has been so strong to bloom”), which becomes itself (“white night-glories”) in the struggle against forces that would destroy it (“the hour of its sudden cut-off from the feeding earth,” “storm and flash”). The critique of material determinism implicit in this apostrophe pivots on a refusal to relinquish the opposition between inside and outside: “Must we,” de Cleyre asks elsewhere in the pamphlet, “because the Middle Age was dark and blind and brutal, throw away the one good thing it wrought into the fibre of Man, that the inside of a human being was worth more than the outside?” (90-91). For de Cleyre, the “white night-glories” are praiseworthy not simply because they triumph over their precarious and humiliating living conditions; they are expressions of an internal determination that rejects and transcends external conditions determined on their behalf. Rather than surrendering their agency, as de Cleyre’s revolutionary comrades allegedly did, the night-glories seem to find their own way. Blooming after their connection to the source has been broken, they effectively disavow the ruling ideology that consigns them to death, and discover inspiration in an alternative, internally determined idea that preserves their materiality against external threat.

Yet, while de Cleyre’s individualism risks naïveté and romanticism, her anecdote also expresses an unexpected step away from ideology. The pamphlet concludes with an imperative that transposes “the Dominant Idea” from the realm of ideology to the spectrum of individual thought: an idea that governs the subject, but a governance that is too relative and idiosyncratic to be ideological.

Let us have Men, Men who will say a word to their souls and keep it — keep it not when it is easy, but keep it when it is hard — keep it when the storm roars and there is a white-streaked sky and blue thunder before, and one’s eyes are blinded and one’s ears deafened with the war of opposing things; and keep it under the long leaden sky and the gray dreariness that never lifts. Hold unto the last: that is what it means to have a Dominant Idea, which Circumstance cannot break. And such men make and unmake Circumstance. (94-95)

De Cleyre’s meteorological rhetoric re-activates the opening anecdote’s storm imagery. Further, her shift from the definite to the indefinite article, from “the” to “a Dominant Idea,” re-evokes the image of the night-glory’s last flower: “dwarfed, weak, a very baby of a blossom, but still white and delicate, with five purple flecks, like those on the live vine beside it, [that] opened and waved at the stars, and waited for the early sun.” Here, the man possessed with his own dominant idea “holds” with the night-glory’s tenacity, prevailing even where victory has been forbidden. But the word “like” marks the crucial difference. “Like” the other morning-glories, but sufficiently distinct from them to stand apart, de Cleyre’s description of the last night-glory endorses a non-ideological idea. If the night-glories represent *a* dominant idea, they are not simply indefinite, relative, singular; they are an idea severed from a central source and belonging to another circumstance. Rather than a romanticized individualism, reaching back to a lost period in history, de Cleyre’s “white night-glories” hold out the hope of a revolutionary thought that cannot be reduced to a hegemonic ideological form.

Indeed, the night-glories hold out the promise of something radical. Blossoming against all odds, after they have been severed from their root and declared “dead,” *de Cleyre’s night-*

glories live on their own death. As a morning-glory that blossoms at night, it always already grows queerly, perversely, out of turn, without conforming to “the dominant idea” that governs the other plants. That it blossoms at “mid-NIGHT” reiterates this incommensurability: rather than simply growing in the dark, under the stars and moon, without sunshine, it effloresces in the middle of the darkness, on the hither side of night, absolutely distant from morning. It unfurls, opening and fluttering, in oblivion. This resurrection is a sort of secular miracle (“the wonder of the world”). Living on their own death, conditioned by their own impossibility, de Cleyre’s night-glories are subterranean creatures, underground rhizomes, night-crawlers that do not belong to the biopolitical order of life and death, visibility and invisibility, nor even perhaps interiority and exteriority. They cannot happen, and for that reason they do.

Does this radical step away from the biopolitical order suffice to distance de Cleyre’s argument from its apparent romanticism? If her “white night-glories” are figurations of subjectivity that neither conform to their existential conditions nor adhere to ideological formations, is “The Dominant Idea” more than a naïve and obsolete expression of individualism and the power of a sovereign will? It’s telling that de Cleyre, who by 1910 had begun to question and step away from the anarchist individualism popular in the late nineteenth-century United States, frames her critique of “Materialist Determinism” as a *revolutionary* rather than an *anarchist* problem, as though her profounder critique of ideology as such discouraged her from identifying alliances with any “-ism,” even with her later well-known endorsement of an “anarchism without adjectives.” In the essay that follows, I would like to suggest that de Cleyre *thinks more than she thinks.* As a metaphor, the night-glory imagines an ipseity, a radical subject, a revolutionary subject that does not belong or refer to social, cultural, or political ideologies, but

instead finds its conditions of possibility in a practice that incorporates its own limits.

However, that claim is secondary. What I will keep in the foreground is the fact that that radical, that miraculous, that impossible begins with a cut.

III. WHAT IS THE CUT-UP?

Composed by the “cut-up technique,” cut-up literature involves “the creation of new texts by cutting up at least two existing texts and recombining the fragments at random. Hence the old texts are literally cut up and the end product is a new composite text” (Robinson 1). This method is fundamentally aleatory. Rather than transferring the author’s thoughts and imagination onto the page through language, the cut-up decentralizes the place of the author; it effectively *discovers* thoughts, images, and textures *for the author* through the process of arranging and rearranging textual fragments. While definitions of the cut-up technique (such as Robinson’s) tend to emphasize the physical practice of cutting and juxtaposing, I would underscore this *processual* character. Cutting and collaging should not be minimized, but it is the process, the procedural adventure of placing texts together and then unexpectedly stumbling upon a phrase or meaning that is not a reproduction of meanings or phrases already produced within the mind that distinguishes cut-up literature from modernist collages such as T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* and Melvin Tolson’s *Libretto for the Republic of Liberia*.

Histories of the cut-up tend to begin with Tristan Tzara and Dada. William S. Burroughs, who popular consensus regards as the cut-up’s greatest pioneer and practitioner, and Edward S. Robinson, author of *Shift Linguals*, the only formal effort to trace a genealogy of the cut-up technique, both adhere to this narrative.⁸ However, the practice of introducing a “cut” into a pre-

existing text and using that incision to combine the text with another goes back to classical Japanese haiku⁹ — that compressed poetic form celebrated by Ezra Pound, Imagists, and other high modernist writers. While most American school children learn that haiku are three-line poems with five syllables in the first line, seven in the second, and five in third, classical haiku written in Japanese are also built around a conventionalized word called *kireji* or “severing letter” (Yamada-Bochynek 255). Only a handful of these words are permissible in the traditional form. They do not have equivalents in English, and are frequently registered in English translations by punctuation marks (e.g., a dash, colon, or exclamation mark). Their function is two-fold. First, *kireji* communicate tonal effects, such as a question, surprise, or wonder. Second, more importantly, they both separate and join the two images that constitute the haiku’s content.

For example, if the dash in X.J. Kennedy’s translation of Basho’s haiku marks the place of the Japanese *kireji*, that punctuation mark — itself resembling a slash — effectively demarcates the line between the poem’s two images *and* draws them together, highlighting the profundity captured by their juxtaposition.

Heat-lightening streak —
 through darkness pieces
 the heron’s shriek.

Taken alone, neither image possesses depth. However, the introduction of the dash, while marking where each image begins and ends, simultaneously accentuates the images’ relationship. The punctuation mark clinches the two images in a manner that produces a thought-provoking dissonance between the visual and the auditory. The visual image of the lightening — suggesting a rent in the dark sky graphically replicated by the dash — creates the expectation of the sound

of thunder. But, rather than the anticipated sound, the dash/*kiregi* mixes in a heron's cry. Bewildering at first, the confused auditory signal indicates not only a remarkable coincidence, but suggests the unity of the natural world, accord of the earth and the heavens, where birds speak fire and lightning sings. The *kiregi* conditions this deep sense of harmony. While Bashō's poem does not juxtapose two pre-existing texts or discover the haiku's meaning through aleatory combinations, the practice and effect of a word that "splices," cutting and fusing in order to produce a new message, prefigures what will be shocking and exhilarating about Tzara's and Dada's (as well as Gysin's and Burroughs's) twentieth-century literary experiments.

Emerging as a European avant-garde artistic movement after the horrors of World War I, Dada represents both an aggressive and playfully irreverent effort to annihilate European civilization. For example, referring obliquely to WWI in his 1918 *Dada Manifesto*, Tzara calls for a large-scale purgation: "Let every man shout: there is a great destructive, negative work to be accomplished. Sweeping, cleaning. The cleanliness of the individual affirms itself after the state of madness, the aggressive, complete madness of the world left in the hands of bandits who vandalize and destroy centuries" (155-6).¹⁰ In *Dada Manifesto on Feeble & Bitter Love*, Tzara turns this "destructive, negative work" on literature itself through "To Make A Dadaist Poem" — the earliest work that Robinson identifies in his "prehistory of the cut-up."¹¹ The short piece resembles a recipe for making poetry; it instructs the reader to cut up a newspaper article with scissors, shake the words together in a bag, and then copy the words onto a sheet of paper in the order in which they are removed. "And there you are — " Tzara mocks, "an infinitely original author of charming sensibility, even though unappreciated by the vulgar herd" (302). The effect of the instructions is to burlesque literary composition. While the lyrical tradition acclaims self-

expression and originality, Tzara's instructions suggest that language is not the writer's invention. To write is to work with a medium designed without the writer's input and to speak in the voice of another. Furthermore, the "recipe" deflates literature's value. Literature is not only little more than the product of copying somebody else's words; it is, Tzara suggests, the practice of placing one word beside another, hoping that their arrangement makes sense.¹²

"To Make a Dadaist Poem" marks the historical locus where the cut-up technique and anarchism intersect for the first time. In his groundbreaking 1968 *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Renato Poggioli affirms that the avant-garde endorses anarchism (though he mischaracterizes the ideology as "antipolitical"): "the only omnipresent or recurring political ideology within the avant-garde is the least political or the most antipolitical of all: libertarianism and anarchism" (97). He goes on to characterize such anarchism as an "individualistic moment [that] is never absent from avant-gardism" (ibid.). Tzara's disgust — his contempt for hierarchy and bourgeois institutions, his love for spontaneity and freedom — corroborate Poggioli's claims. Indeed, in the 1918 *Dada Manifesto*, Tzara states:

I am against systems, the most acceptable system is the one of not having any system, on principle. * * * Making yourself complete, growing perfect in your own littleness until you have filled up the vase of your self, the courage to fight for and against thought, the mystery of bread sudden unleashing of an infernal helix into economic lilies:

DADAIST SPONTANEITY

I call it don't give a damnism that state of a life where each person keeps his own conditions, although knowing how to respect other individuals, if not defending himself, the two-step becoming a national hymn, a whatnot store, a radio playing Bach fugues, neon lights and signs for brothels, the organ diffusing incarnations for God, all that together and actually replacing photography and unilateral catechism. (154)

Though Tzara does not outright call himself an “anarchist,” John D. Erikson avers that he “steps right out of the classic egalitarian, anarchical tradition of Bakunin, Malatesta, Kropotkin, and Sorel, but most particularly, of Max Stirner [. . .]” in this passage (105).¹³ If applied to “To Make A Dadaist Poem,” then, Tzara’s statement reveals that anarchist aims motivate this early cut-up experiment. While burlesquing the elevated status enjoyed by literature, the process of destroying the newspaper article by cutting it into its individual words and then rearranging those words in an aleatory manner endeavors to dismantle the system of literary production and to introduce a jolt of spontaneity that might restore the individual’s identity and establish his own place in the world.

Brion Gysin and William S. Burroughs transform Tzara’s impertinent gimmick into the literary method known now as “cut-up writing.” According to Gysin, he accidentally discovered the method in 1959 when cutting into a stack of newspapers with a Stanley blade in order to make a mount for a drawing. Intrigued by the cut’s effect, he began “piec[ing] together” the “raw words” (*Third Mind* 43-44). He then told his friend Burroughs about it. Together, they launched into a series of literary experiments published later in *Minutes to Go* (1960). A slender collection of early cut-ups by Gysin, Burroughs, Sinclair Beiles, and Gregory Corso, *Minutes to Go*

features several experiments. Gysin's "First Cut-Ups," for example, collages articles from *The Paris Herald Tribune*, *The London Observer*, *The London Daily Mail*, and *Life* magazine advertisements; Burroughs' and Corso's "Everywhere March Your Head" and "Son of Your In" collaboratively rearrange Arthur Rimbaud's poem "*A une raison*" ("To a Reason"); and Corso's self-explanatory "CUT UP of Eisenhower Speech & Mine Own Poem" blends the then-US president's and the poet's words into a new text. *Minutes to Go* also includes Gysin's "permutations."¹⁴ Based on a geometric progression (i.e., 5 x 4 x 3 x 2 x 1), these permutations take a short phrase, e.g., "I think therefore I am," and then re-sequence the order of each word until all possible syntactic combinations have been formulated (see *Minutes to Go*, 47).

Implicit in the cut-ups of *Minutes to Go* is a critique of consumer capitalism and what Guy Debord called "the society of the spectacle." In 1959, echoing the Dada movement's anger and disgust, the physical act of cutting newspapers, advertisements, literary works, philosophical aphorisms, and the U.S. president's speeches into fragments constitutes an attack not simply on the political, cultural, scientific, and social foundations of a conservative global power openly punishing dissent, nonconformity, and difference, but on the texts and rhetorical practices that supported and reified that foundation's legitimacy. (Indeed, Burroughs' own experiments with the cut-up method, independent of his collaboration with Gysin, portend late capitalist developments in telecommunications, global production, and digital information. Later in his career, his metaphor of the "word virus" offers a critique of post-war capitalism in which the virus produces the same alienating and pacifying effects of late capitalist media.) "The society of the spectacle," according to Debord, is the late capitalist social order in which the subject has been reduced to an absolute consumer. He no longer produces; he only purchases, consumes,

swallows. He no longer acts; for him, the world is only a panorama of images to which he is the spectator, and he no longer has the power to change it: “the individual’s gestures are no longer his own,” Debord writes, “but rather those of someone else who represents them to him. The spectator feels at home nowhere, for the spectacle is everywhere” (Debord 23). In *Minutes to Go*, when Gysin and Burroughs apply a Stanley blade to texts, they are assaulting the spectacle’s very systems and effects. Every stroke of the ox is a wooden shoe jammed in capitalism’s cogs.

These cut-ups emphasize a DIY aesthetics that advocate the direct action blocked by capitalist spectacularity. In the book’s opening, titular work, after providing instructions about how to make a cut-up, Gysin writes:

The writing machine is for everybody

Do it yourself until the machine comes

Here is the system according to us (“Minutes to Go” 5)

Later, elsewhere, Burroughs echoes Gysin’s appeal to direct action: “Cut-ups are for everyone,” he states. “Anybody can make cut-ups. [. . .] Right here write now” (*Third Mind* 31).

Maintaining Dada’s anti-authoritarianism, Burroughs’ and Gysin’s claims implicitly argue that the cut-up democratizes literature; the production of literature no longer requires professional writers, elevated above others for their expertise and sensibilities. “there is no longer a need to drum up a season of / geniuses,” Gysin writes in “Minutes to Go.” “be your own agent.” If one can acquire both a text and a pair of scissors (or a comparable instrument), then they can arrange these composite texts. I am speaking for Burroughs and Gysin now, but one need not even be fluent in the given language.¹⁵ Since the cut-up is based on process and discovery rather than self-expression, the writer’s mastery of the language is irrelevant; the textual fragments, the work

of juxtaposition, and the precipitous light that cracks when two fragments click relieve the secondary language user and carry him to the point.

Robin Lydenberg, whose *Word Cultures* offers one of the few major sustained readings of Burroughs' later cut-up experiments, calls this method a "negative poetics." Quoting Terry Wilson, she confirms that Gysin's and Burroughs' cut-ups are Dadaesque efforts to find "ways out — out of identity, habit, perhaps out of human form itself" (qtd. in Lydenberg 48). In other words, they are modes of escape. Lydenberg identifies positive gains that this "deliberate and conscious abdication of control" would impart — namely, "the possibility [. . .] of continual evolution and change" and "time travel" — but even these achievements are described in negative terms (54). She reduces evolutionary possibilities to "a random and infinite variety of implosions and explosions," while she limits "time travel" to "a total awareness that transgresses the boundaries separating inside and outside, fiction and alleged fact, the private self and the words of others" (52; 53). Explosion, implosion, transgression — anticipating Bruns' "anything goes" aesthetics, these destructive terms shrink the cut-up's effects to a negative freedom that accomplishes no more than did its avant-garde predecessors.¹⁶ Simply stated, they reduce the cut-up to juvenile, egoistical, and iconoclastic acts of vandalism that find their full realization in the spectacle of social and political relations in flames.

However, empowering disenfranchised individuals to write for themselves, Gysin and Burroughs' innovations transcend Dada's impulses, outstripping Lydenberg's "negative poetics" as well as the hermetic individualism that Poggioli associates with the avant-garde. Instead, *they call attention to fact that the cut-up method is a social practice*. The title of their collection *The Third Mind* (1965), which Jennie Skerl calls "a manifesto that sums up the cutup's significance

for Burroughs and Gysin” (49), suggests that cooperative exchange constitutes the core of the method. An effect of collaboration, the “third mind” results from two writers working together to create an art form greater than the sum of their individual efforts. In an interview, Burroughs and Gysin explain the suspicious origin of this idea:

BURROUGHS: [The source of the concept is] a book called *Think and Grow Rich*.

GYSIN: It says that when you put two minds together . . .

BURROUGHS: . . . there is always a third mind . . .

GYSIN: . . . a third and superior mind . . .

BURROUGHS: . . . as an unseen collaborator.

GYSIN: That is where we picked up the title. Our book *The Third Mind* is all about the cut-up materials. (19)

Though Burroughs and Gysin’s reply refers to their collaboration, the practice of one writer cutting up and rearranging another writer’s work itself implies the co-presence of two minds and the emergence of an “unseen collaborator.” To cut up a text, in other words, is to engage in a dialogue: to put two minds together and to build on, question, and perhaps subvert what each collaborator contributes, until the encounter itself gives place to an achievement neither participant could independently accomplish. Opposed to the spectacle, which separates subjects from themselves and others, the cut-up is an affirmation, a hopeful affirmation, that detects a chink — a chink inflicted by the cut-up itself — in what de Cleyre called “Much Making of Things” and “Thing-Worship.” Looking into that aperture, the cut-up spots an alternative to spectatorship in which men directly cooperate to build living conditions together.

Thus, in 1959, isolated absolutely by postwar capitalism, Gysin cut into a stack of newspapers with his Stanley blade and accidentally discovered the act of friendship *par excellence* and the possibility of friendship itself.

While his and Burroughs' cut-ups do preserve Dada's destructive impulses, their innovations cannot be reduced to antisocial acts of vandalism. Their technique acknowledges that the "great destructive, negative work" cleaves to a connection that no act of annihilation has the power to sweep into nothingness. This connection is a social relation, shared between one subject and another. But, figured forth by the dash or cut, by *kireji*, this relation affords cohesion and unity only to the degree that it introduces and safeguards separation. Such separation is not comparable to the spectacle's. Rather than disconnecting the subject from himself and his neighbor, placing him out of touch with himself and others, the cut of the cut-up figures forth a division that binds. If the cut-up method represents friendship, the cut symbolizes a social bond that ceaselessly recognizes the absolute distance between one subject and another, binding by holding apart.

Such a cut is a true Gordian knot. Unbinding it means cutting it, and cutting it only introduces a newer, tighter tangle.

It is a night-glory. Guided by the "dominant idea" represented by de Cleyre's inexorable flowers, the cut-up method represents a refusal to be a victim of capitalist (or socialist or anarchist) ideology who consents through passivity to an acceptance of circumstances determined on her behalf. Through it, she takes direct action on the world in order to materially alter it. She "hold[s] on to the last"; the cut-up method destroys and creates texts, she makes and unmakes circumstances. For the cut-up, this practice is not authoritarian. The cut-up's aleatory,

processual character places power in the *practice* rather than the practitioner. This is the dominant idea at the center of the cut-up technique: *an ethical practice that systematically, structurally forbids power from finding a center or vertical axis, and instead maintains its horizontal organization, unchaining power from hierarchy and centralization in a manner that directly and democratically distributes it among the multiplicity of others.*¹⁷ In other words, if the cut-up consistently reflects any pattern of social and political organization, the pattern it reflects is anarchy.

IV. ANARCHY

Anarchy is a social and political form that privileges direct, horizontal, bottom-up, and voluntary organization. Anarchism is the ideas and practices supporting this form. Thus, in this sociopolitical sense, anarchy is not chaos, violence, or self-indulgence. Nor is anarchism, as Poggioli indicates, less political or more antipolitical than other ideologies. Nor is it, as Bruns assumes, an “anything goes” philosophy for “unruly” adherents.

Moreover, to state that “anarchy is a form of organization” is not a contradiction. While anarchism rejects power formations dependent upon authority, hierarchy, and exclusion, it does not therefore endorse an absolute abrogation of power. Contrary to that popular, almost knee-jerk response, anarchy is a unique agglomeration of power that respects power’s complex, quicksilver, constantly fluctuating form.¹⁸ This is not to say that anarchy is a sociopolitical form that is ceaselessly changing, though that would not be an error; it is to say that *anarchy accounts for change as a conceptual kernel internal to its conditions*. In other words, over any final, idealized form (e.g., everyone is free to govern their own affairs), it can be understood as an

updated version of Tzara's brash claim that "the most acceptable system is the one of not having any system." Anarchy accounts for that which disorganizes it, incorporates the principle that disturbs any propensity toward inertia and systematization, and it is organized by this account.

The anarchist principles guiding cut-up literature are subsumed by the category "postanarchism." In a nutshell, postanarchism — also known as "postmodern" and "poststructuralist anarchism" — is a critical approach to anarchism that applies critical theory to classical anarchist texts in order to both interrogate and rehabilitate their potentially radical values and ideas.¹⁹ The "post" of postanarchism does not signal a move away from anarchism; it marks a mode of infighting that deepens immersion in the ideology it modifies. It is not "after" anarchism, beyond it; it is a renewed set of ideas and practices. Thus, as this critical approach to anarchism, postanarchism is a kind of "dominant idea." Rather than fashioning the blueprint of an anarchist society or a catalogue of recommendations, it is a theory — the practice of a theory. Stationed within philosophical traditions, it assumes that the unique formulation of ideas and questions about those formulations affect social, political, and cultural material conditions, and that changes in those material conditions begin with modulations within thought itself. Simply stated, postanarchism endeavors to reframe anarchist concepts in order to keep anarchism open to the possibility of horizontal, grassroots, and voluntary organization.

Saul Newman's *The Politics of Postanarchism* (2010) represents the fullest theorization of postanarchism to date. According to Newman, anarchism is "a *politics that is conceived outside of, and in opposition to, the state*" (4). It formalizes a paradoxical "*politics of anti-politics, or an anti-political politics*" (ibid.). In other words, since "politics" are conventionally conflated with statecraft, anarchism takes shape around both the rejection of laws, programs,

organizations, and populations administered by and/or referring back to the state *and* an institution of politics based on anarchist principles and practices. Newman suggests that this dialectical relation to the state imperils anarchism; its institution of political forms, the very act of instituting, threatens to reproduce forms of hierarchy and domination. Postanarchism, he proposes, “refers to the *threshold between politics and anti-politics*” and “might be seen as an exploration of this aporetic moment in anarchism” (69; 4).²⁰ It studies those sites within anarchism that would locate its impossibility if they did not identify the very source of its singularity and power.

Newman grounds his conceptualization of anarchism’s aporia in the terms of Levinasian “anarchy.” For Levinas, “an-archy” — often written with the hyphen in order to distinguish it from its usual senses — implicitly plays on Benjamin Tucker’s spurious etymology for Greek *an-arche*, “no origin” or “no first principle” (rather than “no ruler” or “no authority”).²¹ In a footnote, careful not to confuse his term with that used by “anarchists,” Levinas indicates that “an-archy” designates a non-originary origin, that is, the absence of a first principle that cannot *as an absence* establish a first principle, which he further indicates “[makes] possible a moment of negation *without any* affirmation” (194, note 3). As an ontological concept that Levinas places prior to being, this “moment of negation without any affirmation” locates within every ontological determination an absence that cannot be resolved by ontology, that is, cannot be affirmed as a negative moment of that determination and therefore recuperated for knowledge. Instead, an-archy is a soft spot on every ontological determination that cannot be spotted, no matter how closely being is scrutinized, whose trace upon the object can only be inferred from the fact that the object incessantly slips from knowledge’s grasp.

Applying Levinas's concept, Newman advances "a kind of ontological anarchism" (12) — a term he borrows from Hakim Bey and that I reflect on in chapter 3. He argues for an "anarchic moment" within anarchism that maintains anarchism's openness, preventing it from becoming another form of authoritarian hierarchy, and indicates that an-archy "implies the notion of a critique or questioning of the authority of ontological foundations, *including those of anarchism itself*" (ibid.; 51). In other words, for Newman, an-archy designates an "anarchism without foundations," an anarchism that escapes every ontological determination. But it also designates a soft spot within anarchism. To bend Tzara's language a bit, an-archy is a systemic point, a structural fact of anarchist systems, a question *within anarchism itself* about the anarchy of anarchism that maintains anarchy's malleability and precludes its consolidation into an authoritarian form. It indicates, as Newman states, that anarchism "contains a beyond, a moment of its own transcendence, when it exceeds the discursive limits and ontological foundations within which it was originally conceived and opens itself up to a multitude of different voices and possibilities" (20).

In the context of this essay, Newman's theorizations are evocative. If anarchism derives its capacity to produce voluntary, horizontal, and direct relations from the irreducible tension between the political and the anti-political, then it finds a robust metaphor in de Cleyre's "white night-glories." Newman's definition of an-archy implies that *anarchism feeds on its own death*; while it materializes in its antagonism toward the state, it only produces targeted political conditions to the degree that it severs that relation. Postanarchism, analogously, is a kind of horticulture. To study anarchism's aporia is to cultivate a garden of morning-glories by cutting them off at the root and nurturing their growth toward something theretofore unseen and

triumphant.

However, Newman's theorizations hesitate at the threshold of the an-archy in anarchism by faltering before the radical concept of substitution central to Levinas' ethics. Identifying the point "where the thinking of Levinas becomes important" for the politics of postanarchism, Newman elaborates the relation between "an-archy" and the "encounter — or what [Levinas] calls assignation — with the other" (54). Then, he elaborates this encounter's relation to "substitution":

[. . .] in this encounter, there is a 'substitution' in which one now exists through and for the other, and here the limits of one's own identity are broken up.

However, while this destabilisation of one's identity through a sense of radical responsibility to the other might sound like the very antithesis of freedom, Levinas contends that it allows a freedom of a different kind: 'Substitution frees the subject from ennui, that is, from the enchainment to itself, where the ego suffocates in itself due to the tautological way of identity . . . ' The freeing of the self from the self is really a getting away from essence; essence is not the basis of freedom — as it is claimed in the humanist tradition — but a limitation on it. (54-55)

Here, Newman wavers. While he indicates that substitution relieves the subject from the metaphysical constraints of essence, his elaboration only calls attention to what the subject *loses* through substitution, that is, what it is liberated *from*, and neglects what the subject *gains* by this ordeal. In this way, Newman stresses substitution's negative moment. Reiterating the pattern established by Bruns' "anarchist aesthetics" and Lydenburg's "negative poetics," his "ontological

anarchism” reproduces the limitation in anarchic thinking that strains to imagine anarchy beyond its “great destructive, negative work.” This pattern is a problem for anarchism: it treats freedom as if it were the ultimate in itself, rather than the concrete revolutionary attainment inaugurating anarchy, after which productive work would begin. Further, for Newman, his emphasis on the subject’s destabilization and its evasion of ontological essence provides a diversion that turns his attention from the positive moment in Levinas’ notion of substitution.

The irony of his emphasis is that, even though he recognizes that “this is where the thinking of Levinas becomes important,” it excludes the radical implications of anarchy in Levinas’s thought. Ultimately, for Levinas, the positive moment of anarchy *for the subject* is (as Newman indirectly states) “radical responsibility for the other.” However, that responsibility does not “allow” freedom from essence. Such freedom, in Levinas’ *Otherwise Than Being*, is concomitant with the responsibility. What the responsibility “allows,” through substitution, is the dark side of subjectivity. Substitution, identifying “the possibility of putting oneself in the place of the other, which refers to the transference from the ‘by the other’ into a ‘for the other’” (117-8), describes a “non-interchangeability” with the other that traumatizes the subject and obliges it to serve the other, without reciprocity or end, to the extreme of self-sacrifice.

In *Otherwise than Being*, this moment of being “by the other” hearkens back to the primal scene described in de Cleyre’s “confession.” For Levinas, it begins with the idea of *proximity*. In a nutshell, proximity is a concept that locates a moment of the subject prior to self-consciousness; it characterizes the subject’s embodied experience of its nearness to the other, its neighbor. Levinas notes that this idea of proximity is “an-archival.” While it designates a relationship between the subject and its neighbor, that relationship cannot be identified with a

point of origin. Instead, it is anterior to the determination of the subject, “‘older’ than the a priori,” which he describes as a “relationship with a singularity without the mediation of any principle, any ideality” (101; 100). Further, Levinas notes that proximity is not a relationship of “spatial contiguity,” but is “an assignation of me by the other”: “an extremely urgent assignation — an obligation, anachronistically prior to any commitment” (100-101). In de Cleyre’s vignette, this assignation is figured forth by the “bitter reproach and shame” experienced after she utters the condemnation “They ought to be hanged!”²² When she is merely the puppet of capitalist discourse, before she becomes “self-conscious,” this assignation calls de Cleyre forward, silently, affectively, connecting her with the Haymarket martyrs. Framed in these terms, proximity is a bond with the other. It is a connection, albeit with the infinitely far away, as well as a contract that must be fulfilled, antedating any physical or social encounter with the other.

Proximity torments de Cleyre. Always already belonging to her body, this anarchical assignation from the other causes her to suffer from what Levinas describes as *obsession* and *persecution*. In de Cleyre’s vignette, persecution is narrated in her experience of not being in herself: before she is herself, she is the Haymarket martyrs’ “executioner.” Further, her obsession is expressed not simply through the alien voice that “will sound so in [her] ears until [she] die[s],” but by the fact that she “did not let the matter rest there.” Indeed, after this event, her continual efforts to know the accused’s case (“little by little”) as well as the anarchist labors that she undertakes as a result of the assignation prove the fact and intensity of her mania and fixation.²³ For de Cleyre, murder and responsibility antedate the subject. Prior to the possibility of saying “I,” before there is a subject who would take responsibility for another or could act against that other’s life, she has not only been committed prior to any commitment by the

assignation from the other; she is the Haymarket martyrs' murderer, guilty of their death, and is charged by them with the sentence to carry on their work.

For Levinas, this "obsession" characterizes the subject's unique bond to the other that is prior to being. If the other assigns an obligation to the subject before the subject "is," obsession suggests the idea that the subject encounters this obligation everywhere; it hounds the subject, permeating their being absolutely precisely because it "originates" before the subject's beginning. Since it is "prior to any commitment," even the effort to rescind the obligation reasserts the contract. The passivity of this obsession, the fact that it seizes the subject without its consent and prior to its existence, throws the subject's being into question. Indeed, persecution designates the experience of "being called into question prior to questioning, responsibility over and beyond the logos of response" (102). In effect, the an-archy of the assignation from the other and de Cleyre's obsession by that assignation threaten her *as a subject* with the possibility that her subjectivity does not have its origin *in itself*. Prior to consciousness, before she can act or not act, her ipseity is "there," in the other's proximity, being called forth "by the other."

Indeed, Levinas argues that the "in itself" is the other, that is, it is the anarchical assignation from the other that obsesses and persecutes the subject. Levinas states: "Iipseity is not an abstract point, the center of a rotation, identifiable on the basis of a trajectory traced by this movement of consciousness, but a point already identified by the outside, not having to identify itself in the present nor to state its identity, already older than the time of consciousness" (107). Within the drama of self-consciousness, this ipseity that has been introduced by the other's assignation becomes the point of concentration that locates the very spot where consciousness goes when the subject reflects on itself *in itself*. It is for this reason that de Cleyre's call seems to

come from within herself yet is always already there where she finds herself, as though staked out in advance, before her. Proximity, then, is not simply a bond with the other, sealed by responsibility; it is the most intimate bond, installing the outside onto the subject's interiority. Levinas calls this an "anarchic plot" (105). The ipseity of the subject is "bound in a knot that cannot be undone in a responsibility for others. [. . .] In the exposure to wounds and outrages, in the feeling proper to responsibility the oneself is provoked as irreplaceable, as devoted to the others, without being able to resign, and thus as incarnated in order to offer itself, to suffer and to give" (ibid.).

Conceptualizing this "anarchic plot," Levinas introduces the idea of "recurrence." The notion suggests *a repetition of the subject in which the subject does not encounter itself except to the degree that it encounters the other in itself*. Contrary to the experience of self-consciousness, which becomes present to itself, the experience of recurrence indicates to the subject that it does not belong to the present; instead, it belongs to anarchy, that is, insofar as its identity belongs to its ipseity, the subject in itself is always already past, prior to the past, carried away by a time extraneous to it. The subject is a recurrence, a redundancy. Its ipseity is its soft spot. Levinas states that recurrence is "the constriction of an 'entry inwards,' or the 'hither side' of all extension. It is not a flight into the void, but a movement into fullness, the anguish of contraction and break-up. [. . .]" (108). In other words, the deeper the subject plunges into itself, the farther removed it paradoxically is into the exteriority alien to it. The greater its efforts to consolidate and unify itself, the more terrifically it shatters.

"This recurrence," Levinas states, "[. . .] is the self" (108). Insofar as recurrence reveals that the assignation from the other antedates the subject, the self is the assignation that obsesses

and persecutes it; it is responsibility for the other.

This recurrence would be the ultimate secret of the incarnation of the subject; prior to all reflection, prior to every positing, an indebtedness before any loan, not assumed, anarchical, subjectivity of a bottomless passivity, made out of assignation, like the echo of a sound that would precede the resonance of this sound. The active source of this passivity is not thematizable. It is the passivity of a trauma, but one that prevents its own representation, a deafening trauma, cutting the thread of consciousness which should have welcomed it in its present, the passivity of being persecuted. (111)

Here, persecution acquires its full weight. In effect, before the self is a self, its ipseity is founded through the assignation from the other that commits the subject to take responsibility for the other. The assignation means that the subject owes a debt to the other; it obliges the subject to repay the other for its ipseity. This assignation is persecution. While it calls attention to the subject's redundancy, indicating that it does not belong to itself, the anarchical obligation to take responsibility for the other also indicates that the subject must act first and foremost *for the other*, prior to an intentionality or will. Levinas notes that this responsibility is not simply a call to service; it commits the subject to accept responsibility for "what others do or suffer" (112), including the action of persecution itself. That responsibility measures the full weight of the feeling that the subject is not itself but the other; that is what it means to be "by the other": anarchical, prior to any past, persecution permeates the subject so absolutely that its ipseity is that persecution: when it reflects on itself, it sees not only the outside within itself but its culpability for the trauma with which the other has afflicted it.

In de Cleyre's "anarchic plot," she becomes herself, a singularity, "one of them [some few thousand]," irreplaceable, through the assignation. In the plotting of her story, since she is neither an anarchist at that point nor even a subject that can act upon the assignation, she does not accept the Haymarket martyr's call because she is an anarchist. She becomes an anarchist because she is called.

Substitution locates the moment that de Cleyre becomes an anarchist "for the other." For Levinas, this possibility of "putting oneself in the place of the other" is both an "anarchic liberation" and an "anarchic trauma" (124; 123). Founded in recurrence, substitution frees the subject from itself, extending its boundaries to the other and a radical exteriority prior to apriority itself. However, it also afflicts the subject with a wound. If the wound can be understood as a cut, then it is an anarchical cut that antedates the possibility of cutting. This first cut is the deepest; it does not heal. Always already, obsessively, it accuses the subject. Its pain provides the reminder of "the incessant event of subjection to everything" and the feeling of being "under the weight of the universe, responsible for everything" (117; 116). In a long, complex paragraph, Levinas defines substitution as the ego's very singularity:

The ego is not just a being endowed with certain qualities called moral which it would bear as a substance bears attributes, or which it would take on as accidents in its becoming. Its exceptional uniqueness in the passivity or the passion of the self is the incessant event of subjection to everything, of substitution. It is a being divesting itself, emptying itself of its being, turning itself inside out, and if it can be put thus, the fact of "otherwise than being." This subjection is neither nothingness, nor the product of a transcendental imagination. In this analysis we

do not mean to reduce an entity that would be the ego to an act of substituting itself that would be the being of this entity. Substitution is not an act; it is a passivity incontrovertible into an act, the hither side of the act-passivity alternative, the exception that cannot be fitted into the grammatical categories of noun or verb, save in the said that thematizes them. This recurrence can be stated only as an in-itself, as the underside of being or as otherwise than being. To be oneself, otherwise than being, to be dis-interested, is to bear the wretchedness and bankruptcy of the other, and even the responsibility that the other can have for me. To be oneself, the state of being a hostage, is always to have one degree of responsibility more, the responsibility for the responsibility of the other. (117)

“Hostage” is a metaphor for the subject that I would underscore. While the metaphor suggests that the subject is the captive of the other, passive and vulnerable, it also reverses the other’s anarchical anteriority to the subject. *Qua hostage, the subject stands in front of the other, shielding its captor from danger and harm, and in effect its life is laid down for its persecutor.* Here, substitution finds its consummation. Assigned responsibility for what others do or suffer before the possibility of electing that responsibility, exposed to death for the other’s actions, the subject always already finds itself in the place of the other. For Levinas, such sacrifice is “expiation”: it is a show of remorse on the other’s behalf for its persecution of the subject (127). For de Cleyre, it is the work of anarchism; it is the exposure of her body to danger and harm in order to recompense the Haymarket martyrs for the justice that she denied them.

The twist is that substitution designates a “non-interchangeability” between the subject and the other. Radically asymmetrical and nonreciprocal, the relation of substitution is one-way;

the subject can be substituted for the other, but not the reverse. For de Cleyre, such asymmetry and non-reciprocity means that the Haymarket martyrs cannot die for her; she is their hostage, and she alone can die for them. Yet, for Levinas, de Cleyre's irreplacability, the fact that she specifically is accused and wounded by them, prior to the advent of being, permits her claim to ontological singularity.

[. . .] it is I, I and no one else, who am a hostage for the others. In substitution my being that belongs to me and not to another is undone, and it is through this substitution that I am not "another," but me. The self in a being is exactly the not-being-able-to-slip-away-from an assignation that does not aim at any generality. There is no ipseity common to me and the others; "me" is the exclusion from the possibility of comparison, as soon as comparison is set up. The ipseity is not a privilege or an unjustifiable election that chooses me and not the ego. I am unique and chosen; the election is in the subjection. (127)

Thus, Levinas' an-archical subject is a night-glory. Rather than locating its individuality in itself, its individuality takes shape around a cut that unchains the subject from subjectivity. Indeed, the subject is that very cutting. What Levinas adds to de Cleyre's metaphor is the idea that the night-glory's death, which simultaneously is the very condition of its life, is given to it by forces anterior to "the force of purposive action, of intent *within* holding its purpose against obstacles *without*" or "the immortal fire of Individual Will." Its life, its death incurs a debt that cannot be paid except in the subject's sacrifice of itself to the darkness that ceaselessly accuses it, coaxing it forth into a bottomless service, out of itself, through its own interiority. In other words, the very cut that frees the night-glory from its existential conditions exposes the fact that it owes its

life to an other that calls it forward, obsessed, persecuted, and filled with remorse, to die in its service, without reciprocity, a Stanley blade pressed to its neck.

Obsession. Persecution. Expiation. Hostage. Sacrifice. Newman elides these darker, most difficult components of Levinas' formulation of the concept of substitution.²⁴ If my own elucidation of this concept has been overindulgent, its excesses at least serve to demonstrate that Newman's own elucidation does not merely oversimplify it; they indicate that the subject gains an unpayable debt. To write that "the limits of one's own identity are broken up" by substitution effectively elides the pre-ontological traumas that permeate this "anarchical plot" and terminate in the subject atoning for the other's violence upon it through being its hostage. Indeed, in the passage from *Otherwise Than Being* that Newman quotes above,²⁵ after Newman's ellipsis, Levinas goes on to describe the "suffering and vulnerability" undergone by the subject in its "anarchic liberation" as well as "the self-accusation of remorse [that] gnaws away at the closed and firm core of consciousness, opening it, fissioning it" (124-5; 125). What the ellipsis suggests, then, is not an omission of irrelevant material, but an effort to dodge the full implications of Levinas' thought for anarchism. Simply stated, while Newman's postanarchist project saves the "freedom from essence" and "responsibility for the other" derived from Levinas' notion of anarchy for anarchism, he deliberately omits the traumatic experiences that would both earn these privileges for the subject and, affirming the asymmetry and non-reciprocity at the core of anarchy, determine anarchism's ambitions for liberty and equality to be impossible.

Contracting his postanarchist project's scope, Newman's elision encourages his critique of anarchism to retreat into the language of liberalism and multiculturalism. Since he neither theorizes the non-interchangeability rooted in the subject's experience of obsession and

persecution in the “anarchic encounter” nor integrates the radical asymmetry and non-reciprocity that characterizes the subject’s hostage position relative to the neighbor, his critique of anarchism repeatedly reverts to the language of liberalism and the politics of recognition. For Newman — to return to a quote left dangling above — an-archy culminates in “a multitude of different voices and possibilities.”²⁶ Indeed, following that statement, Newman defines anarchism in terms of “equal-liberty.” “More fundamental” to anarchism than anti-statism or “a general scepticism towards political authority,” he argues, is “the idea of equal-liberty — a proposition through which all forms of domination and hierarchy come under interrogation” (21). Here, in offering this critique of Newman’s *The Politics of Postanarchism*, I do not mean to propose that liberty, equality, and diversity and multivocality do not deserve places within anarchism. My suggestion is that Newman’s tendency to privilege this Enlightenment political vocabulary — rather than terms such as of embodiment, affect, and affinity²⁷ — indicates a complicity with liberal thought within postanarchism itself. In the final analysis, this complicity obstructs anarchism’s connection to an-archy. It reduces anarchism to another sociopolitical theory fully realized in respect for and accommodation of difference.

If anarchism is a night-glory, the full depth of de Cleyre’s anecdote becomes legible the moment that it incorporates the concept of substitution as it relates to hostage and responsibility. Anarchy is not simply “an-archival,” disturbed on its interior by a radical exteriority installed in the heart of its ipseity; it is a social and political organization based around and designed to facilitate the subject’s obligation, prior to any compulsory or involuntary commitment, to repay the neighbor for the gift of death. Hence, anarchism is an effort to organize from the place of the other — to start from the other, rather than the subject.

Darker than any suicidal impulse, the night-glory blossoms by being drawn out by the midnight that it cannot know, yearning for that which can only be its sacrifice.

V. ARE CUT-UPS ANARCHICAL?

Cut-up literature does not shrink from anarchy. While all political ideologies and literary genres are an-archic, without essential foundations, cut-ups and anarchism are unique as modalities of literature and political thought respectively because both recognize and respect the anarchy at their hearts. Both account for change as the conceptual kernel internal to their conditions, that is, both are processual systems that accommodate aleatory elements extraneous to their design — elements that, for this reason, may take them in unexpected directions. While the cut-up's destruction of capitalism's spectacular discourses and commodities grounds its "negative poetics" in a historically anarchist critique of sociopolitical and economic structures, its fundamentally aleatory and processual character suggests the cut-up's direct, democratic applications and intuitive, process-oriented mode of discovery are guided by and give literary form to anarchist principles. In short, cut-up texts form anarchical, asystematic systems. They organize and sustain acentric, nonlinear, organic textual forms that are susceptible to de-systemization through systematic practices and chance incorporations.

Beyond these aleatory and processual linkages, the cut-up engages directly with the concept of substitution at the threshold of which anarchism trembles. If the cut symbolizes a social bond that ceaselessly recognizes the absolute distance between the self and the other, then *Otherwise Than Being* opens the possibility that the cut gives expression to anarchy itself. For the text, the cut is a soft spot, an incurable wound, an assignation that incessantly places it into

question, but that cut is also an assignation to which the text owes its being. Further, if the cut-up technique is the act of friendship *par excellence*, Levinas suggests that it is not only because the cut establishes a bond that holds the duo apart, but because it recognizes that violence, the cut's violence, an ancient hostility older than the most primal violence, first and foremost belongs to that bond. Thus, cut-up literature emerges out of anarchy. Organized around a soft spot that disorganizes it, an invisible wound that simultaneously indicts the text for violence and implies recompense through its own destruction, the cut-up is not simply dialogue; it gives literary form to the subject's anarchical responsibility to the neighbor.

Foregrounding the subject's responsibility, cut-up literature expresses the anarchical concept of substitution anterior to it. In *The Third Mind*, for example, Burroughs states: "Poetry is a place and it is free to all cut up Rimbaud and you are in Rimbaud's place" (31). Echoing the collaborative principle of "the third mind" that generates a new writer from dialogue between the two, Burroughs' statement introduces the possibility that the process of the cut-up technique is a process of "putting oneself in the place of the other." The effect of the technique, at the level of narrative, tends to replicate this possibility. Since cut-ups often splice one character's speech or actions with another's, the technique produces composite characters. However, rather than simple hybrids, these narrative forms in terms of characterization and character development are replacements, one-for-the-other.²⁸ In the narrative, the cut that binds two characters registers an infinitesimal interruption in which one character's story arc displaces and resumes another's, that is, in which one character takes the other's place. The narrative interruption, the slightest flutter, implies sacrificial violence. It suggests that every character (and practitioner) of the cut-up are subject to ancient hostility, hostages to the text for whose death they are responsible, parasites

siphoning from their host.²⁹

Perhaps due to its engagement with (and in) substitution, cut-up literature also features recurrence. Gertrude Stein, the first true writer of repetition, called such recurrence “insistence:” a mode of repetition that produces difference by constantly differentiating identity through the process of repetition itself, calling attention to the anarchic core within each identity. If anarchy is the soft core of cut-up literature, these repetitions suggest not simply the obsessive, circular return of language to the point that absorbs it through repulsion, finding only destabilization where language would obtain ultimate security; *it suggests the obsession of persecution*. In effect, the cut calls attention to redundancy. While it suggests that the text belongs to the other, not to itself, it also marks the locus from which the text flees from the other *within itself*. What Levinas describes as a “constriction of an ‘entry inwards,’” that is, a restriction of the possibility of moving deeper into the self without expulsion, is reiterated by Burroughs’ often repeated phrase from *Naked Lunch*, “the way OUT is the way IN.” Repetition in the cut-up, then, does not simply express a “negative poetics” in which the more the text endeavors to anchor in its foundation the more tremendously it shatters. If the cut-up gives literary form to substitution, repetition is both a symptom of the encounter with the other in the self (to the point of death) and the rhythm of the movement that receives responsibility for the other as an integral part of the text’s singularity.

Cut-up literature, then, is a record of the one-for-the-other located on anarchism’s heart. I would suggest that, for this reason, cut-up texts obsessively explore the body, particularly sexual organs, excretory functions, and autonomic systems.³⁰ For Levinas, the body is the site of recurrence; it is the place to which the I, unable to secure a return to its ipseity, goes back after it

has been repelled by the other in itself. It is, Levinas says, “the distinctive in-oneself of the contract of ipseity and its break-up” (109), that is, “that by which the self is susceptibility itself” (195, note 12). In other words, it is a body prior to subjectivity: skin, vulnerability, exposure. “The form of incarnation, as being-in-one’s-skin, having-the-other-in-one’s-skin” becomes, for the subject, an experience of a body that belongs to the other, “already tight, ill at ease in one’s own skin” (115; 108). While Burroughs certainly wrote about the body and its affects in order to disrupt the conservative values of 1950s America and Acker because her sex-positive texts aim to recuperate the female body and sexuality, I would like to suggest that this virtually universal attention across the history of cut-up literature expresses a deeper, pre-ontological trauma: the substitution of the one-for-the-other. Cut-up texts, echoing the experience of recurrence, relentlessly bring language back to the body — back to susceptibility, vulnerability, a softness that exposes it to death and constitutes the singularity of its life.

These intersections indicate not simply that cut-ups are anarchical, but that they are deeply engaged in anarchist discourse. Going beyond critiques of capitalism and the state, these engagements participate in a postanarchist conversation about responsibility for the neighbor. Deeper still, as literary works, they enact anarchism’s primal scene. Evoking the ideas of substitution, recurrence, and incarnation at the levels of literary form and narrative content, cut-up texts seem to stage, over and over again, the moment that Voltairine de Cleyre becomes a night-glory: the instant when, accused by the other for murder, she is unchained from the capitalist subjectivity that interpellates her and is called forth to become an anarchist.

Here, the cut-up marks the hither side of literature. While its “negative poetics” monkeywrench centralized, hierarchical power organizations, that negative impulse

concomitaneously gives expression to a Levinasian notion of anarchy. In *On the Anarchy of Poetry and Philosophy*, Bruns struggles to place Levinas's "anarchist aesthetics" within the context of his ethics. He points out that for Levinas the work of art radiates a "dark light." Such "dark light" would not be a mixture of light and darkness, a half-light or half-darkness; it would be akin to de Cleyre's "mid-NIGHT," prior to the orders of light and dark, visibility and invisibility, consciousness and unconsciousness.³¹ According to Bruns, this "dark light" is another moment of negative freedom. It is "a way of setting things free of the light in which they exist for me. It would be a way of restoring to things their fundamental strangeness" (188-9). "Strangeness" retains that negativity. It designates the unidentifiable, the impossible, wreckage remaining in the light's absence. Yet, if the dark light is read through de Cleyre's "mid-NIGHT," it suggests that the "dark light" radiated by the work of art is anarchy itself. It is an interval that lets slip the otherwise than being — an anarchic revelation, a revelation of anarchy. It is the other that draws forth not only the work of art but the subject produced by its effects.³²

In his final analysis — indeed, in the last words of the book — Bruns conjectures that Levinas' "anarchist aesthetics" mark the locus where "poetry and the ethical come near one another" (197). For Levinas, Bruns states, poetry welcomes the arrival of the other not through the word [*mot*], "sign or noun or word-as-image," but through the *verbe*, which denotes "pure sound." Building on the affectivity of rhythm, this notion of the word [*verbe*] acknowledges "the power of the word to affect things — to intervene in the world" (ibid.). For Levinas, Bruns explains, *verbe* as an auditory materiality "indicate[s] the event of sociality: sound means the *presence* of others making themselves felt in advance of what is said" (ibid.). Further, it indicates "an ethical event, [. . .] not only because others interrupt me in making themselves felt, setting

limits to my own autonomy, but because *even when I myself speak* — even in self-expression — I am no longer an ‘I,’ am no longer self-identical, but am now beside myself” (ibid.). In this context, “dark light” is not merely an image for the appearance of anarchy; it is the affect that radiates across and incarnates the subject prior to being.

Does the cut of the cut-up share in this affect? More than the material sound of language, the cut is a figure for the call of the other that binds me in responsibility to my neighbor. Rather than appealing to the ear, the cut touches the skin of the subject’s body with a pain that makes the skin into *a tunic of Nessus*.³³ The allusion does not simply imply a poisonous skin, as though the very sensibilities and susceptiveness that incarnate the subject — obsession, persecution, remorse — always already signal the subject’s destabilization and responsibility for the other. Referring also to Hemming von Tresckow, it also suggests the night-glory. The Nessus tunic is a symbol of the revolutionary — mournfully alluded to in de Cleyre’s characterization of the flower as “the finest and most ambitious one, of course” — who makes their life a sacrifice in being called to responsibility for the other. Thus, the cut of the cut-up indicates that, already, always, embodiment is a revolutionary act for which the subject eats a hand grenade, or lights a cigar in which their friend has hidden a dynamite cap.

That is not only the place where poetry and the ethical draw near one another. Within the cut-up text, that place, that cut, that almost imperceptible vibration that quivers on the surface of the skin — that is the relation to the neighbor that makes an anarchist. That is the introduction to anarchist aesthetics.

CHAPTER 2

BUBBLES:
ANARCHISM AND THE QUESTION OF THE SUBJECT

Naturally, the bubble does not know what a more actual body brushing past it may do to it, and in a minute it is not even a bubble.

— Louis Zukofsky
“Sincerity and Objectification”

Here we are trying to express the unconditionality of a subject, which does not have the status of a principle. This unconditionality confers meaning on being itself, and welcomes its gravity. It is as resting on a self, supporting the whole of being, that being is assembled into a unity of the universe and essence is assembled into an event. This self is a *sub-jectum*; it is under the weight of the universe, responsible for everything. The unity of the universe is not what my gaze embraces in its unity of apperception, but what is incumbent on me from all sides, regards me in the two senses of the term, accuses me, is my affair. In this sense, the idea that I am sought out in the intersidereal [sic] spaces is not science-fiction fiction, but expresses my passivity as a self.

— Emmanuel Levinas
Otherwise than Being

“The plant cannot prevent itself from flowering. Sometimes to flower means to die. Never mind the sap mounts all the same,” concludes the young anarchist philosopher.

It is the same with the human being when he is full of force and energy. Force accumulates in him. He expands his life. He gives without calculation, otherwise he would not live. If he must die like the flower when it blooms, never mind. The sap rises, if sap there be.

— Peter Kropotkin
Anarchist Morality

I am not sure that liberty is good. I am not sure that progress exists. [. . .]
Everything turns bitter in my mouth and ashes in my hands . . . All my tastes are dying [. . .]

— Voltairine de Cleyre
from *An American Anarchist*

I. “NOBODY LOOKS AS THEY LOOK LIKE”

The introduction suggested that anarchism is not only based on substitution, that is, a responsibility to the other that antedates the anarchist subject, but that anarchist thinkers,

reluctant to integrate that traumatic moment into anarchism's discursive limits, tend to falter before it. Saul Newman's ellipses in *The Politics of Postanarchism* exemplify this tendency. While his "ontological anarchism" conceptualizes the anarchy that unconditionally conditions the encounter between the self and other, his formulation of this Levinasian "assignation" shrinks from the compromising implications of persecution, guilt, and ransom that make Levinas' ethics radical. As a result, Newman's thought errs. Rather than radicalizing anarchism, his postanarchism falls into the convenient, familiar language of multicultural liberal democracy. In this chapter, I would like to show that Newman's lapse typifies a recurrent lacuna in anarchism's discursive history. I argue that, in effect, major anarchist texts contain a similar ellipsis. Undertaking this argument prior to my examination of cut-up literature's anarchist principles and practices, I hope to establish a historical and ideological context in which to appreciate the cut-up's technical and formal contributions to radical discourse.

My central claim is that anarchism speaks a borrowed language. While it attempts to formulate a political thought that organizes from the place of the other, it deploys a concept of the subject inherited from the Enlightenment that repeatedly reformulates its radical aims in the language of liberalism. For my purposes, this language constitutes a politics of identity and recognition. It assumes the existence of an individual, autonomous subject. Furthermore, it reduces the subject's political actions to (a) *petitioning the state for acknowledgement and redress of injuries* and (b) *receiving the "natural" rights of liberty and equality*. Such a subject is effectively a citizen. From anarchism's position, that political category is intrinsically problematic; the subject qua citizen, the subject that appeals to and accepts the privileges conferred by the state, is always already a subject whose subjectivity belongs first and foremost

to hierarchical and authoritarian powers. For anarchism, the liberal subject's aspirations for freedom and equality can only be a ruse. In the context of liberal democracy, every newly acquired right, every policy reform, and every legislative gain deepens that subject's subordination to and reliance on hierarchical authority.

It can be taken for granted that liberalism, like anarchism, is not a monolithic political philosophy. In general, however, it posits an autarkic subject capable of independent, rational thought and entitled to equal rights. For example, in *Two Treatises of Government* (1689), John Locke characterizes the subject in terms of *a priori* autonomy and sovereignty. Such a subject, before any political classification, belongs to himself, not to any other: “[. . .] every Man has a *Property* in his own *Person*. This no Body has any Right to but himself. The *Labour* of his Body, and the *Work* of his Hands, we may say, are properly his” (287-8). In other words, prior to any social or political relation, the subject of liberalism belongs to itself; it is first and foremost possessed by itself and is thus an instrument *for itself*, available to be put to use in its own interests or the interests of another, according to the self-possessed subject's free will. In *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation* (1895), nineteenth-century Hegelian philosopher and pioneering social liberal theorist T.H. Green connects self-ownership to the personal “rights of life and liberty.” For Green, such rights preserve “one's body from the violence of other men, and of using it as an instrument only of one's will; if of another's, still only through one's own” (155). Further, they define the subject's very *person*. “Prevent [a man] from using his body to express a will,” Green states, “and the will itself could not become a reality; he would not be really a person” (ibid.). Thus, this “person,” this property proper to the subject of liberalism, does not simply own itself; the conditions of its possibility rely on its

capacity to freely exercise its own will.

In his lectures, Green argues that such personhood is socially determined. Established prior to the state, the rights of life and liberty are available on the condition that “a society of men who recognise each other as [. . .] capable of a common well-being” exists (154).¹ For Green, in other words, the subject’s self-owned personhood is not simply defined by sovereign, autonomous volition; it is conditioned by a social recognition that both crystallizes the subject in itself and connects it to others in a regime of visibility and representation. For social liberalism, then, the subject is defined by a circle that recalls the oscillation of self-consciousness in Hegel’s dialectic. The exteriority of society makes possible the affirmation of the subject’s singularity not through a destabilization that shatters self-referential identity, but through a circle that removes the subject from itself *in order to bring it back to its most intimate interiority*. For this reason, the socially recognized right to life and liberty forms a “natural” right, grounded in the essence of the human being. Green states: “the right is one that belongs to every man in virtue of his human nature (of the qualities that render him capable of any fellowship with any other men), and is a right as between him and any other men” (156).

Liberalism therefore posits a humanist subject. Contrary to anarchism, which founds the subject in anti-foundational anarchy, liberal philosophy is grounded in a notion of a self-contained, self-sufficient, and self-conscious subject whose essential nature is totalized by the recognition of the other. Responding to the charge that liberalism remains “naïve” about this subject, “radical” liberal thinker Charles W. Mills seems unable to offer a compelling contestation. At first, in reply to Althusser’s and Foucault’s challenges to the humanist subject, rather than engaging with their arguments, he “rejects” the “premise” of their claim about power

and the production of the self (“Occupy Liberalism!” 315). Then, while he acknowledges that subjects are “constrained in what they can accomplish by material structures and social restrictions,” he reserves a measure of “self-creation” for the subject that would empower it against such restraints (ibid.). Such a response is peculiar. Not only does it unclearly contest Althusser’s or Foucault’s challenges, which advance “self-creation,” albeit one that does not find its ground in human nature; it does not deny liberalism’s naiveté. Instead, it proposes a subject more or less consistent with Locke’s notion of self-ownership and Green’s Hegelian-inflected self-reflexive subject. While the grandiose title of Mills’ article promises to explain why this charge is “wrong,” I would suggest that his case ultimately proves unconvincing not because he does not engage sufficiently with his critics but because *liberalism as a political philosophy can only inadequately respond to the critique of humanism*. In the final analysis, liberalism is a philosophy of the state and law. It constructs a self-interested subject “naturally” endowed with certain rights in order to justify the existence of a state and the rule of law that can centralize and hierarchize power for the benefit of a few under the banners of representative democracy, free competitive elections, and the protection of individual civil rights and liberties. If there is no individual subject and if that subject has no rights, then liberalism loses its internal coherence, since it can no longer claim to represent individual, self-conscious voters nor to defend and secure rights. If freedom and the will cease to be proper to the subject, then liberal democracies are exposed not as institutional complexes safeguarding and nurturing freedoms according to the subject’s voluntary consent, but a unique consolidation of power that organizes populations through a sleight-of-hand that controls and dominates via discourses of liberty and equality.

While Green insists that the state’s function is to “maintain” these rights, his thought

delineates liberalism's move from the "state of nature" to the state. In his *Lectures*, the former slides more or less seamlessly into the latter, following from the social to the political, from the existential to the liberal subject.³⁵ For him, the establishment of the state is nothing less than the very possibility of the fulfillment of the sovereign subject, so that the individual needs the state not simply to exercise its freedom and enjoy access to material resources but to possess its own life.

To ask why I am to submit to the power of the state, is to ask why I am to allow my life to be regulated by that complex of institutions without which I literally should not have a life to call my own, nor should I be able to ask justification of what I am called to do. For that I may have a life which I can call my own, I must not only be conscious of myself and of ends which I present to myself as mine; I must be able to reckon on a certain freedom of action and acquisition for the attainment of those ends, and this can only be secured through common recognition of this freedom on the part of each other by members of a society, as being for a common good. Without this, the very consciousness of having ends of his own and a life which he can direct in a certain way, a life of which he can make something, would remain dormant in man. (122)

Mills calls this politicized subject "*socially recognized personhood*." For him, it is "a robust moral status implying not merely juridical equality, but substantively guaranteed equality, in the sense of the political will and allocation of material resources to actively enforce anti-discrimination measures and correct for the legacy of past discrimination" ("Political Economy" n.pag.). In other words, the self-owned person is politicized through recognition by the state. She

becomes a viable political subject, recipient of rights and freedoms, only through obtaining an officially acknowledged legal status, that is, being granted formal membership to the state. The transference suggests a compromise of self-ownership wherein liberty is exchanged for protection, since the sovereign subject effectively ceases to own itself when it receives its citizenship, but more than that, it designates a transcription into another regime of visibility and representation. To acquire “socially recognized personhood” is to become visible to the liberal state. Despite Mills’ protestations, Green’s account indicates that citizenship means taking on a role whose range of motion has been determined in advance by powers that depend on it.

Central to liberal citizenship is the notion of “equal liberty.” Prefigured by Green’s correlation between the individual’s right to life and liberty and his association with mutually recognizing *isoī kai homoioi*, John Rawls considers equal liberty the distribution of rights among citizens. In its ideal form, it is “the best arrangement of the several liberties [which] depends upon the totality of limitations to which they are subject” (178). In other words, in its idealized formulation, “equal liberty” liberty is equal when all citizens enjoy the same liberties to the same extent. For Rawls, such equal liberty is “the end of social justice” (179). Taking up this charge, Mills’ radical liberalism aims to gain recognition for disenfranchised, socially and politically invisible groups, including women and people of color as well as migrant workers, gay and lesbian couples, and transgender individuals.³⁶ In effect, increased recognition ameliorates liberal democracy. For social liberals such as Mills, liberalism’s success is measured by the state’s capacity not only to enfranchise and protect its citizens, but to identify and classify them.

Such a subject differs from de Cleyre’s night-glory. If anarchism can be reduced to “a dominant idea,” that idea might be what Martin Buber called “the whole, unimpaired man”

(116). Contrary to liberalism, which presents a version of the individual that either its political organizations cannot adequately accommodate or that those organizations ultimately alienate, anarchism attempts to organize diverse institutions and populations according to the idea of anarchy, that is, responsibility to the other and hostage. In this way, the work of anarchism becomes like ancient Greek sculpture, whose “dominant idea” according to de Cleyre “is Activity, and the beauty and strength of it. Change, swift, every-circling change” (“Dominant” 85). Though carved from marble, such sculptures, vibrating with the idea proper to them, acquire an effervescence. Weightless, they take on a levity that defies gravity and sets them free into the air. “I think that no one could look upon them without realizing at once that those figures came out of the boil of life; they seem like rising bubbles about to float into the air, but beneath them other bubbles rising, and others, and others, — there will be no end of it” (ibid.).

II. NEIGHBOR

In “Anarchism” (1901), de Cleyre characterizes the anarchist subject in terms of freedom. She writes: “anarchism means freedom to the soul as to the body — in every aspiration, every growth” (115). In other words, anarchism does not merely free the mind (“the soul”); it places man in contact with his flesh, instincts, and desires. Indeed, in a long, complex, feverish passage, right before she proposes the above definition, de Cleyre suggests that anarchism brings man face to face with that within himself which he would disavow. Further, she associates the subject’s self-confrontation with an encounter between the self and the other. Speaking about “the soul which has come out of its casement of custom and cowardice, and dared to claim its Self,” she envisions anarchism as a double encounter — one with oneself, another with the other

— wherein the true face of each is the face of the abyss:

Ah, once to stand unflinchingly on the brink of that dark gulf of passions and desires, once at last to send a bold, straight-driven gaze down into the volcanic Me, *once*, and in that once, and in that once *forever*, to throw off the command to cover and flee from the knowledge of that abyss, — nay, to dare it to hiss and seethe if it will, and make us writhe and shiver with its force! Once and forever to realize that one is not a bundle of well-regulated little reasons bound up in the front room of the brain to be sermonized and held in order with copy-book maxims or moved and stopped by a syllogism, but a bottomless, bottomless depth of all strange sensations, a rocking sea of feeling wherever sweep strong storms of unaccountable hate and rage, invisible contortions of disappointment, low ebbs of meanness, quakings and shudderings of love that drives to madness and will not be controlled, hungerings and moanings and sobbing that smite upon the inner ear, now first bent to listen, as if all the sadness of the sea and the wailing of the great pine forests of the North had met to weep together there in that silence audible to you alone. To look down into that, to know the blackness, the midnight, the dead ages in oneself, to feel the jungle and the beast within, — and the swamp and the slime, and the desolate desert of the heart's despair — to see, to know, to feel to the uttermost, — and then to look at one's fellow, sitting across from one in the street-car, so decorous, so well got up, so nicely combed and brushed and oiled and to wonder what lies beneath that commonplace exterior, — to picture the cavern in him which somewhere far below has a narrow gallery running into

your own — to imagine the pain that racks him to the finger-tips perhaps while he wears that placid ironed-shirt-front countenance — to conceive how he too shudders at himself and writhes and flees from the lava of his heart and aches in his prison-house not daring to see himself — to draw back respectfully from the Self-gate of the plainest, most unpromising creature, even from the most debased criminal, because one knows the nonentity and the criminal in oneself — to spare all condemnation (how much more trial and sentence) because one knows the stuff of which man is made and recoils at nothing since all is in himself, — this is what Anarchism may mean to you. It means that to me. (113-4)

Published one month before de Cleyre delivered her 1901 May Day speech,³⁷ this passage's double movement provides a gloss on her "confession." First, the subject encounters itself. For de Cleyre, the individual subject, "Me," is an "abyss." Rather than a mere psyche, intelligence, or soul that could be influenced by reason, this abyss encompasses that which eschews rationality. It is "a bottomless, bottomless depth of all strange sensations" and "the blackness, the midnight, the dead ages in oneself." Juxtaposed with de Cleyre's night-glory anecdote, the metaphor suggests the immemorial anarchy at the heart of the subject: the "mid-NIGHT" that calls the severed flower forward. It suggests that, while the subject may be partially knowable, its known part may only be its unknowability. In other words, according to de Cleyre's description, when the subject gazes into itself, it encounters that which puts it into question. Counter to the liberal subject, this "volcanic Me" could not be classified by a bureaucracy, governed by a state, enlisted in a military, judged by courts, or profiled by the police; it is beyond recognition and representation.

If read beside de Cleyre's "confession," this encounter with the "volcanic Me," — the anarchic abyss, that is, "hungerings and moanings and sobbing that smite upon the inner ear" as well as "the silence audible to you alone" — re-imagines the assignation that de Cleyre receives from the Haymarket martyrs. Dreadful, sufficiently horrific to ordinarily trigger its startle response, the subject is a mixture of "negative" affects: hate, rage, disappointment, despair. Indeed, in Levinasian terms, it is susceptibility itself. Rather than simply the affective, excretory, and autonomic functions of the body that would be extraneous to the notion of an autarkic subject, de Cleyre encounters within the "Me" a passivity more passive than all passivity, an anarchic vulnerability in which the subject is absolutely exposed to danger and pain. De Cleyre's grandiloquent rhetoric underscores the extremity of this horror. Albeit without stating that the subject is "called" in this encounter with itself, the passage's long, overflowing sentences and rough, irregular rhythms suggest that the subject has been transported to the ultimate where unity and coherence shatter. Here, "to feel the jungle and the beast within" cannot be reduced to an encounter with mere somatic responses; it is the encounter with the unforgivable, the death of the other for which the "I" is always already responsible — the recognition that, as de Cleyre (quoting Emerson) states elsewhere: "I have within me the capacity for every crime" (177).

Second, the subject encounters its "fellow" or "neighbor."³⁸ De Cleyre's narrative suggests that this encounter is the experience of proximity par excellence: while the neighbor sits "across from one in the street-car," spatially near the subject, the subject's sight of the fellow in this moment reveals that he is interior to it: the subject "conceives how [the neighbor] too shudders at himself and writhes and flees from the lava of his heart and aches in his prison-

house not daring to see himself.” In other words, while the neighbor appears disciplined and poised, that surface only conceals the dark places within him that the subject previously identified with its own ipseity. Thus, if read beside de Cleyre’s confession, the “I”’s identification with the neighbor in the street-car embodies the subject’s encounter with the other *in itself*. Such an encounter would stymie identification. In Levinasian terms, rather than confirming similarity and kinship between “Me” and the neighbor, the recognition that the “I” shares the abyss with the other suggests that the other is always already proper to the subject before the subject as such comes into being and recognizes itself as “Me.” The other, the abyss, is there; it is. It conditions the subject, staking out its being in advance for it.

Hence, rather than identification, the subject encounters the neighbor’s asymmetrical and nonreciprocal relation to it in this experience of proximity. De Cleyre registers this uneven, one-way relation in the image of the tunnels that connect the anarchist and its neighbor. For the subject, to recognize that the abyss of the other is in itself, that is, is its ipseity, is “to picture the cavern in him [the neighbor] which somewhere far below has a narrow gallery running into your own.” The image of this underground passage does not only confirm the connection between “Me” and the neighbor; it indicates that their connection travels from the other to the subject, but not from the subject to the other. Even though de Cleyre plots her narrative so that the anarchic subject first sees itself, then the other, suggesting the primacy of the subject in its relation to its fellow, the “narrow gallery” that connects the subject to that fellow retroactively indicates that *the neighbor is in the subject, proper to its ipseity, before the subject is in itself*. In other words, when the subject leans and gazes into the abyss, it first and foremost sees the other in the molten liquid of the “Me,” even if the anarchist “I” has never made his or her acquaintance, and then,

after the fact, the subject sees itself. Here, while the neighbor's proximity to the subject is susceptiveness, it is also the reason for the subject's horror: the subject, uncontained by itself, breaks to pieces, and recognizes its debt to the other.

For de Cleyre, this horror is the freedom of anarchism. While the subject subdued its startle reflex in its encounter with "Me," it recoils, albeit gently, tenderly, from the neighbor. After the anarchic subject sees the abyss of the other *in it*, it "draw[s] back respectfully from the Self-gate of the plainest, most unpromising creature, even from the most debased criminal." For de Cleyre, *this repulsion is the very meaning of anarchism*. For anarchism, or for her anarchism, not only does the subject never know the other; the other remains beyond its reach. The neighbor is in the subject's proximity, yet precisely because it is other, greater than its face and disguising with it inconceivable depths, it remains at an infinite distance. Perhaps there is only an inch between the two, but that inch measures an interval that possesses neither beginning nor end, center nor circumference. The neighbor and the subject are related, but their relation is characterized by a bond that maintains their separation.

Within de Cleyre's account, the abysmal relation conditions a situation in which the self and other are free, but only in a limited sense: they can claim no natural right upon one another's coercion. If I acknowledge the abyss in the other or I recognize that "I have within me the capacity for every crime," then every indictment of intimidation, violence, and invasion becomes impossible for me without drawing attention to my own culpability. It is for this reason that de Cleyre identifies anarchism with the decision to "draw back respectfully from the Self-gate of the plainest, most unpromising creature, even from the most debased criminal [. . .]." In "Crime and Punishment," she elaborates this situation. While 2Pac asserts that "only God can judge me," de

Cleyre implies that only I can judge myself, *if one can be judged at all*. Even though the relation between the self and the other is effracted, characterized by a bond that separates, the same rupture continues to relate them; it simply limits the parameters of their engagements.

[. . .] we [anarchists] draw the line upon ourselves. Set the standard as high as you will; live it as near as you can; and if you fail, try yourself, judge yourself, condemn yourself, if you choose. Teach and persuade your neighbor if you can; consider and compare his conduct if you please; speak your mind if you desire; but if he fails to reach your standard or his own, try him not, judge him not, condemn him not. *He lies beyond your sphere*; you cannot know the temptation or the inward battle nor the weight of the circumstances upon him. You do not know how long he fought before he failed. Therefore you cannot be just. Let him alone.
(130, *emphasis added*)

In de Cleyre's "Anarchism," then, anarchism means more than freedom. Its core is a soft, ceaseless avowal that respects the other's absolute distance.

Fragile, translucent, explosive, spherical, her anarchist subject is a bubble. Within de Cleyre's oeuvre, such a subject is modeled after the figure of the illegitimate child born out of wedlock. In her 1891 poem "Bastard Born," de Cleyre presents this figure through a dramatic monologue that places him in conversation with the society disdainful of him.³⁹ In the monologue's climax, he flips society's criminalization of his status upon them in a revolutionary bouleversement:

"Hark ye! Out of the reeking slums,
Thick with the fetid stench of crime,

Boiling up through their sickening scums,
 Bubbles that burst through the crimson wine,

 “Voices burst — with terrible sound,
 Crying the truth your dull souls never saw!
We are your sentence! The wheels turn round!
 The bastard spawn of your bastard law!” (41)

“Bubbles” poses an ambivalent metaphor in this context. The revolting violence of the alliterated, plosive “b,” the repetition of “burst,” and the upwardly surging imagery seems at odds with the delicacy of the spheres that concretize the bastard’s revolutionary force. The implication is that this illegitimate subject’s radical indictment is an almost effortless operation. His violence is no greater than the command, “hark ye!” In other words, the bastard does not impose his will on his audience, as his audience has imposed its will on him; he only presents it with an idea that, in the poem’s narrative arc, obliges the audience to indict itself. Passionate though they are, his violence (boiling and bursting) and the bubbles are the products of a passivity prior to action and inaction. While the bastard is a subject, his voice and, by implication, his body, as well as the bodies of every bastard that “burst” in the climax, *give place to the other; they speak from the place of the other*. To say that the anarchist subject is a “bubble,” then, is not only to suggest that a philosophical idea that changes the implications of the human being grounds it, as de Cleyre’s use of the metaphor in “The Dominant Idea” intimates; its gravity-defiance, its upward-rising effervescence, is also an insurrectionary movement. It rises up, but rather than a bomb-throwing maniac, the anarchist’s uprising reveals a

frail and diaphanous being whose insurgence is a call that accuses the state of its injustices against it.

De Cleyre's anarchist subject defies liberal philosophy's assumptions. As a bubble, the subject does not have a body that could be considered its own property, since that body is always already claimed *at least in part* by an other. (In "Bastard Born," that other is the speaker's *mother*, who his features — eyes, hands, voice, and blood — resemble. In the poem's closing line, the mother calls to him from the place of her death, and he hears her call in the silence registered by the stanza's proliferating, interruptive dashes.⁴⁰) Hence, it cannot be reduced to a "socially recognized personhood"; it is invisible. Further, even if a measure of its body proper to the subject could be identified, it could not be protected by "a right to life and liberty." It is not only that the subject's anarchic "foundation" grounds its ontological determination in an ethical relation to the other, rather than in a concept of the human; it is that, at the very site of incarnation, trauma founds the anarchist subject. While anarchism does retain the responsibility to protect bodies from violence, its assumptions render irrational attempts to found the concept of liberty on a defense against it. For anarchism, freedom begins not simply at the moment when the subject respectfully withdraws; it is prefigured in moment of horror, the passive and passionate repulsion, that repels the subject away from the other.

III. "EQUALIBERTY"

Mikhail Bakunin explicitly distinguishes anarchist freedom and the liberty of liberalism. For him, while liberalism's promises of liberty sound seductive, its principles "culminate in the

absolute domination of the state” (*Michael Bakunin* 136). Bakunin argues that liberalism, founded on Rousseau’s social contract theory, is based on two assumptions that prove incommensurable with anarchism. First, social contract theory posits that solitary man, subject to the “state of nature” and preceding any social agreement, is intrinsically endowed with liberty. It is a fact of his individuality. Rather than receiving it from an extrinsic source, liberty belongs to his being, and it wholly inheres in him “only as long as he does not come into contact with another and remains immersed in individual isolation” (137). Second, since each individual threatens the liberty of his neighbor, social contract theory naturalizes social antagonism. In Bakunin’s words, it assumes that separate individuals, lest they “utterly destroy one another,” “form an explicit or tacit *contract* by which they relinquish a part of themselves [i.e., their liberty] so as to safeguard the rest” (ibid.). For Bakunin, this consent is the origin of the state. While social contract theory’s first assumption creates a situation in which “the liberty of one does not require the liberty of the other” (ibid.), the second reveals that “each man’s liberty is the boundary or natural denial of everybody else’s” (138). Bakunin draws his conclusions from these points. He writes: “So, this absolute limitation, this denial of each man’s liberty in the name of the liberty of all, or of the common law — it is the State. Therefore individual liberty ends where the State begins, and vice versa” (ibid.). In other words, secured by the social contract, the liberty of liberalism can never be more than a compromised, incomplete freedom. An elegant deception, its name implies a love of freedom, but according to its very terms, it abolishes the individual’s liberty *under the flag of his protection*.⁴¹ For Bakunin, then, liberalism loathes liberty. His critique of Rousseau’s social contract theory implies that the ideology exploits the rhetoric of freedom, protection, and security, but the true referents of its language are the principles of

authority and brute force.

For Bakunin, rather than preexisting its social determination, anarchist freedom is produced by *social relations*. He writes: “Man completely realizes his individual freedom [. . .] only through the individuals who surround him, and thanks only to the labor and collective power of society. [. . .] Society, far from decreasing his freedom, on the contrary creates the individual freedom of all human beings” (*Bakunin on Anarchy* 236).⁴² Thus, beside social relations, freedom is defined by material conditions as well. Furthermore, along with freedom, Bakunin asserts that man *as an individual* only exists posterior to society. He, too, is a product of social relations. Counter to Rousseau, Bakunin argues that “man becomes conscious of himself and his humanity only in society and only by the collective action of the whole society” (*ibid*). Elsewhere, he adds: “Outside society, man would not only not be free, but he would not be transformed into a real man at all, that is to say, into a being who has self-consciousness, who alone thinks and speaks” (*Michael Bakunin* 208). Therefore, for Bakunin, contrasting with social contract theory, there is neither man nor freedom in the “state of nature.” If man could exist in isolation, he would not be unfree, but he would not be free either. He would be outside the conditions of freedom. However, his exteriority would be peripheral, since in his isolation there would be no individual per se. Bakunin does not use these terms, yet his language suggests that a body would exist — muscle, electrical impulses, locomotivity — but, bereft of society, it would not possess the conditions to say “I” or assert its existence. In the “state of nature,” there would be organic material, but it would be no more “man” than a stone, tree, or animal. For Bakunin, to be a man, one must make contact with those who can provide the language that permits one to say “man,” and to be free, man must cooperate with others in order to engineer the material

conditions wherein he will be able to satisfy his needs.

This is not to say that he rejects the uniqueness of the individual. Quite the contrary, for Bakunin, society is the possibility of the individual's singularity. While he acknowledges "an infinity of the most diverse and disparate causes" — including material, moral, mechanical, historical, geographic, and economic influences — he argues that the moment a child comes into the world, leaving its isolation in the uterus and becoming a member of society, it is already unique. He writes: "[. . .] the sum total [of these causes] is combined in a single living being and is individualized, for the first and last time, in this child who [. . .] never had and never will have an exact duplicate" (*Political Philosophy* 149-50). In other words, social relations determine the individual, but no individual is determined in the same way twice, and though no individual can claim his or her individuality absolutely for their own, wherever they find themselves, there remains an individual who is none other than him or her.

The "I," then, owes a debt to the other. For Bakunin, not only does the "I" receive its freedom from its relation to its neighbor; wherever the "I" finds itself, that neighbor has already been there, staking out the conditions for self-discovery. The situation forms a central nerve in the logic of anarchism. In Bakunin's collectivist anarchism, *two comes before one. Before there is one, always already there are at least two.*

Following this logic, Bakunin advances an anarchist definition of freedom that, conditioned for the individual *by others*, extends ad infinitum. In *Marxism, Freedom, and the State*, referring to a liberty that "recognizes no other restrictions than those which are traced for us by the laws of our own nature," he crystallizes his definition:

I mean that liberty of each individual which, far from halting as at a boundary

before the liberty of others, finds there its confirmation and its extension to infinity; the illimitable liberty of each through the liberty of all, liberty by solidarity, liberty in equality; liberty triumphing over brute force and the principle of authority which was never anything but the idealized expression of that force, liberty which, after having overthrown all heavenly and earthly idols, will found and organize a new world, that of human solidarity, on the ruins of all Churches and all States. (11)

Bakunin's sensitivity to the other is exquisite. Contrary to Rousseau, he does not see each individual as an essential threat to the other. Instead, for him, *at the very moment that they are individuals*, all individuals are bonded with one another. Rather than each individual possessing an inalienable freedom that he loses to a greater or lesser degree upon commencing his membership to a society, Bakunin asserts that freedom is engineered by the collective consolidation of individual powers. For him, the "fellow" is not the self's assistant; he is closer to a *savior*. Elsewhere, Bakunin writes: "I am not myself free or human until or unless I recognize the freedom and humanity of all my fellowmen" (*Bakunin on Anarchy* 237). Thus, he deduces: "only in respecting their human character do I respect my own" (*ibid.*). For Bakunin, then, anarchist freedom is not only grounded in the relation of the "I" to its "fellowmen"; it is a relation characterized by respectfulness, and that respectfulness recognizes both the retroactive production of the "I" by the other and the limits that demarcate the other's freedom.

Saul Newman, for this reason, calls anarchist freedom "equaliberty." Blending the words "equality" and "liberty" into one term, he expresses how Bakunin's definition cannot be separated from egalitarian material conditions. Citing Bakunin, but speaking on behalf of

anarchism in general, Newman argues that the concept of “equal liberty” distinguishes itself from the liberal theory of liberty and equality, which subordinates the latter to the former, and advances the idea that “each principle becomes inconsistent *without* the other” (*Politics of Postanarchism* 23). In other words, for Bakunin, equality and liberty are inseparable: there is no freedom without egalitarian relations, no egalitarianism without freedom. To sacrifice one is to sacrifice the other. Thus, Newman seems to be paraphrasing Bakunin’s notion of the “liberty of each through the liberty of all, liberty by solidarity, liberty in equality,” when he writes: “equal-liberty sees these two principles [equality and liberty] as part of the same category of emancipation: a person cannot be fully free unless others around him or her are equally free; moreover, one cannot be said to be emancipated unless this freedom is accompanied by equality, which, from this perspective, is not confined to formal or political equality, but includes all forms of social and economic equality” (21). The implications of the paraphrase reiterate Bakunin’s sensitivity to the other. For him, not only does the other save the “I” from oblivion; he feels that even the slightest deprivation suffices to shake free social relations to the ground. In his political universe, freedom is not founded upon the other’s deprivation. If one is unfree, all share in that bondage. “I” is free only when the totality of society that constitutes it as an autonomous subject is.

While Bakunin explained that such “equal liberty” radically differs from the compromised freedom in Rousseau’s classical liberal social contract, I would note that Bakunin’s attention to the “illimitable” in freedom also distinguishes his anarchist understanding of the concept from Rawls’ social liberal “equal liberty.” For Rawls, equal liberty is a right of citizenship. In this sense, it is not a relation that locally exists between members of a population, which the liberal

state then manages and protects; it is an organization applied by the state through the distribution of civil rights and laws among a population, which shapes that population after the fact. For Bakunin, Rawls' idealized vision of a delicately balanced system of justice, wherein liberties are distributed to their maximum capacity among the population, each right attenuated or enlarged based on its relation to contiguous demands, would be *the end of justice*. Rather than "illimitable" freedom, Rawls' equal liberty proposes a form of compromised liberties that preclude the possibility of justice in social relations. Beginning with the citizen's rights, that system straightaway "disrespects" the neighbor's freedom, that is, neglects his freedom in favor of a politicized reification of the individual subject.

Illimitability distinguishes Bakunin's "equaliberty" from Etienne Balibar's concept of the same name. In one sense, Balibar's formulation of this term is consistent with Bakunin's concept: the two words, fused into a single category, imply a mutual reinforcement in which there is "no equality without liberty, no liberty without equality" (*Politics* 2). However, for Balibar, as for Rawls, "equaliberty" remains a category of citizenship, "the affirmation of a universal right to politics" (*Equaliberty* 50). Rather than an anarchist term, then, it is statist. In a footnote, Balibar's perspective matches Green's thought, which would reserve the autonomy of the individual, but only in the context of a state power: "E=L [equaliberty] means that men emancipate themselves, that no one can be liberated by another, that the right to politics is unlimited and is exercised everywhere there is submission to an authority that claims to treat individuals or collectivities as minors" (308, note 21).⁴³ Next to Bakunin, the illimitable in Balibar's equaliberty appears to be misplaced. For the anarchist, no "right to politics" can be claimed, since neither citizenship nor a hierarchical political body that could recognize such

rights plays into the equation. Further, for Bakunin, men do not emancipate themselves, except to the degree that *they are emancipated in the work of emancipation for the other*. Illimitability, for Bakunin, belongs to this passivity. Contrary to Balibar's equaliberty, Bakunin's concept suggests that equaliberty is confirmed and extended first and foremost by exposure to the other, in the endless fulfillment of an obligation prior to consent or submission.

Newman misunderstands the illimitable in Bakunin's thought. While he effectively paraphrases the "liberty of each through the liberty of all," he ignores that liberty in Bakunin's formulation is "extended "to infinity."⁴⁴ In *The Politics of Postanarchism*, he paraphrases "extension to infinity" as a freedom that is "maximized" (144). However, the infinite in Bakunin's notion of "equaliberty" outstrips that paraphrase. In *Marxism, Freedom, and the State*, when he names an individual liberty that "finds [in the liberty of others] its confirmation and extension to infinity," Bakunin means "the illimitable liberty of each through the liberty of all." If he understood "all" to designate the aggregate of individuals in society — a number that could be counted hypothetically — then perhaps such infinitization could be synonymous with maximization. But "all," insofar as it designates society, is not calculable in the ordinary sense; for Bakunin, two comes before one. "The liberty of each through the liberty of all" is "illimitable," then, in the sense of being *unlimited*. It is not taken to the maximum, pushing on its limits. Limits do not constrain it. Recognizing that freedom is confirmed in the neighbor, Bakunin implicitly acknowledges that such freedom belongs to no one. I can claim it, but there will be no end to my possession of it. I can hold it, but what I grasp will never altogether be what I am cupping in my palms. A measure of that liberty, however negligible, will belong to the other, and this portion that is the neighbor's share places freedom in my hands even while that

placement puts it at an infinite remove.

For Bakunin, “equaliberty” is “illimitable” because it has no boundaries. Rather than being outside it, defining the contours of its form, the boundaries of Bakunin’s freedom are *interior* to it. It accounts for the limits placed upon it. Though his comments do not reach this far, these internal, ruptured boundaries create a situation proper to anarchism. Locating it in the other, Bakunin does not reduce freedom to a right, intrinsic or extrinsic, as does liberalism; instead, true to his materialism, he hints at a notion of freedom that is *work* — a collaborative act, a construction, an inspiration. As the Invisible Committee states in *The Coming Insurrection*, “Freedom isn’t the act of shedding our attachments, but the *practical* capacity to work on them, to move around in their space, to form or dissolve them. [. . .] We can’t rid ourselves of what binds us without at the same time losing the very thing to which our forces would be applied” (20). For Bakunin, because such freedom is infinite, it is a work that is never finished.⁴⁵ Produced by social relations, anarchist freedom is that which individuals build cooperatively, but it is a labor to which all must commit everyday, lest inequalities steal in, and freedom drifts away.

Mitchell Verter suggests an affinity between Bakunin’s equaliberty and Levinas’s notion of freedom. Citing Bakunin’s claim that “the freedom of my neighbor is [. . .] [my freedom’s] precondition and confirmation,” he hints at the possibility that Bakunin’s idea prefigures Levinas’ claim that the self is not only “anarchically committed to the other” but responsible for that other’s freedom (77-8). However, if Bakunin’s equaliberty is placed beside de Cleyre’s notion of freedom, her elaboration problematizes his recourse to the language of liberty and equality itself. According to de Cleyre’s Levinasean description, the subject and neighbor are

connected, but their connection is asymmetrical and nonreciprocal; the other's galleries run into the subject, but the subject's do not run into the other. In this anarchic relation, the political ideal of egalitarianism is destabilized for the sake of the other. Hence, if anarchist liberty requires equal relations, then Bakunin's claim that the neighbor's freedom preconditions and confirms the anarchist subject's runs into trouble. If the anarchist relation par excellence is the neighbor's anteriority to the subject, then Bakunin is obliged to revise both his concepts of liberty and equality, and their place within anarchism. If equal liberty is fundamental to anarchism, then he must reconsider the subject as indebted to the social and economic relations that preceded it.

Ultimately, Bakunin chooses the latter. Rather than identifying freedom with the passivity and passion of repulsion, he indicates the telos of freedom reaches its consummation in the "I." When he writes "I am not myself free or human until or unless I recognize the freedom and humanity of my fellowmen," Bakunin perceives that the freedom in the self *first* takes place in the other, "my fellowmen," but he then affirms the primacy of the subject to the degree that he preserves the need for that subject's acknowledgement of the other's freedom. For him, then, the struggle for freedom stops when the other's freedom receives the subject's recognition; it is not given in the place of the other, but in the subject's consciousness. Such a conclusion does not reflect the egalitarian labor of liberty. Instead, it locates authority in the subject. Rather than a work that is infinite, it makes the subject its dénouement, and the work is finished when the subject receives its share. *This is what I mean when I say that anarchism speaks a borrowed language.* In the end, Bakunin devises the concept of "equal liberty" to accommodate the anarchist principle that respects the anteriority of the other, but the very use of the terms "liberty" and "equality" surreptitiously reinscribe that respect into the principle of *isoi kai homoioi* that

grounds liberal democracies. Contrary to Verter's claim, equaliberty does not affirm an anarchic form of freedom; it leads Bakunin back to a regime of visibility and representation, and catches him in the snare of subjectivity that grounds the political subject in itself rather than its neighbor.

Bakunin is correct that the subject's freedom finds fulfillment in the other. However, given his terms, such fulfillment is not the last word. Rather than a conclusion, the "last word" is infinity. If it is only in the fulfillment of my freedom that the other's freedom becomes fulfillable, and it is only in their fulfillment that my own freedom can be fulfilled, then there is no last step for the subject, as Bakunin indicates. There is only the fall that exposes infinite responsibility, headlong into the abyss.

IV. SYMPATHY

Peter Kropotkin exhibits a similar sensitivity to the other. In his 1891 pamphlet,⁴⁶ *Anarchist Morality*, he argues that anarchism fundamentally avoids the individual's "mutilation." Following Fourier, he associates "mutilation" with external, nonconsensual, coercive impositions. Asserting that anarchists refuse the "right" of "mutilating the individual in the name of some ideal," he offers the classic anarchist position: "We [anarchists] recognize the full and complete liberty of the individual; we desire for him plenitude of existence, the free development of all his faculties. We wish to impose nothing on him [. . .]" (105). While such a position encompasses repressive or coercive violence that would subtract from one individual's freedom in order to aggrandize another's, it also includes any ideological prescription ("the name of some ideal") that would dictate or misrepresent the individual to himself. Alternately, non-mutilation would be "respect for the individual" (ibid.). While he identifies it as a supplement to equality,

Kropotkin does not define such “respect.” However, if “mutilation” is the other’s repression or misrepresentation, then respect must be that which maintains his “equaliberty” and recognizes the other as he is (or asks to be recognized).⁴⁷ For Kropotkin, then, respect is what Bakunin called “recognition of humanity, or human right and human dignity in every man whatever race, color, and degree of intellectual and even moral development” (*Political Philosophy* 147).⁴⁸

In *Anarchist Morality*, Kropotkin argues that such respect is achieved through “sympathy” (94). He identifies this feeling with the origin of “the idea of good and evil” (93), but he also calls it a “feeling of solidarity” in which each individual senses her connection to every other (95). Kropotkin borrows these definitions from Adam Smith’s 1759 *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, where Smith views “sympathy” as an individual’s *affective* bond to a fellow being: “our fellow-feeling with any passion whatsoever” (5). In his pamphlet, Kropotkin gives an example to illustrate his argument:

You see a man beat a child. You know that the beaten child suffers. Your imagination causes you yourself to suffer the pain inflicted upon the child; or perhaps its tears, its little suffering face tell you. And if you are not a coward, you rush at the brute who is beating it and rescue it from him.

This example by itself explains almost all the moral sentiments. The more powerful your imagination, the better you can picture to yourself what any being feels when it is made to suffer, and the more intense and delicate will your moral sense be. The more you are drawn to put yourself in the place of the other person, the more you feel the pain inflicted upon him, the insult offered him, the injustice of which he is the victim, the more you will be urged to act so that you will

prevent the pain, insult, or injustice. (94-5)

The image speaks to the core of anarchist morality. Identifying with the one in a compromising position, Kropotkin suggests that an individual will be inspired to act on that victim's behalf in order to alleviate the suffering shared by both the victim and sympathizer. In the example, what the "you" encounters is a "mutilation," and it delivers justice in response. His response does not belong to any moral code, personal commitment, or ideological program. Instead, *it is prehensive*. He intensely feels a bond with the victim. If I found myself in that situation, my sympathy for the child would always already be inside me, prior to any reflection on the situation, and it would belong to my conscious life only to the degree that I possess the knowledge that the assault would lead to humiliation and injury, and that if I was in the child's position, I would want someone to take action and deliver me.

The example and its implications harken back to Bakunin's "illimitable liberty of each through the liberty of all, liberty by solidarity, liberty in equality."⁴⁹ In other words, while Kropotkin's illustration of sympathy defines anarchism as respect for the other and its freedom, his analysis also indicates that such freedom is *conditioned* by egalitarian relations and solidarity. Indeed, in the pamphlet, while he argues that anarchism's moral principles are based on natural laws, common to all living creatures, he "sums up" "anarchist morality" with the Golden Rule: "do to others what you would have them do to you in the same circumstances" (92).⁵⁰ What this law of reciprocity reinforces is double. First, it reiterates the idea that *anarchism is a relation to the other*. Second, insofar as the anarchist cares about his and the other's freedom, it is a reminder that the subject's responsibility to the other is to comport himself in a manner that preserves equality and to accede to the other's liberty.

More than Bakunin's "equaliberty," however, Kropotkin's example glosses Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. There, acknowledging that the subject cannot immediately know his neighbor's feelings, Smith proposes that an *act of imagination* can "carry [the subject] beyond [his] own person" and transport him into its neighbor's embodied, affective experiences:

Though our brother is upon the rack, as long as we ourselves are at ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. They never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations. Neither can that faculty help us to this in any other way, than by representing to us what would be our own, if we were in his case. It is the impressions of our own senses only, not those of his, which our imaginations copy. By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them. His agonies, when they are thus brought home to us, begin at last to affect us, and we then tremble and shudder at the thought of what he feels. For as to be in pain or distress of any kind excites the most excessive sorrow, so to conceive or to imagine that we are in it, excites some degree of the same emotion, in proportion to the vivacity or dulness [sic] of the conception. (4)

Kropotkin's example of the beaten child effectively paraphrases this passage. However, when he describes this sympathetic identification that allows one to "put yourself in the place of the other

person,” he introduces the term “substitution.” Reiterating his explanation of the example, he writes: “[. . .] the man substitutes himself in imagination for the person opposed to him; he asks himself if he would like to be treated in such a way, and the better he has identified himself with the person whose dignity or interests he has been on the point of injuring, the more moral will his decision be” (102). This is a crucial twist that Kropotkin adds to Bakunin’s equaliberty. From his perspective, such a substitution would not mutilate the other; it preserves the other’s liberty through an equalization that *positions the subject’s experience in the place of the other*.

Kropotkin’s paraphrase registers Smith’s reluctance to reduce sympathy to an absolute identification. Where Smith states that the imagination permits the subject to “become *in some measure* the same person with [another]” and to experience his fellow’s feelings “though weaker in degree,” indicating that the identification is partial and provisional, Kropotkin characterizes sympathetic identification as an ameliorable process, constantly improving with each attempt, but therefore also constantly incomplete. However, the term “substitution” suggests these lapses’ negligibility. Incomplete though such identifications are, the word “substitution” indicates that they do not prevent the subject’s acts of imagination from bringing the neighbor’s plight “home to us,” or from enveloping the subject in the other’s skin, positioning the “I” in the other’s place of embodied vulnerability. Smith, later, corroborates the sufficiency of such “substitution” when he counters claims that sympathy is fundamentally “selfish”: “When [. . .] I consider what I should suffer if I was really you,” he writes, “[. . .] I not only change circumstances with you, but I change persons and characters. My grief, therefore, is entirely on your account, and not in the least upon my own. It is not, therefore, in the least selfish” (466). “Substitution,” for Kropotkin, condenses Smith’s thought. It indicates that the subject who sympathizes with its

fellow does not simply share similar feelings with him; it is exposed to a relation to the neighbor so intimate that the proximity engulfs the subject in an intensity that goes to the extreme of disappearance, sacrificing the subjectivity of the subject for the otherness of the other.

Kropotkin's anarchism thereby harbors a desire to put the other before the "I." While the principle remains tacit in *Anarchist Morality*, in the opening pages of *Ethics*, it crystallizes. Claiming that "modern science" has taught man "to consider himself as but an infinitesimally small particle of the universe," Kropotkin adds that it has also revealed that "our 'I' cannot even come to a self-definition without the 'thou'" (4). He thereby explicitly theorizes a relation to the other implicit in Bakunin's and de Cleyre's elucidations. Whereas Bakunin associates the possibility of saying "I" with society and de Cleyre identifies "Me" with the abyss, Kropotkin locates the "I" in the other. He formulates an intellectual progression from the collectivist notion of "equal-liberty" and respect for the other, and, in the maturity of his own thought, posits within anarchism what he elsewhere calls "a morality without obligation and without the sanction of religion," beyond "any confirmation from without" (*Ethics* 331). He thereby teaches that anarchism is founded on respect for the other taken to the ultimate. For Kropotkin, it is based on a sympathetic affectivity so intense that it terminates in a substitution that dislocates the place of the subject for the other. Anarchism, he suggests, is possible only insofar as the subject gives place to the other within itself.

For de Cleyre, such a subject would be Dyer D. Lum. Known for smuggling the blasting cap into Louis Lingg's cell at the Illinois State Penitentiary and "seizing the Monster, Death, with a smile on his lips" through his own suicide in 1893, Lum was commemorated by his friend, de Cleyre, one year after his death.⁵¹ His modesty, she says, "was inborn, instinctive; but it was also

fostered by his conception of life, which led him to consider self as *the veriest of soap-bubbles*, a thing to be dispelled by the merest whiff of wind, so to speak; and therefore, personal recognition or personal gain as the most silly, as well as unworthy, of motives. (284, *emphasis added*). While such modesty agrees with Kropotkin's vision of an anarchist morality that attempts to think in the other's place, selflessly, the metaphor of the soap-bubble also connects Kropotkin's sympathetic substitution back to de Cleyre's anarchic bastard subject. However, while de Cleyre's figure of the bastard confronted the society that marginalized him with the offense of that marginalization bubbling up from its peripheries, her iteration of the metaphor — composed three years after "Bastard Born" — tends to emphasize the bubble's insubstantiality, rather than its passive effervescence. For de Cleyre, Lum is a bubble because he sways. "Dispelled by the merest whiff of wind," it is as though Lum possesses no center; his faint, susceptible surface envelops an absence that renders him almost invisible in his weightlessness. De Cleyre's metaphor suggests that, for anarchy, for his neighbor's equaliberty, Lum would not only bumrush a child's mutilator; as Kropotkin later imagines in *Anarchist Morality*, he would "die like the flower when it blooms," giving "without calculation" (109). Uninterested in "personal gain" and "personal recognition," such a figure is not only irreducible to "socially recognized personhood"; in his invisibility, he cannot be represented by an elected official or enfranchised by the state. As a political subject, he is designed to flower, like de Cleyre's "white night-glories," sap bubbling, rising up in him. Called, he involuntarily and gratuitously gives himself to the extreme of an immolation that burns him up, even to the ultimate sacrifice that takes responsibility for the other's death.

Perhaps, if the night-glory is a metaphor for the anarchist subject, the purple streaks in the

flowers that so fascinate de Cleyre evoke for her the iridescences on that airy sphere's arcing surface. When she calls attention to "five purple flecks" on the severed vine's last bloom, she is perhaps not only constructing a symbol of a subject that lives on its own death, but contemplating one that might vanish at any moment, expending its energy without return through a substitution that puts it in the place of the other. One fleck, perhaps, for each Haymarket martyr.

However, in *Anarchist Morality*, Kropotkin's theorization of sympathy inadvertently prohibits that substitution. Maudlin as his example is, rather than seeing in the brutalized child the "narrow gallery" running between them or "respecting [the child's] human characteristics," Kropotkin perceives a flat, genderless, extraterrestrial "it." Though in his explanation he refers to the hypothetical individual with whom he would be substituted as "him," he deploys the neuter pronoun throughout when referring to the child: to focalize "its tears, its little suffering face," and then to express the courageous choice to "rush at the brute who is beating it" and "rescue it." It is a peculiar rhetorical decision. Unless he means to signal the abyss with the child or challenge gender categories, Kropotkin's use of "it" registers the fact that he does not *see* the child. For him, a boy is not being beaten; "it" is. The problem is not merely that his rhetoric dehumanizes — and dehumanizes at the moment when he would reveal anarchism's profound humanity. Though the subject may suffer when he encounters this scene,⁵² the problem is that he does not suffer the pain inflicted upon the child. Theoretically, following the contours of Kropotkin's very rhetoric, the subject experiences "its" anguish. In Kropotkin's example, it is likely that the child feels pain and humiliation. It is likely that the sympathetic subject feels pain and humiliation as well. However, what Kropotkin forgoes is that the child's agony belongs to

the child, the subject's to the subject.

Rather than the child, the subject encounters only its own *imagination*. Kropotkin does not hide this fact. He writes: "your imagination causes you to suffer the pain inflicted on the child [. . .]." However, while he discloses the role of the imagination in sympathetic identification, he overestimates its efficacy. For him, the subject's imagination replicates the child's pain. What he experiences is not an approximation or lyrical recreation of the child's affliction; it *is* the child's affliction. Substitution is absolute. However, Kropotkin's use of the pronoun "it" provides evidence that sympathy as it is formulated in *Anarchist Morality* achieves neither complete nor incomplete substitution. The pronoun demonstrates that what the subject imagines is not the child's suffering, since that child has been removed from the act of imagination and replaced by "it," but the fact that "its" suffering would be extraneous to the child's also provides a reminder that what the subject experiences would be nothing but the subject's imagination. Rather than trading places with the other, the subject moves from himself to himself. Not only is there no child; there is no substitution. The subject who sympathetically identifies with the child and then comes to his or her rescue does not put himself in "its" place; he puts himself in the place where he is. He goes nowhere.

Furthermore, though he attempts to save the child, his sympathy mutilates him. The pronoun "it" dehumanizes, but in displacing the child with an image of what the subject imagines him to be, Kropotkin's sympathizer subjects him to an "ideal" or "spook" incommensurable with him. In such a scenario, the child is not free or equal. There is no solidarity. The child's suffering, insofar as it obtains, is controlled by the subject's experience. He "mutilates" the child to the degree that his imagination forecloses on the child's account of his own suffering, and this

foreclosure produces an inequality that channels all the power to the subject. But, with this power, the subject does not affirm his sympathy for the child. The sympathizer's imagination disconnects them and places the child outside the very situation in which he holds the center. Therefore, even if the child is rescued from the "brute," his deliverance is a charade that only transports him from brutality to brutality. First he suffers his assailant's blows, then he endures his savior's lacerations. The sympathizer comes for the child, but the child is only the alibi for the anarchist to affirm his magisterial connection to himself.⁵³

In "Anarchism," De Cleyre's account of the self and other's encounter features the same problem. While I previously argued that the *serialization* of this encounter retroactively places the other before the self, despite the fact that de Cleyre's narrative introduces the subject's self-consciousness prior to its awareness of the other, her descriptions of this event also rely on the subject's imagination. Since the neighbor remains beyond knowledge, de Cleyre saves the subject from sheer ignorance by locating knowledge of the other in its capacity to "wonder what lies beneath that commonplace exterior" of the neighbor and to "imagine the pain that racks him to the finger-tips." Therefore, the situation that I previously interpreted as a retroactive production of the self *by the other* risks slipping into the circle of self-consciousness, so that de Cleyre's encounter with the other only affirms and returns her to herself, rather than tacitly calling attention to the anarchic assignation that she will formulate in her May Day speech a month after her essay's publication. As a consequence, the language of "Anarchism" does not simply endorse the neighbor's mutilation; it fails to fully reflect the subject's traumatic relation to the other. It aims to establish *the otherness of the other*, but it reduces this otherness to *the otherness of the self*. In this instance, de Cleyre's recourse to imagination (rather than

assignment) compromises the anarchic relation's radical foundation for freedom. Where de Cleyre and Kropotkin would first and foremost place the subject's responsibility for the other, they install a circuit that crisscrosses the anarchist's affective response to the other's call, so that when a woman intervenes to save a child, she does so first and foremost for her own advantage. Or, when Dyer D. Lum smuggles explosives into Illinois State prison for Lingg, he risks his own incarceration and endorses his friend's death mainly to aggrandize himself.

For "Anarchism," the implication is that anarchist freedom does not extend to "every aspiration" and "every growth." If one is a subject, then perhaps anarchism affords "freedom to the soul as to the body." But, in this instance, de Cleyre's definition of freedom fails to conceptualize the same liberties for the other and instead sanctions a condition that limits the neighbor's freedom to boundaries imposed by the subject who gives that other place

This is the ruse of the law of reciprocity. In Kropotkin's formulation, the child calls to the sympathizer for assistance, but the sympathizer answers by imagining for himself a misery that the child could never abide. Hence, while the Golden Rule fails as the principle of "anarchist morality" par excellence, that failure demonstrates that Kropotkin's formulation of the structure of substitution posits only a narcissistic act that dissembles its own narcissism. In other words, contrary to Smith's insistence that sympathy "cannot, in any sense, be regarded as a selfish principle" (465), Kropotkin's evocation of the Golden Rule shows that ethics grounded in identification is selfish in the sense that it puts the subject before the neighbor under the guise of the neighbor's priority. Rather than reciprocity, Kropotkin's articulation of sympathy (qua substitution) speaks for an other who it gags; it subordinates the desires of the other to the desire of a subject who should have been displaced by her. It does not give priority to the neighbor; it

reflects the limits of the subject who sympathizes. In other words, in saying “do to others what you would have them do to you in the same circumstances,” Kropotkin’s rhetoric secretly declares war on the other. The Golden Rule says to the other: “the limits of my desires and experiences will dictate your situation.” If Kropotkin truly incorporated the primacy of the other into “anarchist morality” and politicized the “scientific” insight that there is no “I” unconditioned by a “thou,” anarchism’s main principle would not be “do to others what you would have them do to you in the same circumstances.” It would be *do unto the other what she wants done for herself. Listen, and treat your neighbor as she would treat herself.*⁵⁴

Yet Kropotkin’s conceptualization of sympathy mutilates the subject as well. If de Cleyre and Bakunin can be believed — if “I” is deeply connected to its “fellow” and “only in respecting their human character do I respect my own” — then, in Kropotkin’s example, the child’s objectification and the misrecognition of her desires forces the subject not merely to mistake his desires for the child’s; in misrecognizing the other in the child, he forbids himself from recognizing the other *in him*. Failing to answer the other’s call, he does not only ignore his bond with the child; he disconnects himself from himself. Without a “thou,” or with a “thou” that is only “I,” the subject cannot say “I.” If “thou” is not “thou,” “I” is not “I.” If the subject does say “I,” that very utterance is a mutilation. He disrespects the child, but he also disrespects himself.

Duane Rousselle’s critique of the “authoritarian dimension” in Kropotkin’s *Anarchist Morality* approaches this problem of self-interestedness (156). Referring to the scenario in which the individual jumps into a river to save his drowning comrade, Rousselle implicitly deploys Nietzsche’s critique of *ressentiment* from *Genealogy of Morals*. In Kropotkin’s scene of self-sacrifice, Rousselle identifies a “veiled authoritarianism” that is “revealed is the metaphorical

slave who renounces her own life to make the life of the other that much wealthier” (160-1). In other words, from Rousselle’s perspective, Kropotkin’s notion of substitution implicitly serves authoritarian power by reducing the subject to a slave willing to die for its master. His use of the language of sacrifice and sympathy effectively re-activates the values of Judeo-Christianity, and corroborates the backward idea that weakness is strength, or bondage freedom. This “authoritarian dimension,” Rousselle claims, is “epitomized, in some ways, in the Levinasean ‘ethics of responsibility’” (158). However, the problem of power in *Anarchist Morality* is not that it is Levinasean. For Levinas, the persecution and passivity that accompanies the subject’s responsibility for the other is irreducible to “slave morality,” since the obligation is prior to all commitments, that is, anterior to slaves and masters. Further, the subject’s hostility cannot be conflated with *ressentiment*; rather than a deception in which the subject projects antipathy onto the other in order to divert attention from its own inadequacy, the subject’s resentment expresses its response to its responsibility for the other’s death. Instead, the problem of power in *Anarchist Morality* is that it does not sufficiently account for a Levinasean responsibility that places the neighbor before the subject. *It fails to think the subject as hostage.*⁵⁵ While the scenario to which Rousselle refers acknowledges the subject’s passivity and obsession, setting Kropotkin up to infer the subject’s asymmetrical and nonreciprocal bond to the drowning comrade, Kropotkin’s ideological commitment to equaliberty encourages him to conceptualize sympathy in terms of a mutual *isoi kai homoioi*, thereby introducing a misprision that represents the “I” and its fellow as two individuals, the latter powerless to extricate itself, the former authorized to free. In this context, sympathy forbids the construction of an anarchist subject — a subject for whom the other is anterior — and instead produces the sovereign humanist subject of liberalism, serving

others for the purpose of fulfilling its own interests first and foremost.

This ruse belongs to the logic of sympathy, and its duplicity chronically restores the primacy of the liberal subject within anarchist ethics. In *Anarchist Morality*, while sympathy appears to privilege the other through an act of substitution, that “privilege” is actually a subterfuge that disassembles the priority of the subject and structurally forbids substitution. Kropotkin may have respected others, but an onto-epistemology that ascribes sovereignty to the subject insofar as it inaccurately accounts for the other limits his respectfulness. In the final analysis, such respectfulness neither reckons the boundaries of the other’s liberty nor fulfills an act of substitution; it produces a subject who accumulates power exclusively for itself by pretending, albeit without its knowledge, that the borders separating it from others eliminate its debt to them. This is how the logic of sympathy operates: it celebrates the ethics of substitution, but the substitution is a pretense for competition, free enterprise, and private ownership.

Does Kropotkin assimilate this logic through his paraphrase? In the passage of *Theory of Moral Sentiments* quoted above, Smith’s language clearly preserves the primacy of the subject. On the one hand, Smith does disavow imagination as a selfish act, but on the other he repeatedly returns that act of substitution to the self. For example, Smith states that imagination “[represents] to us what would be our own” and makes available “the impressions of our own senses only, not those of [my fellow].” Furthermore, even when imagination exposes the subject to his neighbor’s “agonies,” Smith describes them as being “brought home to us.” In other words, as an act of imagination, Smith’s notion of sympathy affirms the subject’s property and the fact that the subject is a property-holder before it communicates his comrade’s distress. Hence, while Smith’s notion of sympathy predates his strong capitalist turn in *Wealth of Nations*,

his language nevertheless demonstrates faithfulness to liberal values. Even though he effectively thinks substitution, his theorization of imagination as a catalyst for that radical sympathetic identification keeps Locke's notion of self-ownership intact. That the individual subject finds himself in the skin of another only brings him "home," back to the boundaries of his own incarnate body. Further, even though he finds himself transported, vulnerable in a passivity beyond all passivity, the subject's exposure affirms Green's "right to life and liberty." Keeping the subject's body in an economy of self-ownership, sympathy as an act of imagination cannot be *for the other*; instead, it may be "an instrument only of one's will; if of another's, still only through one's own."

Paraphrase itself, as Kropotkin's mode of response, preserves that mutilating logic at the level of form. I imagine Kropotkin at his desk, fountain pen delicately balanced between his thumb and middle finger, hand positioned over an open notebook, translating a passage from Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* into a new language. While he sympathetically reformulates Smith's claims in his own words, Kropotkin does not only incorporate the Scottish philosopher's humanist assumptions about subjectivity and property; he stops listening to both Smith and himself. The act of paraphrase, rather than thinking from the place of the other or registering the question of the subject, becomes about the transference from the other to the one. It becomes not only about replacing Smith's language with Kropotkin's own, and using that ownership to his advantage, but about dissembling the liberal underneath the anarchist thought, and forgetting that the latter owes its being, its proper, to the former.

That logic of sympathy runs wild throughout anarchism. In this chapter, I have suggested that this logic seeps into anarchism through the borrowed language of liberalism, that is, the

language anarchist thinkers inherit from the Enlightenment and remains in circulation to this day. While Bakunin's, Kropotkin's, and de Cleyre's elaborations of anarchism depend first and foremost on a respect for the anteriority of the other, they consistently tip into narcissism, self-aggrandizement, and the other's subordination because this received, incommensurable language inveigles their thoughts into these catastrophes. It insinuates into the very revolutionary fervor of anarchist thought a notion of the subject incongruous with anarchism's radical ontological and ethical assumptions. However, the problem is not that anarchism thereby rehabilitates the liberal subject in its very efforts to dispel it; it is that *such a subject is designed to fulfill its destiny in the state, not anarchy*. It assumes, as Green and Mills indicate, not only citizenship, but ultimate enfranchisement for the subject through a large-scale, vertically organized hegemonic power. The problems identified above — social isolation, immanent self-interestedness, unavoidable limitations to freedom — are not threatening as philosophical conundra. But once put into practice in a political sphere of public action and social engagement, their fine conceptual details justify the legitimacy of state power, representative democracy, and capitalist enterprise hostile to horizontal social organization, direct action, voluntary cooperation, and mutual aid.

Curiously, Kropotkin intimates this problem. In *Ethics*, though he uses the term “altruism” rather than “sympathy,” he indicates that there is no absolute absence of narcissism; *there are only degrees of it*. He writes: “The very expressions ‘egoism’ and ‘altruism’ are incorrect, because there can be no pure altruism without an admixture of personal pleasure — and, consequently, without egoism. It would therefore be more nearly correct to say that ethics aims at *the development of social habits and the weakening of the narrowly personal habits*” (307-8). The implications of this statement are profound. For Kropotkin, they imply that there

would be no pure substitution, free from a subject that must see itself before the other. For anarchism, if its limits cannot circumvent “*personal habits*” but can only minimize them, not only would sympathy as it is elaborated in *Anarchist Morality* be impossible by Kropotkin’s own admission; “anarchist morality” itself would be irrevocably compromised. However, insofar as *Ethics* is an anarchist text, that rupture would belong to “anarchist morality.” Perhaps de Cleyre felt this eruption when she defended the other’s freedom and reminded her audience “you do not know how long he fought before he failed. Therefore you cannot be just. Leave him alone.” The ethical formulations in *Anarchist Morality* do not permit that conceptual move, but Kropotkin’s statement in *Ethics* suggests that *there is no ethics that does not reckon itself qua unethical*. “Anarchist morality” can save sympathy and substitution, but the recovery must ceaselessly acknowledge the ruse and danger of that logic. It must respect the other, and what that respectfulness demands is an avowal that reckons how every act of sympathetic identification places the other “beyond your sphere.”

Or perhaps *Anarchist Morality* does permit such a move. Perhaps, within anarchism, Kropotkin clears a space in which sympathy and substitution come into reach. In his example, at the very moment that he identifies the imagination as a vehicle of sympathy, he also mentions an alternative vehicle: *the face*. He writes: “your imagination causes you to suffer the pain inflicted upon the child, *or perhaps its tears, its little suffering face tell you*” [italics mine]. Kropotkin’s language knows better than he does. While he proceeds to develop the possibility of *imaginative substitution*, Kropotkin bypasses the alternate route marked by “perhaps” and never revisits it. Yet the unexplored course remains open. Disconnected from the subject’s imagination, does this encounter with the child’s face evade the imagination’s treacherous narcissism? Does it hold out

the possibility of an anarchist relation: a relation that would respect the child and, perhaps, prehensively answer her call prior to the imaginative distortions of language? Is that face the locus of what could be called “*postanarchist morality*”?

V. “THE ANARCHY OF THE SUBJECT”

Drawing on late twentieth-century thinkers, postanarchists have endeavored to resolve this very problem of the subject in classical anarchism. Summarizing postanarchism’s central insights, Dave Morland indicates that postanarchists critique classical anarchism’s foundationalist assumptions about human nature and the exclusively repressive nature of power (24). Furthermore, he shows that, demonstrating the obsolescence of classical anarchist assumptions, postanarchists then theorize an antifoundationalist subject and a constructive, capillary notion of power commensurable with the postmodern, globalized world (*ibid.*). In other words, while they do not frame their theorizations of the subject with the Levinasean notion of the face, postanarchists do theorize the anarchist subject as the product of effects of practices and disparate assemblages. For them, the subject does not possess power to a greater or lesser degree; it is, prior to such possession, always already possessed by the power that produces it.

Lewis Call fits this description. In *Postmodern Anarchism*, he cries out for the head of the ideology that produced the subject of both classical anarchism and liberalism. He writes: “let the guillotine be deployed [. . .] against the philosophy of subjectivity” (50). In the place of that philosophy, Call advances a theory based on Nietzsche’s “assault on traditional forms of subjectivity and consciousness” (49). For him, Nietzsche’s critiques put liberalism and the liberal state into doubt, which Call associates with the metaphysics of being (essence, identity, ground).

He claims that Nietzsche adds to political discourse a subject characterized not by singularity or fixity but by “multiple subject positions and decentered identities” (48). Moreover, rather than possessing a “free will,” he asserts that the Nietzschean subject is “the indirect product of the social and cultural forces which have constituted the individual who performs those actions” (49). Elsewhere, drawing on Foucault, he identifies these “social and cultural forces” with “the practices and techniques by which we are constructed as individuals” and acknowledges that “power is capillary; it is everywhere, and it flows through every social relation” (66). For him, humans are “little more than nodal points where various social, economic, and cultural forces converge to produce the *illusion* of subjectivity [. . .]” (49). While such a subject resembles Bakunin’s materialist theorization, Call designates it “Nietzsche’s anarchy of the subject” (48). Such a subject is animated by what he calls “the anarchy of becoming” (50). Based on Nietzsche’s critiques of being, the “anarchy of becoming” designates the argument that everything, including subjectivity, “is in a state of flux” (ibid.). It means that “change is the very heart of who and what we are. And this is true [. . .] not only of ourselves but of our world” (ibid.). “For Nietzsche,” Call adds, “the world has no teleology, no destination,” and “the philosophy of becoming assures us that nothing is permanent” (ibid.). Rather than essences, humans are “selves-in-process” (52). In other words, counter to liberalism, which requires subjects to possess a being that can be represented and classified, Call borrows Nietzsche’s theory of a subject fundamentally typified by flux in order to cast an anarchist subject sufficiently mercurial to escape bureaucratic identification, state surveillance, and corporate marketing. Borrowing thus, he challenges the logic of sympathy. Indeed, though it contradicts his previous claim that “nothing is permanent,” Call conjectures that “the philosophy of becoming

suggests that we are in a state of permanent and total revolution, a revolution against being” (51).

Is Call’s postanarchist subject among de Cleyre’s bubbles? Quite like the Greek sculpture that seems “about to float into the air,” the idea at the heart of Call’s postanarchist subject is “change, swift, ever-circling change.” Its “state of permanent and total revolution [. . .] against being” recalls the subject-in-process in “Bastard Born” who, consigned to the margins of society, poses a perpetual insurrection within that system that contains it through an exclusion designed to dissemble the subject’s immanence. Such a becoming-subject declares with its roil and froth that system’s death sentence. However, Call’s postanarchist subject falls short of “the veriest of soap-bubbles.” Rather than taking responsibility for the other and risking its own life in the struggle, his Nietzschean subject seems isolated and unconcerned with others.

Indeed, while Call implicitly attempts to circumvent the problems produced by the logic of sympathy, his so-called “postmodern Nietzschean anarchism” (55) misunderstands the very concepts that he implements on anarchism’s behalf. First, he misconstrues the complexity of “the anarchy of the subject,” or, if he does not misconstrue, then he fails to construct sentences that accurately convey his understanding. Immediately after hinting at “a revolution against being,” he writes: “the philosophy of becoming implies a single ethical imperative: become who you are, create yourself as a masterpiece” (51). Call’s rhetoric is scandalous not because, without any trace of irony, he identifies anarchism with an “ethical imperative,” albeit only one, or because he hopes to move the anarchist subject to the category of “masterpiece.” Anarchism possesses a flexibility that can accommodate ethical imperatives, and the idea of a masterpiece, if it can be understood outside literary assumptions about the authority of the author and language’s hierarchical metaphorical operations, remains within reach.⁵⁶ Scandalous is that, despite having

elaborated how the anarchist subject does not possess a “free will” per se and is instead constructed by the effects of practices, he still represents that subject as though it possessed isolated, autarkic power. His rhetoric is subtle, but significant. Rather than using the more appropriate passive voice, Call uses the active. He does not write “be created as a masterpiece”; he writes “create yourself.” The imperative mood betrays his own conceptualization. While his theorization of “the anarchy of the subject” heretofore indicated that prior to the act of masterful creation there is no “in itself,” no being that can create, but only an empty place (“nodal point”) around which power conglomerates in order to produce the subject, his rhetoric ignores the subject’s secondarity. Indeed, though he previously acknowledged that the subject is ancillary and contingent, he now formulates it as though it were primary and autonomous.

Contrary to de Cleyre’s characterization of the passive, self-sacrificing figure of Dyer D. Lum, Call’s postanarchist self-in-process reproduces Mills’ “radical” characterization of the liberal subject that reserves a measure of “self-creation” in the face of “material structures and social restrictions.” For Call, such a subject cannot first and foremost take responsibility for the other; it must focus on the self-interested processes of self-amelioration and self-actualization *as forms of resistance to existing regimes of power*. For Mills, such a subject belongs to traditional humanist struggle. Identifying such resistance with anti-colonial, anti-Fascist, and civil rights struggles, he suggests that the radical subject fits within a traditional, more or less linear and dialectical narrative of empowerment (“Occupy Liberalism!” 316). In this narrative, the doer precedes the deed; confronted with adversity, the revolutionary subject acts on its own behalf. Further, its process of development — from disenfranchisement to emancipation — is teleologically oriented toward the fulfillment of the rights deserved by and proper to it. Call’s

imperative to “become who you are, create yourself as a masterpiece” places the anarchist subject in this same narrative. This is not simply to say that Call reproduces a liberal subject that reifies notions of self-ownership and self-knowledge impossible for a bubble that contains anarchy; I mean that the end of the masterpiece, of self-certainty and self- mastery, belongs to humanist thought.⁵⁸ While the postanarchist subject might see itself as responsible for the “material conditions and social restrictions” from which it and others suffer, that responsibility is not from the other; it is an effect of that subject’s capacity to choose those conditions and restrictions.

Constructing the anarchist subject in this way, Call constrains his theorization of the subject typified by “multiple subject positions and decentered identities.” Rather than guillotining “the philosophy of subjectivity,” he replicates Mills’ liberal subject by speaking liberalism’s language and drawing on its narrative forms. While Call theretofore described that anarchist subject as the “indirect product” of “social and cultural forces,” the command “create yourself” excludes any indication that “the anarchy of the subject” involves even the most superficial contact with the neighbor. Indeed, he gives the impression that *the subject creates itself as a masterpiece alone*. He constructs a subject who can only be solitary, self-sufficient, and anterior to all social relations. This is effectively his “masterpiece.” It is a subject who acts in isolation, mobilized by its own power, and in the absence of any bonds. Such a subject is not only the subject of liberalism *according to Call’s own elucidation*. While anarchism may reserve a place for the Übermensch, the “masterpiece” into which the anarchist subject would create itself according to Call’s own account of power is merely another alibi: it is a dissimulation that conceals from the anarchist subject the debt that she owes to the other.

Indeed, while Call's rhetoric disassembles the liberal subject under the sign of "the anarchy of the subject," it simultaneously terminates in the metaphysics of being. Not only does "create yourself" assign to the subject power that Call's previous assignations located elsewhere; the mandate is coupled with the command "become who you are." Based on the problems of "create yourself," this other instruction elicits the question: *how can I become myself when the very fact that I am not myself, bereft of agency, inspires the pressure to "become" in the first place?*

However, beyond this question, Call's rhetoric produces another problem. While his notion of a "permanent and total" "revolution against being" — and his claim that "change is the very heart of who and what we are" — incontrovertibly indicates that "the anarchy of the subject" will interminably flicker and fluctuate, never arriving at a destination that could pass as being, the order "become who you are" suggests the opposite. Not only does the fact that there is a "you" who the subject could be ("who you are") contradict the nucleation of "the anarchy of becoming" in the subject. The claim that it is the subject's responsibility to "become" this being suggests that "the anarchy of becoming" is not unconditional; *it is only a detour to being*. If "the anarchy of becoming" were held to the premises hitherto set for it, then the anarchist subject could never become itself. Its "revolution against being" would be no more violent or magnificent than maintaining the question that the other incessantly poses to his identity. However, rather than a "permanent [. . .] revolution against being," Call's formulation of "the anarchy of becoming" only achieves a temporary diversion from stasis. For him, the subject remains in a state of flux during a phase, but ultimately it becomes the self-styled masterpiece that it is and ostensibly always had been. According to the terms of Call's "postmodern Nietzschean anarchism," the anarchist subject is a "self-in-process," but the becoming of that process finds its resting place in

being, and the “process” thereby resembles the dialectical development of the Hegelian *Geist* far more than any ontological revolution Nietzsche may have launched against it.

If Call’s Foucaultian notion of the subject holds, then, the problem with the later formulation is not merely that it duplicates the subject of liberalism; it mutilates the subject. When Call’s “ethical imperative” is obeyed by me, the self that is produced when I “become myself” is incommensurable with the “volcanic Me,” my ipseity. The “single ethical imperative,” then, is not the law within anarchism’s heart. It is an interdiction that endorses the domination of the other in me in the name of anarchy.

Second, then, while Call misunderstands the subject, he misunderstands becoming as well. However, beyond the fact that his rhetoric indicates that “the anarchy of becoming” is a transitory stage in the development of the anarchist subject that he calls a “permanent [. . .] revolution against being,” he also misconstrues what about this revolution would be “total.” In his conceptualization of “the anarchy of becoming,” he correctly problematizes its risks. For him, if the subject is multiple and decentered, nothing prevents it from tipping into a position antagonistic to anarchism and becoming fascist (52). While “becoming-fascist” emblemizes the danger of subjective multiplicity, Call reasons that it delineates the limits of “anarcho-becoming.” He queries:

Is this [becoming-fascist] the limit of becoming? Must we conclude that becoming is bordered by a law after all — a visceral, pretheoretical law which says simply, “I will not give myself over to the fascist inside me”? Perhaps. [. . .] [m]icrofascism should be understood as the limit which defines becoming, grants it a definite (albeit fluid and flexible) shape, and prevents it from dissipating into

a politically meaningless gasp of chaos. (52-3)

Though it dictates a new “law,” Call’s observation is potentially radical for anarchism.⁵⁷ It suggests that no anarchist subject is absolutely anarchist; he contains a fascist that interrogates his anarchism. Moreover, it suggests that “the anarchy of becoming” encloses its own limits. It risks violating itself, transgressing itself, but it maintains itself qua becoming by resisting that which within itself would bring it to a halt. Call reinforces this idea: “The threat of microfascism is what motivates anarcho-becoming, what makes it possible, and indeed what completes it” (53). However, rather than developing the insight and accounting for the impossible conditions that would constitute a “postmodern anarchism,” he issues a *third* command. (Despite their palpable difference, Call treats the second and third command as synonymous.) Endeavoring to resolve the problem presented by “the threat of microfascism,” he emphatically writes: “*Kill your inner fascist* — this single, minimal limit opens up incomprehensibly vast vistas of becoming, for there are surely a billion ways to fulfill this prescription” (ibid.)

However, based on Call’s own conceptualization of “microfascism,” this “single, minimal limit” has the opposite effect. While his diction may be hyperbolic, the word “kill” is too strong for “postmodern anarchism.” If microfascism completes “the anarchy of becoming,” then exterminating that microfascism also exterminates that which it completed. In other words, if I could slay my “inner fascist,” I would also destroy that part of my subjectivity that permits my ungovernability and inscribes me outside bureaucratic and liberal frameworks. The “anarcho-becoming” that received its definition from the danger of “becoming-fascist” is dispatched. The fascist’s murder is the anarchist’s demise. Indeed, if I could “kill” my “inner fascist,” I would arrest becoming by eradicating that which mobilizes it, and thereby reduce my subjectivity to

being (or nothingness). If Call is correct that “the philosophy of becoming implies a single ethical imperative” and that the duty of the anarchist subject is to “become [itself],” then the “visceral, pretheoretical law” obliging the subject to “kill [its] inner fascist” would forbid the subject from becoming itself since what it would be abolishing is the “anarcho-becoming” that is the very condition of its self-determination.

Given Call’s explication, despite the fact that he indicates otherwise, “the anarchy of becoming” does not suggest a “total [. . .] revolution against being.” Quite the contrary, it is counterrevolutionary. It is a “revolution” that lacks the element that affords “the anarchy of becoming” its edges. However, not only does it arrest becoming and preclude the possibility of the anarchist subject; insofar as it forecloses on all ontological possibilities subtract the limited options of being and nothingness, the discharge of the duty to “kill your inner fascist” is the birth of fascism itself. It would not be counterrevolutionary because it contests anarchism’s ethical and political commitments. Since it would be a form of fascism that refused itself, excluding itself from itself qua “fascism,” it would place fascism into circulation by removing it from accountability and criticism. The “revolution against being” would not only be an incomplete revolution whose incompleteness heralds the affirmation of being; it would be the triumph of a totalitarian regime that calls itself “postmodern anarchism” but forges its political identity from the eradication of another, competing political identity. Elegantly insidious, it would guillotine anarchism by exalting its glory and rejuvenate fascism by taking its head.

What Call misunderstands about becoming is that it is not his to control; *it controls him*. Antedating any modulation or adjustment that he could accomplish in “the anarchy of becoming” are the adjustments and modulations always already made available by “the anarchy of

becoming.” So, not only are humans “little more than nodal points where various social, economic, and cultural forces converge to produce the *illusion* of subjectivity”: their agency belongs to the same illusions. This is not to say that political change is not possible. Quite the contrary, the avowal of “the anarchy of becoming” is the affirmation of hope and the promise of change, but the responsibility that comes with it demands reckoning *at every point* in the political process that the subject I am has been staked out in advance by the other. Call’s observation about the perils of “microfascism” for “the anarchy of the subject” effectively delineate the limits of anarchy, but the “inner fascist” cannot be destroyed. If I could murder him, that homicide would be an “illusion,” but the illusion would be a nightmare. In taking his life, I would *through that very action* be put in his place, and not only would my body become his tomb; I would be that fascist’s resurrection.

Radical would be for the anarchist subject to learn to live with its “inner fascist” and reckon the presence of microfascism in every ethical and political decision. While Call’s theorizations of the anarchist subject hearken back to de Cleyre’s and Kropotkin’s anarchism and their implications that every ethical decision encloses the unethical, his elaboration of microfascism clandestinely conveys the idea that anarchism conceals from itself about itself, even if classical explications of the “I” and the neighbor stealthily brought it to mind: *anarchism contains that which places its legitimacy into question*. However, insofar as Call’s elaboration can be trusted, it implies a further reserved confession. If there could be a true “postanarchism” — an anarchism after anarchism or that faced anarchism’s grimmest limits — this confession would be its capitulation: *anarchism accommodates the other that forbids anarchism, and that other is anarchism’s consummation*.

VI. TRAFALGAR SQUARE

Perhaps anarchism is a night-glory. Consummated by that which within itself makes it flee from itself, it does not simply live on its own death; it involuntarily bubbles upward, repelled by the anarchy at its heart. In other words, as de Cleyre's confession suggested, the anarchist does not choose to respond to the other; it is responsible for the other prior to choice. Despite Kropotkin's allusions to rescuing abused children and saving wounded comrades under fire on the battlefield, anarchism is not a heroic political philosophy. "Sap rises, if sap there be," but that effervescence commences only after anarchism has been severed from its root. For the anarchist subject, the political act par excellence begins in the passivity of that effervescence. In other words, it begins with the assignation of the other, prior to the question "what has befallen you?" In de Cleyre's account of this assignation, the horror of this ordeal is not that the subject confronts death; it is that the subject is a hostage. It is bubble, and it does not know what a body brushing past it may do to it, and in a minute it is not even a bubble.

Classical anarchists and postanarchists recoil from this horror. Though they share a genuine desire to subordinate self-interestedness and privilege the other, their desires are relentlessly and systematically undermined by the logic of sympathy. On the surface, the logic grants priority to the other. But Bakunin, Kropotkin, de Cleyre, and Call demonstrate that such priority is only a *trompe l'oeil* that dissembles the primacy of the subject under the sign of its secondarity. While anarchists accept the premise that the subject is constituted by otherness and design their ethico-political programs accounting for that postulate, those designs consistently betray the premise. Based on the metaphysics of being, they produce a liberal subject exactly in

the place where they theorize the subject otherwise than being.

Anarchists are right to recoil. Liberalism, socialism, and fascism threaten anarchy, but no idea menaces anarchism more deeply than the idea, produced within its own perimeters, that posits the anteriority of the other. Bakunin's engagements communicate this lesson. The other may be anterior to the subject, but the cost of that anteriority is liberty, equality, and solidarity. For anarchism, these principles can still have value, but if the logic of sympathy is subverted and the place of the liberal subject bypassed, what remains are profoundly compromised principles. No responsible anarchist explication can be advanced that fails to account for the subject's irrevocable subordination to its neighbor. No notion of equality based on equity and reciprocity can be posited with a straight face; anarchist egalitarianism must be squared with the debt it owes to its fellowmen and women — unpayable because it does not exist, and nonexistent because it accumulates without end. Solidarity can no longer unify. There is no "I" without a "thou," but the space from one to the other, however short the span, is abysmal, and if "I" believes it has crossed that chasm, all that it encounters on the other side is itself.

However, without abandoning the anarchist principles of sympathy and respect for the distance of the other, de Cleyre begins formulating alternatives. In "Crime and Punishment" — the lecture in which she asserts that "those who have not suffered cannot understand how to punish; those who have understanding *will not*" (201) — she narrates her encounter in August 1897 with twenty-eight Spanish refugees in Trafalgar Square in London. Recently released from the Montjuich bastille in Barcelona, where they had been imprisoned for a year following a bombing during a Corpus Christi procession in Spain, the refugees — among them Francesco Gana — gathered at the base of the Nelson monument. Canovas del Castillo, Prime Minister of

Spain, had ordered them — along with four hundred other anarchists, socialists, and trade unionists — to be tortured in order to discover the responsible participants, and the bodies of the refugees were visibly battered and scarred by “the infamies of the inquisition” (ibid.). In de Cleyre’s account, “ten thousand people” collected at the base of the monument “to hear and see” the Spanish exiles, and in their harrowed faces she experienced the “outward manifestation” of “the unison of life”: the feeling that everybody’s lives — “the saint and the sinner,” the judge to the criminal” — “are intertwined and rushing upon doom together” (ibid). In another extended passage, she writes:

When Francesco Gana, speaking in a language which most of them did not understand, lifted his poor, scarred hands, the faces of those ten thousand people moved together like the leaves of a forest in the wind. They waved to and fro, they rose and fell; the visible moved in the breath of the invisible. It was the revelation of the action of the Unconscious, the fatalistic unity of man.

Sometimes, even now as I look upon you, it is as if the bodies that I see were as transparent bubbles wherethrough the red blood boils and flows, a turbulent stream churning and tossing and leaping, and behind us and our generation, far, far back, endlessly backwards, where all the bubbles are broken and not a ripple remains, the silent pouring of the Great Red River, the unfathomable River, — backwards through the unbroken forest and the untilled plain, backwards through the forgotten world of savagery and animal life, back somewhere to its dark sources in deep Sea and old Night, the rushing River of Blood — no fancy — real, tangible blood, the blood that hurries in your veins while I speak, bearing

with it the curses and the blessings of the Past. Through what infinite shadows has that river rolled! Through what desolate wastes has it not spread its ooze? Through what desperate passages has it been forced! What strength, what invincible strength is in that hot stream! You are just the bubble on its crest; where will the current fling you ere you die? At what moment will the fierce impurities borne from its somber and tenebrous past be hurled up in you? Shall you then cry out for punishment if they are hurled up in another? if, flung against the merciless rocks of the channel, while you swim easily in the midstream, they fall back and hurt other bubbles? (201-2)

Motifs central to de Cleyre's anarchist imaginary are immediately legible. Romantic though it may be, the image of the "Great Red River" — a "River of Blood" — evokes both the abyss within the "volcanic Me" and the anarchy implied by the "mid-NIGHT" that calls forth de Cleyre's "white night-glories." In "Crime and Punishment," the metaphor suggests a time older than the most ancient histories. "Behind us," "endlessly backwards," this "unfathomable River" recedes "to its dark sources in the deep Sea and old Night," into time immemorial, on the hither side of life, before the possibility of beginnings and endings. Further, de Cleyre associates the River of Blood with responsibility. Her questions at the end of the passage — for example, "where will the current fling you ere you die?" and "shall you then cry out for punishment if they are hurled up in another?" — suggest that it is *responsibility itself*, not only prior to beginnings and endings, but older than the possibility of acceptance or refusal. The river is neither just nor unjust; the river is there, it is. It creates life, it destroys life.

Implicating her audience in the metaphor, de Cleyre states that they are "bubbles" in this

anarchic river. While she has previously deployed this metaphor to imagine the anarchist subject — embodied in the “modest,” self-sacrificing figure of Dyer D. Lum — this iteration emphasizes her audience’s complicity in its anarchy. Qua bubbles, her audience contains the “unfathomable River”: their bodies are “transparent bubbles wherethrough the red blood boils and flows.” However, the unfathomable blood interior to their bodies is not their property. In De Cleyre’s metaphor, the audience is carried passively upon the river’s waves, subjected to its currents: they are “just bubbles on its crest.” For de Cleyre’s audience, that this anarchic river, inside and outside them, transports them all inexorably to death — “where all the bubbles are broken and not a ripple remains” — suggests that their lives are intimately connected to the lives and deaths of those others standing beside them. The “bubble” metaphor suggests not only that every audience member is responsible for every other, as Lum was responsible for Lingg, but that none of them choose their responsibility. Produced by and for the Great Red River, their choice is always already made. They are called before the other’s voice smites upon their inner ear. They are responsible before they take responsibility.

Spoken before the Social Science Club in Philadelphia, de Cleyre’s metaphor aims to establish solidarity among her audience. However, while this solidarity would affirm the “unison of life,” it is not a unity grounded in identity nor in the shared experiences of blood and history. Contrary to the notion of equaliberty, the bodies in the Great Red River are connected by the danger that they pose to another. They are so vulnerable, so fragile, that the tenderest contact explodes them. Thus, they are joined in solidarity by the knowledge that they cannot touch one another, but also that they inevitably will. Indeed, their life will have been taken by the other. Each partakes of the other’s exultation and barbarism. They are hostages. Here, insofar as de

Cleyre's metaphor imagines anarchy as a situation in which the other has taken the subject hostage, I would suggest that she does not only give expression to that which horrifies anarchists, including herself at certain points in her corpus; she shatters liberalism's language and assembles a radical imaginary from its fragments.

Though de Cleyre's point is that all are guilty of every crime and none can legitimately claim the power to judge another, her metaphor simultaneously speaks to the possibility of a sympathy that exceeds Kropotkin's imaginative and narcissistic identification. Rather than personal experience and preference, de Cleyre's vision of solidarity finds itself on "the action of the Unconscious."⁵⁹ "The unison of life," then, is not what subjects share; it is that which is constantly slipping from their clasps. If the River of Blood figures forth sympathy, it does not construct a sympathy that knows the other and could determine its desires; it structures a question. (To put it crudely, the question would be "what has befallen me?" This question, however, would not provide occasion for self-reflection; it would be addressed to the other in me. In a different register, then, the question "what has befallen me?" would be "what have I done?") For this reason, de Cleyre's rhetoric shifts from the declaratory to the interrogative at the passage's end. Rather than instructing her audience and pontificating about the limits of their responsibilities, she poses questions that they are free to answer, refuse, return, or modify. In contrast to Kropotkin's paraphrases, this interrogative mode formalizes sympathy. De Cleyre's rhetoric demonstrates a relation to the other that respects its limits and does not presume to imagine her desires or thoughts without distortion. It recognizes the subject's place; it locates the subject anterior to consciousness and recognition, and before the other whence that question already will have come.

Yet de Cleyre pushes this alternative form of sympathy further. Before she appeals to her audience as accomplices in one another's pain and death, she describes Gana's communication with the crowd of ten thousand in Trafalgar Square. Though Gana speaks another language, he is understood; his tormented body becomes the site of a language that speaks to everyone gathered in that place. Indeed, de Cleyre's narration fixates on his "poor, scarred hands."⁶⁰ The compression and ambiguity of this short, elliptical description expresses greater revulsion than could a catalogue of the gruesome tortures Gana suffered in Montjuich. In the context of de Cleyre's extravagant rhetorical style, "poor, scarred hands" suggests a horror for which she cannot find words, or a severity that would be betrayed by lyricism. Gana's "poor, scarred hands," then, are not simply the images of injuries that one man sustained for another's action; they signify the totality of tortures suffered by all four hundred.⁶¹ However, rather than the scars on Gana's hands functioning as signifiers, the site of inscription itself becomes the signifier. In that moment, Gana's body is pure form: no content but its movement. Indeed, in de Cleyre's description of the scene, he mesmerizes the crowd. His every motion before them resonates through their bodies and, before they could have apprehended the words he has uttered or what he wants them to feel, they refract his motion back to him. Right to right, left to left, they may move one slightly after the other, but de Cleyre testifies that the motions are in unison. What she is describing is not a sympathetic reaction based on subjective identification, as though the crowd of ten thousand shared the same memories of Montjuich's horrors or even could begin to comprehend them. The quietly undulating image of ten thousand bodies lilting "like leaves in the forest in the wind" implies a sympathy based on *embodiment*, *affect*, and *affinity*. In Trafalgar Square, solidarity is not a sentiment or declaration, nor is it even the symbolism of bodies

gathered together; it is harmony of the bodies themselves. The harmony does not belong to a “socially recognized personhood”; it belongs to an unconscious collective horror — repulsion before a mutilated body that enthralls and magnetizes the crowd. Furthermore, that repulsion is not a thought. De Cleyre thinks the experience as “the visible [. . .] in the breath of the invisible,” but her imagery suggests that her horror antedates consciousness and recognition. Before de Cleyre thinks, it has pulsed through her blood and torn her out of her skin.

Could de Cleyre’s testimony bear witness to a substitution that operates otherwise than the logic of sympathy, according to embodiment, affect, and affinity? Does she narrate a form of sympathy that truly gives place to the other? And can the language that she learns from Gana’s body be a signifying system that circumnavigates liberal’s language and encourages anarchy? While her description of the relation between the “I” and its neighbor in “Anarchism” located the subject posterior to the other, her narrative of Trafalgar Square (written only two years later) models a deference to the other that recognizes *at every step* that “I” is not his master and he is no one’s to master. Indeed, the image of the crowd answering Gana’s gestures with their bodies before they have formulated a thought indicates that de Cleyre acknowledges that the other lies beyond consolation. The only justice that “I” can do the neighbor is be there for him, separate but interminably embodying that separation. That is what it means to be a bubble: its effervescence is the weightless and involuntary insurgence of the revulsion encountered by the subject in the face of the other. Intimately connected, the only contact I know is the toil and trouble that throws me to the side when the neighbor extends his hand.

Perhaps, when de Cleyre defined anarchism as “freedom to the soul as to the body,” she did not intend to put the subject’s freedom before its fellow’s. Perhaps, when she identified

anarchism with the obligation to “draw back from the Self-gate of the plainest, most unpromising creature,” she meant to say that anarchism is obliged at every step that would call itself “anarchist” to surmise the infinite, abysmal distance between the one and the other, and to never lose sight of the other’s anteriority to that subject. The neighbor “lies beyond your sphere,” and responsibility must incessantly reckon this transcendence to do the neighbor justice.

Queer situation. I am not sufficiently my own to be made by me into a masterpiece. If my blood belongs to the other, then I am flawed prior to any fate, and that star in the bubble that I am is also my perfection.

Cut-up literature speaks the language of Francesco Gana’s mutilated body. Always already an engagement conditioned by the anteriority of the other, its substitutional practices imply both the subject qua hostage and responsibility for the other’s dismemberment and death. The cut-up is accused of destroying texts, but it also holds a vigil that stays beside those mangled, shattered forms. For anarchism, this language is not simply the language of embodiment, affect, and affinity; it is an anarchic language that assists liberalism’s captured language to suicide.

In the chapters that follow, this assistance operates on the nodes of identity categories — gender, sexuality, race, and class — that support the politics of recognition and representation. Further, through these traumatic effects, cut-up literature speaks from the place of the other. It does not simply *pose* the question of the subject; it *gives expression to* the question: ipseity, the neighbor — persecution, obsession, hostility, pain. Over and over, it returns to the scaffold in Cook County jail where the Haymarket martyrs were murdered by the state, and lets slip the

voices rising from the silence that witnessed them right before the hangman pulled the plunging trap:

There was an instant of silence. Then from beneath Spies's hood came the words: "The time will come when our silence will be more powerful than the voices you strangle here today!" "Hurrah for anarchy!" cried Fischer, his voice ringing out strong and clear. "Hurrah for anarchy!" shouted Engel still more loudly. "This is the happiest day of my life!" exclaimed Fischer. There was a second's pause. Then Parson's voice was heard: "Will I be allowed to speak, O men of America? Let me speak, Sheriff Matson! Let the voice of the people be heard! O — "62

CHAPTER 3

EFFLORESCENCE:

GERTRUDE STEIN'S *PATRIARCHAL POETRY* AND ANARCHA-FEMINISM

In the language of the Tzotziles, those that in listening orient their paths, to listen with their hearts they say “YATEL TAJLOK ‘EL COONTIC.” Speaking and listening to words is how we know who we are, where we come from, and where our steps are going. Also it’s how we know about others, their steps, and their world. Speaking and listening to words is like listening to life.

— Subcomandante Marcos
“I shit on all the revolutionary vanguards of this planet”

It is impossible to define a feminine practice of writing, and this is an impossibility that will remain, for this practice can never be theorized, enclosed, encoded — which doesn’t mean that it doesn’t exist. But it will always surpass the discourse that regulates the phallogocentric system; it does and will take place in areas other than those subordinated to philosophico-theoretical domination. It will be conceived of only by subjects who are breakers of automatisms, by peripheral figures that no authority can ever subjugate.

— Hélène Cixous
“The Laugh of the Medusa”

Once when one has said what one says it is not true or too true. That is what is the trouble with time. That is what makes what women say truer than what men say.

— Gertrude Stein
“What Are Master-pieces”

There is no male. There is no female. Get free.

— CrimethInc.
Days of War, Nights of Love

I. “PATRIARCHAL POETRY”

Is Gertrude Stein’s *Patriarchal Poetry* a masterpiece? Notoriously verging on absolute incoherence, the immense prose poem — if it can be classified as poetry at all — does not present itself as a piece that has been mastered. Quite the contrary, *Patriarchal Poetry* seems out of control. Critics often note that Virgil Thomson, in his preface to *Bee Time Vine*, remarks: “I have not the slightest idea what it means” (vi). Likewise, in *A Different Language*, Marianne

DeKoven quips: “Most of ‘Patriarchal Poetry’ not only defies interpretation, it defies reading” (128).

These extreme reactions reflect the poem’s technical difficulty. While not a cut-up in the rigorous sense — a text physically cut up and rearranged from another — *Patriarchal Poetry* does effectively put into practice aleatory and processual principles of composition. Monotonously repetitious, idiosyncratically punctuated, and composed by kaleidoscopically shifting lexico-syntactic and grammatical units (verbs, adverbs, articles, conjunctions, prepositions) and trivial wordplay, the poem accumulates at a geological pace through permutations into gigantic lists and paragraphs. The technique produces flat, abstract, and nonlinear surfaces. Reading the poem is like gazing into the abyss. Rather than a masterpiece, it would be a work that demonstrates Stein’s incapacity to manipulate her medium and command its effects. The work slips away from her. Whether or not it defies interpretation and reading, it proves recalcitrant against mastery and allergic to the authority of the author and her power to govern it.

Despite its technical difficulty, however, much has and remains to be said about Stein’s prose poem. In general, as its title indicates, it is a poem about “patriarchal poetry.” As Michael Davidson argues, the poem “explores the priority of male power and succession as a discursive possibility” (50). In other words, *Patriarchal Poetry* examines regimes of language that support and validate social institutions and organizations that privilege the figure of the father and filial lineage. More specifically, the poem examines these regimes *within* literature. While it never forgets the diffusion of patriarchal power in society, it mobilizes energies in order to investigate how literature systematically excludes the voice and pleasure of woman as woman,

forbidding her not only from possessing her own property but from claiming a “proper” body in her own name and pioneering a language that would legitimate that claim. In the final analysis, it attempts to redefine the idea of woman in a manner that prefigures the possibility of liberation from those pervasive regimes of patriarchal power.

Written in 1927, Stein’s investigation of patriarchy inherits both the formal effects and spirit of irreverence from Tzara’s “How to Make a Dadaist Poem.” In general, *Patriarchal Poetry* acknowledges this inheritance through Stein’s efforts to break “the rigid form of the noun.” For Stein, this effort focuses on the destruction of traditional literary language that hardens the subject it designates by fixing that subject in an identity. “[P]oetry up to the present time has been a poetry of nouns a poetry of naming something,” Stein states, and her experiments aspire to discover “a way of naming things that would not invent names, but mean names without naming them” (“Poetry and Grammar” 141; 139). In the context of *Patriarchal Poetry*, she narrows the scope of her effort to “break the noun” and targets the patriarchalism of literary language itself. In effect, Stein’s repetitive arrangement and rearrangement of linguistic units are not simply permutations that aim to exhaust syntactic and semantic meaning; they are assaults on the literary conventions and techniques that maintain patriarchal hegemony. Stein’s attacks carry on the “destructive, negative work” undertaken by Dada after the First World War, though in *Patriarchal Poetry*, that work turns inward, targeting even avant-garde itself, whose male “outlaw” artists expressed and benefited from gender exclusion.

Stein’s fundamental assault would be on phallogocentric writing. Effectively describing patriarchal poetry’s “history,” Hélène Cixous observes: “Nearly the entire history of writing is confounded with the history of reason, of which it is at once the effect, the support, and one of

the privileged alibis. It has been one with the phallogocentric tradition” (879). Similarly, in *Patriarchal Poetry*, Stein asserts both that “Patriarchal poetry makes no mistakes” (263; 272) and “there was never a mistake in addition” (254). Registering the numbers “one,” “two,” and “three” in lists, the conflation of mathematics and unmistakability allies “patriarchal poetry” with “the history of reason”; it underscores the algebra of the word and places patriarchal poetry within the logocentric tradition of identity and non-contradiction. In one instance, the numerical list also reinforces addition’s certainty and reliability: “It always can be one two three it can be always can can always be one two three. It can always be one two three” (266). Elsewhere, these numbers conjoin reason and patriarchal poetry itself.

Patriarchal Poetry reasonably.

Patriarchal Poetry which is what they did.

One Patriarchal Poetry.

Two Patriarchal Poetry.

Three Patriarchal Poetry. (274)

The assurance of these passages seems to be that patriarchal poetry *counts*. It enumerates; it matters; but, more importantly, it calculates identities, one upon another, and it calculates relentlessly, interminably, according to the same predetermined, scientific, and so-called “universal” logic.

Patriarchal Poetry speaks this language: it traffics in the rhetorical figures that verify patriarchal poetry’s logic and values. In other words, while it intimates that patriarchal poetry counts, *Patriarchal Poetry* is counting as well. However, *Patriarchal Poetry*’s counting is characterized by *cut-up effects*. It stutters, echoes, leaves phrases unfinished, finds satisfaction in

nonsense. Lines such as “Patriarchal Poetry reasonably” and “Patriarchal Poetry which is what they did” seem less like the best words in their best order or the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings and more like verbal combinations that Stein is experimentally placing side by side, if only to see what sense may emerge from their juxtaposition. In other words, Stein uses cut-upesque techniques to conceptualize ideas through arranging and rearranging words, rather than combining words to conceptualize her own ideas. The difference of these cut-up effects separate *Patriarchal Poetry* from patriarchal poetry, but they do so silently, at the level of form, in the clandestine movement of Stein’s pencil, scratching on the page.

Critics argue that these microscopic cut-up effects critique patriarchal poetry. In *Gender and the Poetics of Excess*, for example, Karen Ford argues that the poem’s enumerations convey patriarchal poetry’s “repetitive, mechanical, measured nature” and “elementary, primer-like sensibility.” Further, she claims that “the measured certainty and predictability of the numbers, as well as their suggestion of something very elementary, capture this complex paradoxical portrait of a literature that is at once childish and tyrannical [. . .]” (103-4). For Ford, the poem’s calculations are a parody. Gertrude Stein is a cut-up, poking fun at serious literature. Her disjointed repetitions display that which patriarchy poetry *is*, even if the being exposed is precisely that which it disavows about itself. While it may be “childish” and “tyrannical,” the “portrait” also exhibits a literature that is wearisome and uninventive. Tedious, droning, aimless, the affect of “One Patriarchal Poetry. Two Patriarchal Poetry. Three Patriarchal Poetry” implies that, if there is nothing else wrong with it, patriarchal poetry is monotonous and dull.⁶³ It believes itself to be cogent, disciplined, and masterful, but it is constrained by the rigors of its own logic to replicate uniform rhetorical operations ad nauseam.

Reading *Patriarchal Poetry* as parody, critics tend to assume that Stein's poem is a reaction to phallogocentric literature. Peter Quartermain, for example argues that *Patriarchal Poetry* "is a form of deconstruction [. . .] in which the discourse demolishes the term [patriarchal poetry] — and the authority and stability of the cypher — embedded within it and shaping it, acting out as it does *nonpatriarchal* modes of writing" (35). Implicit in this deconstructive interpretation is the assumption that Stein's poem *resists* patriarchal poetry; its cut-up effects caricature and provide alternatives to the literary forms that privilege men and male authority. As a response, even if its ridicule succeeds in "demolishing" its adversary, *Patriarchal Poetry* affirms the primacy of patriarchal poetry. The poem thereby emblemizes the postmodern problems of power and resistance. As Cary Nelson points out, *Patriarchal Poetry*'s title raises the question of whether the poem takes patriarchal poetry as its subject or represents an "instance," of it, and such ambiguity "reflects Stein's judgment that everything one writes will be in some way patriarchal" (354). In these terms, the poem's deconstruction of male supremacy's poetic literary practices risks redoubling the patriarchal regimes that authorize those practices and that receive support from them.

In this chapter, I would like to approach *Patriarchal Poetry* from a different direction. Rather than a parody that reacts to patriarchal poetry, *Patriarchal Poetry* is the anarchic locus from which patriarchal poetry is produced as an authoritative form. *Patriarchal Poetry*, in other words, *is the other of patriarchal poetry*. The deconstructive reading of Stein's poem that limits its literary practices to the containment of phallogocentric literature through imitation constrains those practices to the action of a subject, the Master. Further, in restricting the poem to the action of a subject, that deconstructive reading forces the poem to preserve the place of the prime, the

first, and the one, even if it gives place to polymorphous “nonpatriarchal” modes. It must count — “one two three.” However, if *Patriarchal Poetry* is patriarchal poetry’s other, then the poem does not take its name from the subject; it is not a reaction to phallogocentric literature. Instead, it is the irreducible double, the two before one anterior to the subject. Rather than a work that stands in the place of and mimics a consciousness, Stein’s *Patriarchal Poetry* is the passivity more passive than all passivity. (For this reason, I have written that Stein’s fundamental assault “*would be* on phallogocentric writing.” This conditional tense is meant to register the poem’s passivity. If it was a subject, if it acted, the poem’s action would attack patriarchal poetry, but the poem does not act; it happens, spontaneous and without weight. It does not “do” anything except lay it out so patriarchal poetry can play it out.) In terms of de Cleyre’s primal scene, it is the site of the assignation that, before the possibility of anarchy, elects patriarchal poetry as its substitute, calling it forth to die in its place.

Patriarchal Poetry registers this substitution in a cut-upesque vignette. Distinctive in the poem, since its textures do not repeat elsewhere, the passage indicates that “I” and “you” are connected through a perplexing, retroactive relation: “I double you, of course you do. You double me, very likely to be. You double I double I double you double. I double you double me I double you you double me” (263). Although no external evidence indicates that Stein used a scissors and paper bag to compose this vignette, her experiment draws on Dada’s syntactic permutations (which Gysin will also play with in *Minutes to Go*). The cut-up works through a series of variations that alter the order of three words (“I,” “you,” “double”), so that each word’s repetition places it in a different syntactic formation. The effect is an adventure of chance, accident, and discovery. Initially, the theme suggests that “I” is produced by “you” after the fact. The first

clause, “I double you,” ascribes agency to the “I,” which would be responsible for duplicating the “you,” but the next clause reverses this ascription, indicating that “you” does the doubling, while “I”/“me” receives it. In the next phrase, “You double me” reiterates that “you” is the clause’s active subject, suggesting that “I” is the other’s replica. In the context of substitution, that double seems to refer not to *mon semblable* but to the subject’s ipseity. Rather than the displacement of the “I” by the “you”; it is the other *in the “I.”* The next phrase (“I double you double me”) further corroborates the primacy of the “you,” especially if a pause is placed after “I double.” “I double” implies the self-recognition of the “I,” an acknowledgement that it is not anchored in itself, while “you double me” indicates that “you” causes the doubling itself. (If “me” represents the double of “I,” then the “you,” placed between “I double” and “double me,” anchors the replication itself.) While the final phrase problematizes this idea,⁶⁴ the development of this cut-upesque vignette does not only suggest that two comes before one; it repeatedly asserts an asymmetrical and nonreciprocal relation between the self and other that gives primacy to the neighbor. In *Patriarchal Poetry*, this relation is not fundamentally characterized by resistance. Qua substitution, it suggests that patriarchal poetry is the effect of the poem that bears the same name. Even while the poem parodies phallogocentric writing, it maintains a connection that permanently places the subversion of its enemy into doubt and nurtures a hostility that maintains it.

For-the-other, Stein’s avant-garde work prefigures the cut-up texts examined in this study. Its relation to patriarchal poetry suggests the emergence of a “third mind” greater than the sum of its parts, otherwise than being. In “Portraits and Repetition,” Stein suggests that this third mind is “the essence of genius”:

One may really indeed say that that [the same person doing the talking and listening] is the essence of genius, of being most intensely alive, that is being one who is at the same time talking and listening. It is really that that makes one a genius. And it is necessary if you are to be really and truly alive it is necessary to be at once talking and listening, doing both things, not as if there were one thing, not as if they were two things, but doing them, well if you like like the motor going inside and the car moving, they are part of the same thing. (101)

While literary enterprises such as *The Making of Americans*, “Picasso,” and “Matisse” imply that such genius is a hermetic, anti-social relation — the subject related exclusively to itself, absolutely autonomous — *Patriarchal Poetry* fractures the possibility of such autonomy through its acknowledgement of substitution. In the poem, the emergence of a third mind intimates a subject that can be “one who is at the same time talking and listening” because the other speaks in it prior to self-consciousness. For Stein, the essence of genius speaks with the truth and listens with the heart. Like the Tzotziles, it says “YALEL AT MELEI” and “YATEL TAJLOK ‘EL COONTIC.” But this heart that listens belongs to the other, and the voice that speaks the truth reckons with every syllable that such noises put the subject into question. This third mind may not be a masterpiece, but in this recursive act of speaking and listening to the other, the master does take a piece of the work and shatter to pieces on it.

In *Patriarchal Poetry*, this recursive relation of the subject with itself is characterized by asymmetry, irreciprocity, and irrectitude. Rather than offering a subject, *Patriarchal Poetry*’s genius — its master stroke — is that it gives expression to the place of the other, talking and listening, prior to the subject’s formation. Identified with substitution, its title points out that the

poem is neither directly about nor an instance of patriarchal poetry, but chiefly concerns patriarchal poetry's anterior: a space that I am tempted to call not the "motor" but the cut *in* patriarchal poetry. The result is an acephalous form of writing whose contribution to Dada's "destructive, negative work" would be the obliteration of the privileged position enjoyed not only by the noun but by the subject in English grammar. *Patriarchal Poetry* does not orient a linear path; it bubbles. Ascending from the bottom up, it rises from the anarchic depths of language, more ancient than any language spoken by or in the interests of the subject, and organizes through recursive processes of listening and talking without beginning or ending.

II. FLORIOGRAPHY

Intimately linked to patriarchal poetry, *Patriarchal Poetry* suggests that its figurative language fails to substitute one-for-the-other. Instead, in the place of the other, it compulsively installs the same. In the poem, this critique is achieved through flowers — those irresistible symbols of the Eternal Feminine. Throughout the poem, a collection of flower's names is amassed, including pansies (ibid.), daisies (ibid., 288), lilies (257), roses (ibid.), marguerites (261), moss roses (285), and periwinkles (ibid.). Later, recalling her famous "Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose," Stein compiles a list of flowers, and the itemization's effect reiterates the poem's incessant calculations: "A hyacinth resembles a rose. A rose resembles a blossom a blossom resembles a calla lily a calla lily resembles a jonquil and a jonquil resembles a marguerite a marguerite resembles a rose in bloom a rose in bloom resembles a lily of the valley a lily of the valley resembles a violet and a violet resembles a bird" (270).

The floral list suggests the idea of *the language of flowers*. Appearing to be a cut-up that

begins with a fixed base (“resembles”) around which Stein inserts different flowers’ names, the list’s structure mimics the Victorian codes of communication in which each flower refers to an instituted concept. That each flower is effectively itemized alludes to patriarchal poetry’s compulsive logocentricity, suggesting that this taxonomic language is rational, based on an algebra of one-to-one identity and equivalence. For example, the “rose” (if red) would denote “true love,” while the “jonquil” would convey “desire” (Harten 2004). This is not to say that Stein is speaking the language of flowers. Instead, placed in the cut-up serialization (“resembles a”), the flowers refer to patriarchal poetry’s conventional tropes. Rather than a romantic message, Stein’s litany ironically places poetic meaning on exhibit and exposes it as a set of predetermined, calculable symbolic equivalences upon which it counts for semantic stability.

Women are implicated in this floriography. Recalling phallogocentrism’s compulsive tabulations and classifications, *Patriarchal Poetry* obsessively adds women’s names into the poem: Nelly (255), Jenny (265), Helen (ibid.), Agnes (ibid.), Brittany (ibid.), Sue (ibid.), Elizabeth (278), Edith (ibid.), Mary (286), May (ibid.), Gabrielle (293), and Alice (267). Indeed, many of the aforementioned flowers — Lily, Daisy, Violet, Marguerite, and Rose — name women too. “Flowers” hint at an association with women, but Stein’s paronomasia explicates the intimation. While Stein’s evocation of the language of flowers lampoons patriarchal poetry’s symbolic systems of identity and equivalence, these literalized metaphors in which flowers replace women suggest a critique of the complicity between the patriarchal practices that identify women and that operate at the heart of figurative language.

Deborah M. Mix asserts that the poem’s floral language accentuates Stein’s “beautiful” and “pleasurable” “vision for what poetry might be able to do” (163). However, in the context of

Stein's ironic treatment of patriarchal poetry, such as floriography, lays bare a literary convention that severely limits the spectrum of poetic expression. The formulation "a hyacinth resembles a rose" is only the beginning of a soporific series that elicits no possibility of irony, not "pleasure." Rather than "beauty," the floral series is designed to show that poetic language has no meaning except that which signals a discontinuity between patriarchal poetry's technologies and the "beauty" and "pleasure" that those technologies would produce. In other words, if the poem's additions embody the tradition's "repetitive, mechanical, measured nature" and "primer-like sensibility," the flowers multiply its monotony and affectively register the banality of poetic meaning. Within my very flesh, *Patriarchal Poetry* leaves the impression of how profoundly unimpressive patriarchal poetry is.

Subjected to these cut-up effects, this litany of flowers dismantles metaphor. Implied by "a hyacinth resembles a rose," *Patriarchal Poetry*'s obsession extends beyond counting and flowers to metaphor's poetic effects. Indeed, more frequently than flowers and numbers, the poem returns to the issues of resemblance and the obliteration of difference in metaphoric identification. Stating "a hyacinth resembles a rose. A rose resembles a blossom [. . .]," Stein does not only lampoon the language of flowers; she satirizes patriarchal metaphoricity. She formulates a series of comparisons, but rather than crystallizing the singularity of the subject, the comparisons ignore difference and prioritize sameness. Stein's metaphors backfire. However, like the language of flowers that she can speak but instead speaks truthfully, Stein devises metaphors that demonstrate every metaphor's surreptitious operation, and this operation is the obliteration of difference. Reinforcing this reading, Ford asserts that "Stein contends that metaphor — the cornerstone of poetic language — has lost its ability to figure difference. The

metaphors of patriarchy have become predictable and hollow and thus fail to put words into new relations with each other, fail to vitalize poetry” (101). Furthermore, extending her argument to a reading of this passage, she writes: “In patriarchal poetry, all the various flowers blur into the unitary concept of Flower because they are all used in exactly the same way” (106). What Ford’s analyses suggest is that, while the poem uses the language of flowers to demonstrate patriarchal poetry’s tedium and banality, that language also shows that figurative language produces homogeneity — a point reinforced in the poem (as Ford notes) by the line “Patriarchal poetry the same” (*Patriarchal* 264, 275; Ford 106). Metaphor, for Stein, may be the comparison between two unlike objects, but her floriography suggests that such a relation encounters a problem analogous to the problem Kropotkin confronted in the sympathetic relation: it reduces both objects to an identity. Metaphor is the opposite of “genius”; it is the contraction of talking and listening to the other. It is the other reduced to the one, and the reduction operates so that one to the other becomes one to one.

For the idea of woman, this critique prefigures Irigaray’s assertion that “feminine sexuality has always been conceptualized on the basis of masculine parameters” (23), suggesting that the signs that fix women’s identities always already belong to patriarchal poetry. If the language of flowers names women, the category “woman” belongs *in the first instance* to the patriarchal discourse that defines her femininity. For Stein’s feminism, this means that woman’s identity, the very possibility of calling herself a “woman” or by her proper name, including her property, desires, and pleasures, are programmed in advance for her by a discourse to whose authority she never voluntarily consented. Indeed, in the context of *Patriarchal Poetry*, insofar as patriarchal poetry predetermines her property, even the freedom that she would claim as “hers”

would only be a form of conformity and obedience. Woman may grow, she may flourish, but she will only flourish within the perimeters decided within patriarchal organizations. As the floriographic list's final term indicates, she will only ever be a "bird": a spectacle for the male gaze, an object of male heterosexual desire, and a sign that men exchange among themselves in conversation.

Yet the obliteration is not absolute. Contrary to Ford, rather than unity, the floral series affectively underscores heterogeneity. The verb "resembles," placed in the vacuum of symbolic meaning, trembles, transmitting *the feeling that a hyacinth does not resemble a rose*. In other words, while the list evokes "the unitary concept of Flower," it also insists that no "Flower" ever existed. This is not to say that the list does not serialize a set of resemblances nor that the conflation produced by this serialization does not generalize the set into a monad. I mean that, since the set ironically points to the failure of metaphorical language to figure difference, the monad fuses with the idea of its fallibility. Paradoxically, in the floriographic list, affirming homogeneity affirms difference, though the difference is only implied by the metaphoricity's failure. Rather than critiquing an "ability" that has been "lost," then, the series suggests that *patriarchal poetry never possessed the ability to figure difference*. For Stein, there is no Eden, no original plenitude, no innocence.⁶⁵ Metaphor annihilates differences, but its structure keeps difference in circulation. Perhaps this explains why, alongside "Patriarchal poetry is the same," it also states: "Patriarchal poetry the difference" (293).

Indeed, for Stein, difference is the condition of writing. In "Composition as Explanation," she opens with the claim: "There is singularly nothing that makes a difference a difference in beginning in the middle and in ending except each generation has something different at which

they all are looking” (21). Stein then connects this amorphous perceived “something” to “composition”: “Nothing changes from generation to generation except the thing seen and that makes a composition” (ibid.). In other words, for Stein, the world would be absolutely total, immutable, and immobile except for the work of art that belongs to it. The work of art (“composition”), like *Patriarchal Poetry* — a work that looks at patriarchal poetry, or in which patriarchal poetry looks at itself — sits in the world; it froths, accelerates and slows, and metamorphoses, but the world surrounding it remains still. It does not only give form to the act of “looking”; it is, within the still world, the one point of turbulence, effervescence, and transformation that prohibits the world from hardening into absolute torpor. Hence, for Stein, composition is not *a* difference. It is *the* difference, *difference itself*. But, the composition’s power is not its uniqueness; it is that as perspectives change and artists innovate explanations of “things” in the world, the world changes too. That fluctuation discloses what is tantalizing about a work like *Patriarchal Poetry*. Each transformation demands a new look, a new composition that incorporates the previous explanation. Thus, “composition as explanation” forms an infinite responsibility. Explanations belong to the totality, though none are total. If Stein’s thesis is correct, composition is anarchic; it belongs to a single moment that began with time immemorial and continues to prolong itself today, but it never finds its terminus and recedes into memory because the obligation to answer for the totality that it observes excludes the composition that accounts for it, and so each composition, explanation, or act of writing demands a return to the beginning and a repetition of the process, albeit one marked by a difference, whether trifling or profound. It is for this reason that Stein obsessively refers to “the prolonged” or “the continuous present,” “beginning again and again,” and “using everything” (e.g., p. 25). Moreover, it is for

this reason that, shortly after she asserts it, she reverses her opening claim, indicating that with the work of art in the world, nothing is ever the same; *everything is different*. The totality does not exist except in its perpetual flight from itself. She writes: “Everything is the same except composition and as the composition is different and always going to be different everything is not the same. Everything is not the same as the time when of the composition and the time in the composition is different” (23-4).

For Stein, then, *writing is the anarchic movement of difference*. Perhaps there is a world, a totality, and within that totality other, smaller totalities constituting it, but language places that world and its objects out of reach and all that one ever encounters is the composition, discourse, or sign that displaces and absents it.

Perhaps, then, Stein’s true critique of metaphor is that figurative language rests upon the assumption that a world for comparison exists. In the poem, correlating metaphor and flowers once more, but now ontologizing the correlation, Stein remarks: “Compare something else to something else. To be rose” (257). While the command “compare something else to something else” anticipates passages claiming that one thing “resembles” another, the words “something else” register a critical difference. “Something else” is not “something.” “Something” suggests ontological primacy and autonomy; it can stand alone, reflexively taking itself as a referent. “Something else,” however, suggests secondarity. Coming after “something,” it implies anteriority and dependence. The distinction indicates that “compare something else to something else” is not homologous with “compare these unlike objects”; it means “you cannot compare these unlike objects because there are no objects to compare. They do not exist in themselves, but refer to a term that is absent.” The implication is that, in “Patriarchal Poetry,” *the primary*

term of every metaphor is a metaphor. Every thing is always already something else.

Flowers, within *Patriarchal Poetry*, imply that relation between patriarchal language and absence. Early in the poem, Stein cryptically remarks: “she said she had followed flowers” (256). “She” has no referent, except for an abstract concept of gender, but the association between “flowers” and “following” suggests that “she” is behind these flowers; they are leading her way. Anticipating the string of literalized floriographic metaphors for “woman,” “followed flowers” suggests that woman is anterior to patriarchal language. Further, since the logic of identity and equivalence that guides patriarchal metaphoricity incessantly and unknowingly mobilizes differences that subvert the referent, the phrase indicates that *within patriarchal poetry woman as woman does not exist*. “Woman” is only a metaphor, and the sign that fixes her gender always already refers only to an absence. For this reason, *every voluntary act performed under the sign of gender is always already an involuntary act that deepens her subordination to patriarchy*. Indeed, “flower” is a mere permutation of “follow.” The two words may not mirror one another exactly, but their playful graphic resemblance is self-evident. (The “flo” in “flower” is transposed into the “fol” of “follow,” and “wer” reverses the place of the “w” and replaces “er” with “lo.”) The association suggests that to use the language of flowers is to acquiesce to a language belonging to the forces that maintains silence.

“Such a pretty bird.” Appearing immediately after the command “compare something else to something else,” this phrase suggests that woman’s speech is merely a parroting of patriarchal discourse. To identify as a woman, to speak as a woman and in her absence, is not only to follow a system of relations and literary techniques designed to maintain her subservience; is it to make the noises of a trained language that mimics the voice of the owner. Patriarchal poetry’s language

modulates woman's ontological identification and maintains her subordination, affording no position within that spectrum to express herself *as woman* except through discourses that loathe her.

This is what it means to "be rose." In the poem, whether "rose" refers to a flower or a woman, to be Rose is to not be Rose. "To be rose" is to be a sign, a component of the composition formed by looking and writing. However, to be this sign ("rose") is always already to refer to an absence that other signs rush to fill with their chatter. "To be rose" is to be the sign of a sign: a signifier, bereft of its signified, anchored only in the treacherous abyss of other signifiers. "Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose" is simultaneously the greatest lie and the most inescapable fact of literature.

In other words, while the language of phallogocentrism activates the anarchic movement of writing, the poem's cut-up effects suggest that patriarchal poetry dissembles this activity by anchoring it in the noun. For Stein, the noun does not only fix identity, and thus arrest the movement of difference; it forms a metaphor that betrays every being it would represent. It produces a subject whose autarky is constructed on its insulation from its origins outside itself, and on the condition of that ruse produces a subject that can think for itself, consent to following elected leaders, and submit to the laws of the state.⁶⁶

While it defies mastery, then, *Patriarchal Poetry* is a piece that masters. However, rather than mastering the medium of language or displaying a technical virtuosity that realizes aesthetic principles, Stein's poem masters patriarchal poetry itself. Divulging its homogeneity, facileness, and tedium, *Patriarchal Poetry* demonstrates the form of patriarchal poetry to be *redundant*. Its every act has already taken place. It matters, it has a place, but patriarchal poetry does not count.

III. "LITERARY ANARCHY"

If *Patriarchal Poetry* is a masterpiece, according to Stein's own account, it is also *an instance of anarchy*. In the conclusion of "What are Master-pieces," she remarks:

If there was no identity no one could be governed, but everybody is governed by everybody and that is why they make no master-pieces, and also why governing has nothing to do with master-pieces it has completely to do with identity but it has nothing to do with master-pieces. And that is why governing is occupying but not interesting, governments are occupying but not interesting because master-pieces are exactly what they are not. (153)

While Stein does not use the word "anarchy" here, her equation of the "master-piece" with the phrase "exactly what [governments] are not" effectively elides the noun in favor of a description that names anarchy without naming it. Such a description does oversimplify; while its etymological meaning is "no ruler" or "no leader," anarchy draws on vertical and affinity-based forms of organization that prevent it from being the diametrical opposite of "government." However, Stein's elliptical reference obliquely politicizes her concept of difference. For her, government is "occupying" because it relies on identity, that is, it lodges and fixes bodies in place. In contrast, masterpieces are "interesting" due to their reliance on difference; they hold attention by keeping bodies in motion, rotating, arranging and rearranging in new combinations. If *Patriarchal Poetry* is such a "master-piece," it will exhibit an organization that encourages such interminable flux. Contrary to the mastery exercised by the state form, it will achieve an order alien to identity, signification, and bureaucratic control, and form a text that integrates the

difference mobilized by its very composition.

Critics have long equated Stein's experimental work with anarchy. However, these comparisons often employ "anarchy" in pejorative senses that reduce it to a floriography reliant on predetermined and compulsory symbolic meaning. For example, in a 1914 review of *Tender Buttons* in the *Boston Evening Transcript*, Robert E. Rogers credits Stein with accomplishing in literature "what has already been done in painting, sculpture, and music, that is, express anarchy in art" (31). For him, rather than "no-leader," so-called "literary anarchy" prefigures Gerald L. Bruns' "anything goes, nothing is forbidden" attitude. It describes a text that "begin[s] at the far frontiers, where literary expression as we know it jumps off into the deep waters of unintelligible derangements of words!" (ibid.). Writing in 1936 for the Marxist publication *Change the World!*, Michael Gold echoes Rogers's sentiment. Generalizing her body of work, Gold reduces Stein's writings to "the monotonous gibberings of paranoiacs" and "a deliberate irrationality, a deliberate infantilism" (76). Likening that "irrationality" and "infantilism" to anarchy, he identifies it with confusion, decadence, and egomania. He writes: "In essence, what Gertrude Stein's work represents is an example of the most extreme subjectivism of the contemporary bourgeois artist, and a reflection of the ideological anarchy into which the whole of bourgeois literature has fallen" (ibid.).

Late twentieth-century critics formulate similar equations. In *A Different Language*, DeKoven associates Stein's experimental writings with the "anarchic."

As "a different language" [Stein's experimental writing] both disrupts conventional modes of signification and provides alternatives to them. The modes Stein disrupts are linear, orderly, closed, hierarchical, sensible, coherent,

referential, and heavily focused on the signified. The modes she substitutes are incoherent, open-ended, anarchic, irreducibly multiple, often focused on what Roland Barthes calls the “magic of the signifier.” (xiii-xiv)

Like Gold and Rogers, DeKoven equates the “anarchic” in Stein’s experimental work with literature’s abyssal “deep waters,” that is, the tipping point where conventional literary form dissolves and possibilities theretofore prohibited by rationality, good taste, and the rules of order come to pass. However, unlike Gold and Rogers, she renders explicit the dialectical relation between Stein’s “literary anarchy” and hierarchical, centralized, linear order grounding their assumptions about the meaning of “anarchy.” For DeKoven, anarchy seems to be synonymous with chaos and disorder. The “anarchic” in Stein’s experimental writings seems to describe aleatory elements that come out of nowhere and destabilize all inertia. While I have argued that anarchism does incorporate a relation to chance, DeKoven’s association of the anarchic and aleatory tends to call attention to the latter’s negative effects. For DeKoven, even though this trait contributes to Stein’s “different language,” the anarchic element in works like *Tender Buttons*, *Patriarchal Poetry*, and *Stanzas in Meditation* is less a force of adaptation and change than of destabilization, upheaval, and destruction.

These critical responses to Stein’s work show that “anarchy” is discursively constructed not as a viable political enterprise that suffices unto itself but as the flip side of the principles of law and order. Anarchy, for Rogers, Gold, and DeKoven, is not a social relation to the other, nor is it the organizations that emerge from the practices of embodiment, affect, and affinity, wherein subjects are produced in order to govern themselves and locally manage their own affairs; it is the opposite of “logocentrism.” The dialectical relation between anarchy and order at the heart

of DeKoven's description of Stein's experimental writing make this opposition clear. Insofar as logocentric ideology complements top-down organization, anarchism complements organization that is bottom-up; if logocentricism is linear and closed, then anarchism is dispersed and open-ended. In other words, for DeKoven, anarchy is not non-hierarchical because it is anarchy. Likewise, it is not unintelligible, deranged, irrational, and infantile because anarchy would be defined in itself by these descriptors. Quite the contrary, for DeKoven, Gold, and Rogers, "anarchy" is defined by these traits because these traits describe the negation of the centralized, rational, modern state.

Pervasive among literary critics who siphon anarchist discourses, such facile binarism indicates hardened misprisions about both the terms that they deploy and Stein's experimental writings. Even if these terms parallel Stein's account of anarchy and literature, insofar as DeKoven, Gold, and Rogers explain Stein's work relative to anarchy, anarchy is that which they misrecognize in it.

Yet, Stein's implicit construction of "anarchy" authorizes the same dialectical binarism. In "What are Master-pieces," if anarchy corresponds to *the absence of government that operates according to the principle of identity*, then anarchy for Stein is the obverse of the state as well. For her, as for DeKoven, anarchy would be difference, but it would not be difference because difference is anarchy's sole and primary definition; anarchy would be difference because the state that it dialectically opposes is identity. Similarly, insofar as Stein would correlate identity with hierarchy, linearity, closure, referentiality, sensibility, coherence, and order, that binarism would oblige her to perceive anarchy as disorder, incoherence, opaqueness, surface, incompleteness, nonlinearity, and dispersal. The "anarchic" masterpiece, for her, would be high

modernist works such as Mallarmé's "Un Coup de Des," Eliot's *The Waste Land*, or Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*.

More recently, critics have been loosening up this association. For example, Juliana Spahr's *Everybody's Autonomy* identifies anarchy with social practices. Emphasizing populist cooperation rather than egoist subjectivity, Spahr indicates that Stein's works consolidate an "anarchic democracy" (49). Examining the reader's relation to Stein's writings, she argues that her texts are designed for "strangers," especially non-native English speakers. Rather than confronting readers with an impermeable hermetic subjectivism, Spahr claims that Stein's writings democratically permit them with "a form of self-governing that resembles Peter Kropotkin's territorial and functional decentralization" (13). She elaborates: "Stein's works allow a decentralized self-government and autonomy on the part of the reader by giving the reading act as much authority as the authoring act" (47). In other words, Stein's experimental writing foregrounds conditions that dissuade readers from passively consuming the text. Instead, readers must become active, direct participants in the work's construction. For Spahr, then, anarchy is not chaos, violence, and self-indulgence; it is a social relation between the subject and its neighbor associated with autonomy, egalitarianism, direct action, and voluntary cooperation.

Others corroborate Spahr's argument. For example, recalling both DeKoven's and Spahr's observations, Neil Schmitz states that "the landscape of Stein's world is horizontal, democratic, and fluid. In it, all things and all words are of equal value; nothing is more important than anything else nor are words permanently attached to things" (57). While he does not write the word "anarchy," Schmitz's descriptions parallel Spahr's "anarchic democracy" and radical egalitarianism. Likewise, in *A Vocabulary of Thinking*, Mix broaches Spahr's claim. Citing and

agreeing with Spahr's notion of "anarchic democracy," she reiterates the possibility of the reader's autonomous self-government and direct participation in the construction of the text. She avers: "Stein encourages her readers to question the acts of reading and interpretation, (re)figuring them as open-ended and ongoing, rather than as potentially foreclosable acts" (23).

Considering *Patriarchal Poetry*'s debt to Dada and its cut-up effects, the problem with these recent critical responses to Stein's experimental writing is that their anarchisms remain mired in the borrowed language of liberalism and the metaphysics of the humanist subject. Even though Spahr's characterization of Stein's writing as an "anarchic democracy" privileges "strangers," that anarchic democracy does not give place to the other; the strangers' differences are reduced to the same, that is, they are made into subjects in a manner analogous to incorporation into and enfranchisement by the state. Whatever autonomy they discover in the text is only the ruse by which they receive the socially recognized personhood that subordinates them under the guise of liberty and equality. For *Patriarchal Poetry*, this means that Spahr's "anarchic democracy" remains closed to the sayings "YALEL AT MELEI" and "YATEL TAJLOK 'EL COONTIC." It neither accommodates the subject held hostage by its double nor accounts for the figure of woman, whose range of action would be truncated by that system.

Therefore, even though the thesis here is not new, anarchy in Stein's work remains a thought to think. I am concentrating on *Patriarchal Poetry*, not Stein's oeuvre, but perhaps I will be its first thinker. However, if it is enlivened by its own death, anarchy, while not the unthinkable, may turn out to be that which can be thought by none. In that case, the critics — myself included — never will have thought anything else.

Is *Patriarchal Poetry*, then, anarchic? Is it a masterpiece?

IV. NOMIC⁶⁷

“Anarchy” is not a word that appears in *Patriarchal Poetry*, but the form of the cut-upesque poem names it without naming it. Discombobulating about the prose poem is not, as DeKoven claims, its defiance to interpretation — a now obsolete, utterly disproven claim — nor that readers do not know the rules for negotiating these territories. It is that these territories relentlessly undergo transmogrification. In *The Structure of Obscurity*, Lisa Dubnick argues that “the [reader’s] approach [to Stein’s work] should be tailored to the style of the individual work being considered, and to each particular line of that work, since Stein sometimes mixed prose and poetic wordplay” (115, *emphasis added*). This observation suggests that in Stein’s “anarchic” writings, there are rules, but the rules are constantly changing; to each new writing environment, rules adapt and mutate in order to do justice to the language. I would like to suggest that such nomic play is more true for *Patriarchal Poetry*, a work Dubnick does not examine, than Stein’s other “obscure” texts. The challenge of the poem is the challenge of anarchy: the reader must constantly attend and acclimate to the work’s conditions. Moreover, as Stein’s conceptualization of “composition” would indicate, those conditions metamorphose from one instant to the next. Even to recognize conditions as “same” introduces a difference for which the work must be unsettled in order to account.

While Stein calls this differential movement “composition” in “Composition as Explanation,” elsewhere she calls it “insistence.”⁶⁸ As I indicated in the introduction, insistence is a practice of repetition that calls attention to the “soft spot” within identity by differentiating identities through iterative processes. For Stein, “there is no such thing as repetition” (95). In

other words, there is no *pure* repetition. In “Portraits and Repetition,” she claims that there is only “insistence” and its “emphases,” and that these twin energies differentiate every ostensive repetition. She writes: “[. . .] expressing anything there can be no repetition because the essence of that expression is insistence, and if you insist you must each time use emphasis and if you use emphasis it is not possible while anybody is alive that they should use emphasis” (95). To insist, then, is an anarchic practice. In Levinasian terms, insistence follows the obsessive, circular trajectory of recurrence that expulses rather than brings identity home. It does not affirm the primacy of the subject, but shatters the subject in the encounter with its own inner sanctum sanctorum, where it would recognize itself in itself.

In *Patriarchal Poetry*, that principle is not only formally operative; it is written in the poem’s very language. Indeed, *Patriarchal Poetry* even insists insistence:

Patriarchal Poetry insistence.

Insist.

Patriarchal Poetry insist insistence. (293)

The difference is small but significant. “Insistence,” like Derridan *différance*, is written with an “a.” Straddling English and French — *insistance* in French can be translated *urgency* — “insistance” is unpronounceable: it can only be written and read in silence, or uttered with no fewer than two voices. Furthermore, like the poem’s algebraic and floriographic repetitions, it is affective: I can think “insistence” as “insistance,” but the apparent misspelling, despite making no difference, introduces a difference that would remain unknown except for the accompanying perturbation insinuating that I have missed “something.” The “a” is a byproduct of “composition,” an effect of writing, but it suggests that “insistance” is writing’s most urgent

effect, impressing itself and leaving its mark upon language with each failed repetition. In *Patriarchal Poetry*, this cut-up, anarchic effect imparts both coherence and incoherence to the text. Insistence makes its language queer: it encourages the recurrence of the “same” words, producing the appearance of chaos, infantilism, irrationality, and unintelligibility perceived by Gold, Rogers, and DeKoven. But, systematically placing these words in new contexts and combinations, the practice of insistence calls attention to a logic and an order at the heart of that “literary anarchy.”

Rather than “the most extreme subjectivism,” insistence in *Patriarchal Poetry* produces an acephalous text that gives place to the other. Since the practice produces difference, it resists reducing differences to identity and provides an alternative to practices that “govern.” Every identity, in writing, is queered: with each reproduction, it is emphasized differently, and each difference reiterates that identity’s incommensurability with itself. Under such conditions, governmental, bureaucratic, hierarchical regimentation proves redundant and incongruous with the subjects it would organize. It is paralyzed by their fluidity. Furthermore, since even the identity of queerness itself is queered, the politics of insistence cannot be said to conserve hierarchical power while minimizing it, like so-called “libertarians” in the United States. Insistence is radical, down to the root, and to the degree that identity is the liberal principle par excellence, insistence eradicates its every vestige. Counter to Spahr’s, Schmitz’s, and Mix’s vision of an anarchic democracy where individuals might exercise their own voices, the form of Stein’s textual practice intimates the situation of the hostage, that is, insistence points toward writing without a subject, without a head and lead by no one, or writing that, in giving place to the other, produces the subject as an effect of that action.

The poem's opening passage foregrounds such acephalousness. Associating it with "the 'chora' of language," Krzysztof Ziarek argues that the passage "begins to mark a space 'before' words, before language has to spell and be (as signification or representation), and thus to spell 'to be'" (135, 136). In other words, this locus before "before" ("be for before"), apriori and aposteriori to all origin, points to anarchy.⁶⁹

For before let it before to be before spell to be before to be before to have to be to be for before to be tell to be to having held to be to be for before to call to be for to be before to till until to be till before to be for before to be until to be for before to for to be for before will for before to be shall to be to be for to be for to be before still to be will before to be before for to be to be for before to be before such to be for to be much before to be for before will be for to be for before to be well to be well before to be before to before might while to be might before to be might while to be might before while to be might to be while before for might to be for before to for while to be while for before while before to for which as for before had for before had for before to for to before. (254)

Gorgeously voluptuous, this anarchic opening has no subject. Unpunctuated (except the concluding period) and composed by insisting various grammatical units, excluding nouns (except, perhaps, "while," "might," "well," and "till"), Stein obsessively orders and reorders a limited set of verbs, adverbs, prepositions, and conjunctions ("to," "for," "before," "to be"). While patriarchal poetry claims to "make no mistakes," Stein deploys certain parts of speech precisely because they "can be so mistaken" ("Poetry and Grammar" 124). Excluding nouns and adjectives, which (like governments) Stein finds "uninteresting" and correlates with identity,

inertia, and death (123-4), she calls these potentially wayward words “lively” because “they all do something and as long as anything does something it keeps alive” (126). They are, in other words, queer. In “Poetry and Grammar,” “mistakes” primarily refer to verb, adverb, and pronoun agreement (124), but here, the form amplifies this sense of shifting relations and interrelations. Bereft of a subject, not only does the arrangement of “to,” “for,” “before,” and “to be” ignore English subject-verb-object sentence structure; each grammatical unit is multiple and mercurial. Without a context deictically anchoring the words, how they relate, modify one another, and grammatically function implodes in a game of speculation that never solidifies into definitive answers. For example, “to” could be a preposition or adverb; “before” could be a preposition, adverb, or conjunction; and “while” could be a conjunction, preposition, verb, or (as noted above) noun. Such protean variability makes these words “mistaken,” and it is to the degree that their individual and collective functions remain in question, constantly deviating, diversifying, and undecidable, that they can be considered “lively” or “queer.”

Prefiguring the rest of the poem, these aleatory processes devise an intricate, polyvalent, multilayered, kaleidoscopically shimmering textual environment. Operating as though algorithmically, multiplying and combining various parts of speech, albeit without respecting standard English grammar, syntax, or punctuation, and tinkering with language’s superficial resemblances, including homophones, orthographic similarities, and verbal conjugations, the poem’s opening creates textures, ambiances, atmospheres. Rather than formulating meaning, expressing emotion, or portraying images, *Patriarchal Poetry* designs spatiotemporal architectures that include images, emotions, and meanings, but in which those effects are secondary to textual dimensions to which they contribute. More than signs pointing to the

anarchic interval anterior to being, the poem's arrangement of "to," "for," "before," and "to be" spatializes a terrain that changes through iteration. Obsessive, the iterations of the same words, especially in the absence of punctuation, create visual motifs out of the letters. While the passage's meaning may be obscure, that pattern is concretely available, on the page. Repeating the letters b, e, f, l, o, r, and t, and testing their different arrangements, the paragraph assembles textures that Ziarek compares to "language in a melted state" (136).

This liquefied ambiance embodies Stein's definition of "composition." For example, the configuration "to be well before to be before," is the result of processual labor: it appears in its "final" form only after the words "to be," "before," and "well" have cycled through several transformations, so that "to be well before to be before" inherits the associations that have stuck to "to be," "to be well," and "to be well before to be" — all configurations occurring in the passage. Rather than a message, the configuration *first and foremost* produces a matrix of signs, linkages, and intimations. "To be" foregrounds the ontological question of being, while "to be well" suggests a state of being that is satisfactory. Moreover, "to be well to be before to be before" can be further parsed and reread. "To be well before," altering the function of "well" (from adjective to adverb), indicates a superlative ontological relation to "before" (suggesting a being that is very before, the most before); "to be well before to be," retaining that superlative relation, indicates a pre-ontological being that exceeds ontology's own boundaries; and "to be well before to be before," without effacing it, temporalizes that pre-ontological relation, expressing the very anarchic origin prior to all origins embodied by the passage's liquid form. While Stein practices the insistent techniques of the "continuous present," "beginning again and again," and "using everything," this passage not only points toward the soft spot antedating the

symbolic order; but engineers a perpetual transformation in an otherwise immutable world. Quite like the cut-up technique, its expression is neither formulaic nor impromptu; the contours of the paragraph are determined through the complications encountered by adding one word to another.

These transformations suggest rules of play. For example, the opening passage does not invent words or produce nonsense sounds; it restricts itself to words available in every English dictionary. Likewise, its repetitions and combinations are not absolutely unconstrained. “To,” “to be,” “be for,” and “before” occur with relative frequency and are combined in various ways — “to be before,” “before to be,” “to be for,” “be for,” “be for to,” “before to for,” and even (once) “to for” — but certain combinations never occur. Nowhere is written “be be,” “to to,” or “before before.” Such an exclusion suggests that the passage respects specific boundaries. There are no identities: no same coupled with same or exact mirror image. To insist a word, the composition must first contact other words. It cannot repeat “before before” with no term bridging the gap between “before,” but it can produce “to be for before.” What Rogers or DeKoven might mistake for disorder then, possesses organized contours. Further, in *Patriarchal Poetry*’s opening, that order suggests an obligatory relation to otherness, wherein no term stands by itself without proximity to a term that resembles it just enough to differ from it.

The poem organizes in response to its neighbor. “Rules,” rather than being imposed on the poem, are discovered and abandoned in the process of composition, that is, they are a relation to the other that calls the poem forward. Indeed, while “insistance” denotes repetition and urgency, “to insist” can also mean “to follow a course.” However, the following that insists is not an externally imposed obligation, committing the poem to fulfill predetermined actions — as is the case with the language of flowers — but an allurements that charms writing into the nomadic

trajectories of an anarchical language. For example, in the opening passage, words containing double Ls surface: “spell,” “tell,” “call,” “will,” “shall,” “well.” *Patriarchal Poetry*, with these words, insists a course. Once “spell” enters the program, the composition could abandon (as it does the words “let” and “held”) or be magnetized by it, and it chooses the latter. It could have insisted on the same trajectory after “well” (to “shell,” “fell,” “ball,” “Phillip”), but other obsessions seduced it. In this instance, the poem does not “follow”; it *flows*. It *effloresces*. The poem does not self-organize, as though there were a subject that the could act on command prior to the achievement of organization; it is organized by the very contingencies of the language composing it. In other words, *the order of the poem is intrinsic to its medium*. The subject of the poem may be patriarchal poetry, but the work is language operating according to rules extraneous to literature.

Affinity gives coherence to its terms. In the above example, rather than a common symbolic identity, words containing double Ls coalesce in accordance with a shared desire. The desire is fragile, volatile, dangerous, but it suffices for a moment in the poem to unite the words “spell,” “tell,” “will,” “shall,” and “well.” Alone, no term can claim intrinsic meaning, While terms do not follow grammatical, syntactic, and semantic rules, every partial, temporary identity emerges exclusively in relation to other terms that resemble it. Each term’s singularity and irreplaceability is discovered through the process of its association with and subordination to other terms. Examining Stein’s texts in general, Spahr argues that Stein’s writings “suggest an egalitarian theory of reading” that “emphasizes [. . .] that which makes community work: communication” (47). In the context of *Patriarchal Poetry*, this “communication” that “makes community work” would be the spontaneous, partial, and provisional alignments among these

“mistaken” parts of speech, prior to any conscious decision or act of will. In other words, rather than the individual subject, whether it is Stein’s ego, Stirner’s *einzig*, or Gold’s “extreme subjectivism of the contemporary bourgeois artist,” the poem’s form expresses *relations* — mistaken relations, spontaneous alliances, and contracts that endure only as long as they are advantageous to the related parties.

However, the anarchical movement of affinity and cooperation puts into doubt the possibility that *Patriarchal Poetry* “suggests an egalitarian theory of reading that is radical in its intent and form” and grants “the reading act as much authority as the authoring act.” In the poem, differential, compositional drift removes the conditions of such authority from circulation. If the order of the poem is intrinsic to its language, Gertrude Stein is “in” the work only to the degree that she is expelled from it. If the poem insists, if it follows a course through language and organizes according to language’s rules, then Stein belongs to the process of composition in the same way that she “belonged” to her early automatic writing experiments. In her own words, while she was writing, “Miss Stein found it sufficient distraction often to simply read what her arm wrote, but following three or four words behind her pencil . . .” (qtd. in Skinner 66). In other words, in *Patriarchal Poetry*, Stein does not write. The words appearing on the page record the course foreordained by the quicksilver routes networking throughout the language, and the pencil recording this adventure schleps Gertrude Stein behind it.

The same holds for the reader. Rather than allowing my autonomous self-government, the poem repels me. I listen, but there is no place for me in this labyrinth of antechambers. I ask questions, but I receive reply in a dead tongue — spoken by none. Within the work, I am weightless, sheer effervescence, always involuntarily rising toward the work’s surface. If I

participate in its composition, it is as a stranger. When Stein's pencil registers the words "spell . . . tell . . . call . . . will . . . shall . . . well," perhaps she and I read and ascribe meaning to them, but these choices are only aftereffects. The series' form is not conferred by that meaning, nor does the meaning that we ascribe to it during the composition process give it chase. I observe and describe the transformations of its form, but these descriptions only place it further out of my reach.

Contrary to Spahr's hypothesis, rather than the writer or the reader, *Patriarchal Poetry's* formal contours are decided by the language of language. This queer talk is neither the expression of a unique consciousness, nor an expression of consciousness as such, nor even an expression in the ordinary, lyrical sense. In the poem, *the voice that "speaks" is the neuter*. For Maurice Blanchot, the neuter characterizes the "narrative voice that [. . .] is the indifferent-difference that alters the personal voice" (467).

Let us say (on a whim) that it is spectral, ghost-like. Not that it comes from beyond the grave and not even because it might represent once and for all some essential absence, but because it always tends to absent itself in its bearer and to efface him as center, thus being neuter in the decisive sense that it cannot be central, does not create a center, does not speak from the center, but on the contrary, at the limit would prevent the work from having a center, withdrawing from it all special focus of interest, even that of afocality, and also not allowing it to exist as a completed whole, once and forever accomplished. (467-8)

For *Patriarchal Poetry*, the neuter is the whirring of aleatory processes. It is not the words themselves, nor the composite patterns of arrangement and rearrangement resultant from their

attractions; it is the silent, alien drone of the letters clicking as they come together and drift apart. What Meredith Yearsley compares to “the repeated squeakings and jerkings of a piece of machinery” (n.pag.) is not a literary effect, technically produced by Stein or me during the “authoring” or “reading act,” nor is it even the English language, reducible to mimesis. It is the murmurs of language talking about itself amidst itself. Indeed, it is the sayings “YALEL AT MELEI” and “YATEL TAJLOK ‘EL COONTIC” uttered by words speaking the truth and listening to words. Language’s material conditions: strokes, cymophanous and emaciated curvatures of letters, fortuitous resemblances, intonations, histories: one word rubbing against another and enkindling with its friction other words that burn them up.

If “authority” exists in the poem, it belongs to the neuter itself. It is not as though Stein or I step aside and “let” *Patriarchal Poetry* “be,” a strategy that would only authenticate our right to power and duplicate hierarchical order. Quite the contrary, what composes the poem are the very material conditions that permit the poem to freely compose. The work does not merely foreground “communication”; *it is communicating*. In the poem, what Spahr calls “the anarchic democracy of the works themselves” is not the opportunity for a reader to discover her own power to compose; it is an emergent property of the work itself, conditioned by the paralysis of both the reader’s and the writer’s equally illegitimate claims to authority.

For Stein, this is writing’s normative effect: composition composes composition. Words communicate with one another, even if comprehension recoils from their interminable chatter. What is “anarchic” about *Patriarchal Poetry* is that its false starts and dead ends are not erased from the text. Perhaps, for this reason, Stein later remarks: “Patriarchal Poetry makes mistakes” (280). While the statement openly declares the critique intimated by the poem’s parodic gestures,

indicating that logocentric writing does not deserve its claims to rationality and authority, it also offers a metapoetic commentary on insistence. For *Patriarchal Poetry*, it indicates that the poem is the traces of the arrangements and rearrangements of words. Its seams are on the outside.

Gravest of *Patriarchal Poetry*'s mistakes is that it gives place to its enemy. While critics note that the "to be" in the poem's opening alludes to both God's original Word and Hamlet's soliloquy,⁸ suggesting its implication in the logocentric tradition, *Patriarchal Poetry* can also be heard *counting* in this passage, repeating the numbers two ("to") and four ("for," "before"), thereby registering patriarchal poetry's vapid mathematical logic in the anarchic non-originary origin that should antedate patriarchal poetry's ontology. (Indeed, almost immediately after this passage, logocentric mathematics and an-archy are conjoined in the formulation of the statement "there never was a mistake in addition" [254], though the poem will ultimately overturn that statement's veracity.) Here, at the beginning before the beginning, this faintest whisper of patriarchal poetry, rustling in the folds of other whispers, represents the aporia of *Patriarchal Poetry*'s anarchic project: wherever it is, its enemy has been there in advance, prior to its arrival. Those susurrations are the burn forever reminding that the poem is responsible for patriarchy's abolition, and must give its own nomic rules in the place of that legal institution.

No — gravest of *Patriarchal Poetry*'s mistakes is that even this error is put into doubt. While twos and fours can be heard in its opening, the combinations and recombinations of "be," "for" and "to" are perhaps laboring in order to highlight that the opening is *before two*, before substitution and the double — a statement that it does achieve, albeit only obliquely, in the composite "before to" and "be for to." While "to" and "for," heard in isolation, do suggest that patriarchal poetry is present from the beginning, "before to" suggests that those numbers do not

belong to patriarchal calculation, but designate a neutral integer that is the silent space, invisible, demarcated after the number “zero” has been written.

This anarchic gesture makes *Patriarchal Poetry* “interesting.” Containing that from which the poem would distinguish itself before it has had the opportunity to commence the work of distinguishing, but also containing that which puts that claim to containment into doubt, the poem neutralizes all identity in a manner that keeps it in perpetual motion, including the identity that would classify it in terms of difference. It is “interesting” for this reason: at every point that *Patriarchal Poetry* would be consolidated, folded upon itself, it disperses. That interest, that ungovernability, even by itself, makes *Patriarchal Poetry* anarchic to the core. Recalling Tzara’s revolutionary outcry, it is a system whose impossible principle is to abolish every system.

V. ANARCHA-FEMINISM

Out of this anarchy emerges a massive, echolalic series of permutations that modulate the imperative phrase “let her” by attaching “be,” “try,” and “shy” in different combinations. Ultimately, these assemblages articulate a feminist position through shifting, competing inflections and meanings. For example:

Let her try.

Let her be.

Let her be shy.

Let her be.

Let her be let her be let her let her try.

Let her try to be let her try to be let her be shy let her try to be let her try to be

let her be let her be let her try.

Let her by shy. (268)

These phrases bite one another; they gnash and gnaw, they copy⁷¹. While such anaphora may dramatize a dispute between woman and patriarchal culture⁷², they also stage distinguishing contentions between liberal and radical feminist positions. Prioritizing reformist measures characteristic of liberal feminism, “let her try” and “let her be” can be paraphrased “give woman an opportunity” and “give her a chance to exist.” While suffragist strategy would have been fresh in Stein’s historical memory, such an appeal to state power for the rehabilitation of rights can be located even in the thought of radical feminist Judith Butler, who deploys gender performatives “to make use of a category that can be called into question” in the context of liberal democratic legislation (19). Alternately, paraphrased “step aside” and “leave her alone” respectively, the phrases urge an anarchy-feminist departure from the dominant order, applying to woman de Cleyre’s charge to “draw back respectfully from the Self-gate” of the neighbor.

Critics prefer the liberal paraphrase. Connecting the passage to a feminist contestation of patriarchal imperialism, Ford infers that in order “‘to be’ [woman] must be given an opportunity to try” (112-3). Furthermore, the anaphoric imperative (“let”) “demands a place for [woman] in literature through an overwhelming display of verbal excess” (111). Chessman, asserting that the poem devises “a discourse more democratically inclusive of the feminine,” states that “the birth of [an alternative language and literary form, allied to the feminine] is announced (and prayed for) more openly” in this passage (131;130). Both of these interpretations display reformist tendencies. They tacitly recognize that social, political, and cultural organizations deprive women rights guaranteed to men — the freedom to act (“try”) and to claim their own existence

(“be”) — and endorse the restoration of those rights. Intending a message of empowerment, Chessman’s and Ford’s language endorses Charles W. Mills’ liberal goals for equally socially-recognized personhood. It suggests that *Patriarchal Poetry* appeals to patriarchal powers to grant women greater agency and optimistically hopes for a state organization, democratic and egalitarian, where men and women coexist, without sexism, misogyny, or institutionalized forms of gender discrimination.

But these liberal aspirations misrepresent the poem’s attitude toward state power. Earlier in the poem, right before correlating flowers and following, Stein associates the ideas of *permission* and *patriarchy* through two additional permutations: “allow” and “allowance” (256). While the latter refers to the controlled salary paid to woman by the father or husband, the former implies a freedom with boundaries determined by law. Whereas the verb “to follow” connotes obedience and conformity, “to allow” suggests that an individual’s choices depend on another’s consent. In the context of the permutations above, these associations suggest that woman may only undertake certain endeavors (“try”), even possess an identity and ontological determination (“be”), to the degree that the figure of the father gives her permission (“lets” her). For *Patriarchal Poetry*, the implication is that entreating patriarchal (state) power, praying to it for rehabilitation, or demanding recognition and rights, even when these petitions succeed, still maintains the hierarchical relation that subordinates woman, determining her as a follower whose agency inheres in higher powers at the level of gender.

Once squared with the troubling phrase “to be shy,” the cut-up form of “let her be” and “let her try” critiques this triangulation of representation, obedience, and permission. For Ford, this phrase suggests that the poem “has internalized a dismissive view of woman” (113). In other

words, while Stein seems to endorse a historically progressive agenda that acknowledges the rights of women to freely act and be, Ford's claim indicates that Stein's feminism takes a conservative turn here that encourages women's obsequious behavior by implying that she should be meek, reserved, and timorous. Yet, while this phrase does express "dismissive" patriarchal expectations about feminine comportment, its placement in the imperative form ("let her be shy") also calls attention to the toxicity of that form and its association with liberal feminisms. In other words, "let her be shy" need not be understood as an expression that indicts *Patriarchal Poetry*; instead, it accuses of *the form* of the command, appeal, or prayer. Devised as entreaties to patriarchal power, "let her be" and "let her try" are *as dismissive as* "to be shy" *due to the fact that all three reinforce gender hierarchies*. What "Patriarchal Poetry" accomplishes in this theme-and-variation, then, exceeds prayers or demands. Recalling its caricatures of patriarchal poetry, it parodies liberal feminist strategy in order to suggest that such appeals are petitions to powers that injure women. Feminist rhetoric that requests recognition, inclusion, or rights for women from patriarchal (state) powers that have deprived them, even when demanding "give woman an opportunity" and "give her a chance to exist," insidiously reifies inequalities in power and leaves patriarchal forms intact, removing from political discourse the possibility that women could "be" and "try" unauthorized and unassisted by higher powers, for the neighbor.

This critique of liberal feminism's complicity with state power is a classic anarcho-feminist critique. In an 1893 address, de Cleyre argues that "redress of wrongs will not come by petitioning the 'powers that be'" (152). For her, recalling Bakunin's critique of Rousseau's social contract, to fight for and accept one's constitutional rights in the United States is to accede to freedom and equality on the state's terms. Receiving freedoms granted by the state surrenders

acquired freedoms to the regulation of extrinsic authorities (*Michael Bakunin* 137-8). Extending this critique to feminism, Goldman criticizes the first-wave feminist movement for only attaining “external emancipation” for women. Invoking domesticated plant imagery and practically commenting on Stein’s theme-and-variation, she indicates that formal freedom sanctioned by the state relocates the hierarchies that repress and alienate woman: “Merely external emancipation has made the modern woman an artificial being, who reminds one of the products of French arboriculture with its arabesque trees and shrubs, pyramids, wheels, and wreathes; anything, except the forms that would be reached by the expression of her own inner qualities” (220). In other words, for Goldman, “the movement for woman’s rights has broken many old fetters, but it has also forged new ones” (225). Rather than liberation, feminism that petitions the state to redress wrongs produces “the necessity of [woman] emancipating herself from emancipation” (221).

Patriarchal Poetry responds to this impasse. The theme-and-variation, in a coda, concludes with a withering negation: “Never to let her to be what he said. Never to let her to be let her to be let her to be let her what he said” (269). If “let her to be what he said” implies woman’s negation under the forms of both compliance and dissent, “never” doubles that negation. While “let her be” expresses a liberal refusal of patriarchal power that relocates it, the “never” formulates a refusal of that refusal, precipitating both phallogocentric ontology’s and the discourse of permission’s implosion. Taking woman’s place in both male discourse and liberal feminism into its teeth, patriarchal language cannibalizes itself *with the very language of liberal feminist adjurations*. Patriarchal poetry crumbles, but not simply because *Patriarchal Poetry* would reject it; it crumbles because the poem also rejects the conditions of that rejection.

Heard among this “destructive, negative work,” the accents on these verb phrases shift and suggest that they are less commands than warnings, notifications, or excited exclamations: “go away” and “step aside,” but also *Get Out of the Way!* and *Clear Out! Imploding Patriarchy*. In Donna Haraway’s words, such an inflection recodes “communication and intelligence to subvert command and control” (175). It *repurposes* the imperative form, altering the passage’s transmission of power, in order to point to a revolutionary situation. In the poem, this situation would not only be patriarchy’s implosion; it would be a belated event that acknowledges the absence of the subject. There, where patriarchy’s claims to authority cease to have legitimacy, they cannot be an individual’s utterances; they are disembodied, indirect expressions of patriarchy’s unhinging ligatures, disintegrating façade, and exposure.

Permuted according to anarchy’s processual and aleatory nomic rules, “let her be” and “let her try” are not commands, as if they would be uttered to an authority by a subject whose resistance redoubles his power; they are acephalous, attached to no subject. The *passivity* of the imperative verb phrase, the *passive voice*, signifies the voice of the neuter anterior to the subject. Rather than ethical imperatives, these phrases suggest assignations. The assignations, prior to all responsibility, cannot come from the place of the subject, and thus cannot form ethical imperatives that the subject could consent to or refuse. If the command comes to constitute an order, it is not an order from the subject, the sovereign or master; it is an *emergent order*, spontaneously organizing out of the play of affect and affinity mobilized by Stein’s theme-and-variation, associated with no authority, higher power, or predetermined set of rules, except for the nomic rules of the neuter.

That passivity, that absolute immobilization, is the repulsion that throws the subject to the

side, away from its neighbor. Within the context of anarchy, then, “let her be” and “let her try” are not simply actions unperformable for a subject; they are, as responsibilities prior to all responsibility, actions that are performed involuntarily, regardless of volition, before the formation of the subject. They are the ethical conditions of anarchist freedom.

In Chapter 1, I distinguished such conditions from liberalism’s notions of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Placing the other before the subject, anarchist freedom removes from liberal democratic practice the place to which rights could be conferred and protected by the state. Here, I would also distinguish such conditions from Tzara’s “Idon’tgiveadamnism”: “the state of life in which each person keeps his own conditions, although knowing how to respect other individuals.” For *Patriarchal Poetry*, this avant-garde position remains too entangled with the primacy of the subject to accommodate the extreme neutrality of “let her be” and “let her try.” Repulsive, the subject that would “let her be” and “let her try” in order to first and foremost administer his own affairs — secondarily out of respect for the neighbor — is masticated in Stein’s anarchic permutations; it is revealed, under the conditions of the passive imperative, to be neither capable of respect, since it subordinates the neighbor to itself, nor in possession of its own conditions, since its conditions come from the other. Tzara’s “anarchist” individualism, in the context of *Patriarchal Poetry*’s radical freedom, is pushed away; it is drawn back, launched forward, and somersaulted headlong into an anarchic spontaneity and automatism freer than the avant-garde ever dreamed.

Hence, Gertrude Stein’s *Patriarchal Poetry* testifies against David Weir’s hypothesis that anarcho-individualism animates high modernism. (In fact, references to Stein are altogether absent from *Anarchy and Culture*, a lacuna that does not only demonstrate Weir’s profoundly

abridged view of modernism but also indicates that his central claim finds validation through severe myopia.) Far from Stirner's or Tucker's arguments for the sovereign individual's capacity to define the world for himself and to govern his own affairs, Stein's poem gives expression to the passivity of the neuter, which maintains the interminable decentralization of the subject. This is not to say that *Patriarchal Poetry* is not animated by anarchist principles. It means that the principles organizing Stein's nomic work belong to the anarchist pedigree that places the neighbor before the subject. More than subscribing to that lineage, though, the poem's effort to construct conditions that give place to the voice of the neuter and maintain the subject's decentralization crosses the threshold before which Bakunin, Kropotkin, and Call wavered. Passively composed and composed by the passive, it expresses anarchy in a language that does not fall back into the metaphysics of the subject.

Moreover, *Patriarchal Poetry* contextualizes these ethical conditions in anarchist feminism. If "let her be" and "let her try" are paraphrased "step aside" and "go away," they do not only affirm de Cleyre's notion of freedom ("to draw back from the Self-gate"); they suggest that *anarchist freedom is first and foremost for "her," the figure of woman, the sister and the daughter*. This is neither to say that anarchy is exclusively for women, nor that anarchism is essentially invested in a critique of gender and patriarchy. Instead, it means that the anarchist critique of patriarchy is the euporia through which other critiques of hierarchy are accessed. Peggy Kornegger, for example, points to such a serialization when she states: "When we say that we are fighting patriarchy, it isn't always clear to all of us that that means fighting all hierarchy, all leadership, all government, and every idea of authority itself" (28). Rolando Perez, in *On An(archy) and Schizoanalysis*, adds: "Implicit in the freedom of woman is the freedom of

humanity — without it, the possibility of a non-fascist or an(archical) way of life is nil” (115). In other words, if anarchism is a political philosophy that gives place to the other, then its responsibility is first and foremost to gender subjects seldom remembered in the history of radical struggle. Since the critique of patriarchy cannot be extricated from the critique of all hierarchy, the poem suggests that every anarchist is an anarcha-feminist.

VI. VULVAMORPHIA⁷³

In *Patriarchal Poetry*, the anarcha-feminist gender subject emerges from the same anarchy. Without reference to the phallus, except through the emasculating mockery of counting (one, two, three), Stein’s poem incorporates erotic corporal female imagery into her prose poem, which Ford describes as a “wholly female discourse” (113).

Near near near nearly pink near nearly pink nearly near near nearly pink. Wet
inside and pink outside. Pink outside and wet inside wet inside and pink outside
latterly nearly near near pink near near nearly three three pink two gentle one
strong three pink all medium medium as medium as medium sized as sized. One
as one not mistaken but interrupted. One regularly better adapted if readily readily
today. (*Patriarchal* 269-70)

The image shocks; it titillates. Spontaneous, starkly relieved against the poem’s flat, nonreferential abstraction, visually and tactually concupiscent imagery bubbles up from the anarchic, nomic play of signifiers. “Pink,” evoking the female sex organ, is reinforced and intensified by “wet,” suggesting sexual excitement. Other critics report similar impressions.⁷⁴

The image recalls Irigaray’s description of the female genitalia as multiple, contiguous, and self-

embracing: “[Woman’s] genitals are formed of two lips in continuous contact. Thus, within herself, she is already two — but not divisible into one(s) — that caress each other” (24).

Counter to phallogomorphism, the insistence of the composition — the supple, tender, layered complexity of every word, every structure — subtly hints at a vulva’s anatomical forms.

Yet, in a composition that redeploys patriarchal poetry’s phallogocentric strategies, Stein’s “vulvamorph” also shocks because it appears exactly in the place that would exclude, subordinate, and dissemble the female body. Here, *Patriarchal Poetry* is further distinguished from patriarchal poetry. Surpassing irony, the vulvamorphic imagery gives place to a literary practice that compromises patriarchal claims to absolute authority and privilege. Out of the neuter, without warning, and contiguous to a space where woman would be silenced, a feminine voice emerges — and when it comes, it appears to be coming in the absence of any phallus that could take responsibility for the arousal.

Insistence calls attention to the fact that the image is fundamentally a composition. Signifiers — many referring to the writing and reading process — commingle in loose, largely unrecognizable patterns. “Readily” orthographically dissimulates the verb *to read* and “near” the word *ear*, while “sized” aurally dissembles *eyes*. “Pink” — perhaps the poem’s most vibrant word — conceals the word *pen* (through the homophonous *pin*) and *ink*. Likewise, “medium” hints at *paper*, the milieu of writing and reading. Accentuating the embodied experience of the writing and reading process, these words-within-words suggest not only a one-for-the-other relation, but an intimate contact with the materiality of language. “Signs is signs,” as Jim says⁷⁵; they are composed by signs that they enclose and that enclose them. As elsewhere in the poem, composition composes composition; the differential movement of writing succumbs to the

neuter's nomic play. Here, however, that play does not only give expression to anarchy. Simultaneously calling attention to composition and the female body, these metatextual signs compose a female body and give a female body to composition.

The poem's vulval imagery breaks "the rigid form of the noun." Despite its bold evocations, "wet inside and pink outside" does not *name* the female sex organ. Eliciting the visual image of the female genitalia and its tactility in a sexually aroused state, it teases with this allusion. It is "nearly pink" — an adverb whose "mistakability" acknowledges that female sex organs vary in color, and thereby distances the poem's image from pornographic idealizations, but also places the image in a zone of virtuality, where the vulva is only an approximation and could be "something else." Even if critics are convinced that Stein in describing female genitalia, that conviction must remain a tantalizing possibility and every responsible interpretation of the passage must preserve its virtuality. Rather than reducing the female body to synecdoche — a move that would relocate *Patriarchal Poetry* in patriarchal poetry — the female body is left permanently in question. The passage celebrates female sexuality without letting it be reduced to the sexual organ. It shows a female body, but since it does not confirm this exhibition, the "broken" noun shows that nothing is known about that feminine form.

If that broken noun represents the incarnation of an "I," the vulvamorph suggests that the "I" has no identity proper to itself; it is irreducibly queer.⁷⁶ "One as one not mistaken but interrupted" suggests that the "one," the oneself, the metaphysical humanist subject is incommensurable with itself. It is not "mistaken," not flawed or at fault for such queerness; it is "interrupted," disturbed from within by a stranger whose intrusion doubles the "I" prior to any singularity. (In this sense, to be "interrupted" is to be "mistaken" in the way that verbs, adverbs,

and prepositions are, that is, to be connected to the outside, the other, rather than to oneself, the same.) There is, between me and my identity, always an inadequation. I never quite resemble myself. Right before defining the masterpiece in contrast to governments, Stein affirms this point:

It is very interesting to have it be inside one that never as you know yourself you know yourself without looking and feeling and looking and feeling make it be that you are some one you have seen. If you have seen any one you know them as you see them whether it is yourself or any other one and so the identity consists in recognition and in recognizing you lose identity because after all nobody looks as they look like, they do not look like that we all know that of ourselves and of any one. (“What are Master-pieces” 153)

For *Patriarchal Poetry*'s vulval imagery, Stein's claim does not only suggest that the “broken” noun places ignorance about female sexuality on display; it implies that such ignorance is proper to every act of recognition and representation.⁷⁷ It indicates that gender, once “recognized,” loses its identity in that repetition. This is the exasperating drama that the poem stages. Once “woman” is *given*, that representation implies a doubling that “interrupts” her identity and renders her first representation redundant, so that the very sign that gives “woman” takes her away.

I am tempted to say that this “interruption” is the cut. While not a physical incision produced by a blade, it penetrates into the noun “woman” with sufficient force to double it, exposing its substitution and ipseity. If the vulvamorph does represent a “wholly female discourse,” it is the incorporation of this cut into the writing of the body that makes “what women say truer than what men say” (“What are Master-pieces” 151). In this *écriture féminine*,

the cut-up effects register that every word is repeated: every utterance by a subject echoes what the other has already said. While this doubling could refer to the metaphoricity of patriarchal language — its tendency toward redundancy and inertia — it also suggests a “feminine” susceptibility to the neuter that speaks from the hither side of every rhetorical act, so that every feminine identification confronts her with its murmurs.

Embodied, the woman’s ipseity is the other. In the vulvamorphoic passage, the repetition of the word “near” (“near near near”) implies the other’s proximity; the epizeuxis expresses not only the intensity of this proximity, but its extreme, pleonastic intimacy. (Though *Lord of the Flies* would not be written for more than a quarter of a century, it is hard not hear the satanic voice of the severed pig’s head in these repetitions: “Fancy thinking the beast was something you could hunt or kill! . . . You knew, didn’t you? I’m part of you? Close, close, close. I’m the reason why it’s a no go? Why things are what they are?”) “Near near near,” the other is not touching the surface of the vulvamorph’s skin, but *in her skin*, making it tight, uneasy, and disturbing the subject from its most intimate interior. For Irigaray, to be “two lips in continuous contact” is to exist in the interval of this interruption — cut to the quick, but by this separation made whole. In other words, proximity, this extimacy, incarnates the female body. For the vulvamorph, this means that the female body is not only queer; it exists in a kind of *no-man’s land*,⁷⁸ free from the patriarchal logic of identity and equivalence.

The noun that this vulvamorphoic passage breaks is “woman.” While patriarchal discourse assigns values to woman that validate her exclusion and domination, *Patriarchal Poetry* proposes that the word itself — rooted in the “occupying,” patriarchal strategies of identity and equivalence — carries the same assumption. As Stein’s permutational theme-and-variation

suggests, not only does patriarchy harm women under the sign of “woman”; that sign, mobilized by liberal feminist practices, betrays the women who would seek its protection. If “let her be” and “let her try” represent anarchic ethical imperatives from the place of the neuter, then Stein’s destruction of the noun “woman” is an anarcha-feminist gesture par excellence. Rather than naming or renaming woman, *Patriarchal Poetry* achieves what it implicitly urges women to do: it removes the signs misrepresenting and subordinating her, and to understand her not as a noun but as composition, as writing, and as writing that embodies the very movement of difference. For the vulvamorph, this is an acephalous writing that “names without naming.” Without reference to man, it defines woman non-dialectically, and the definition is the euphoria that is the very interrogation of every definition.

Breaking the form of the noun “woman,” the vulvamorph represents the anarcha-feminist gender subject. While patriarchal language, including the language of liberal feminism, reduces women to metaphor to the degree that the sign “woman” misrepresents them, *Patriarchal Poetry*’s vulval imagery proposes “one regularly better adapted.” Of course, this “one” is “better adapted” because the vulvamorph does not name women with an identity that would unify one woman with another, but names without naming, welcoming the interruption of the other that shatters the subject. But the vulvamorph is also “better adapted” because it adapts; it is an adaptation. According to Stein’s definition, the vulvamorph is “genius.” It emerges from the anarchic, insistent play of signifiers. In other words, the paths that it orients and insists are manifested by its listening and talking to the neuter. Perhaps the passage’s counting suggests more than an emasculating mockery of phallogocentricity; perhaps it registers the emergence of an otherwise than being, formed from the collaborative and cooperative antagonism of

Patriarchal Poetry and patriarchal poetry. That its calculations are reversed here, beginning with three and then counting backward to one, implies not only a mathematics that does not originate with one; the weight that it gives to the number “three” suggests that such collaborative and cooperative antagonism is the third mind.

Stein’s vulvamorph, as this third, cannot be floriographic. While the passage’s intimate evocation of the female genitalia seems to place *Patriarchal Poetry*’s vulval imagery in the tradition of Georgia O’Keefe’s extreme close-up paintings of flowers, it in fact marks a radical break with schools of representation. For the poem, if floriography produces a female gender subject, the subject invites comparisons to “French arboriculture”: plants restricted, manipulated, and embellished to a point of betrayal that constructs them counter to their true conditions. The vulvamorph is spontaneously generated by the aleatory and processual effects of Stein’s “cut-up” arrangements. While I have been obliged to name it, these arrangements do not fix it in a grammatical form that would solidify its identity for symbolic and metaphorical substitutions. Freed from the noun, these floriated layers embody the female body *before they imagine it*. The vulvamorph pulsates. It is not meaning — representation, referentiality, signification, or metaphor — but intensity, vibration, efflorescence. White ink⁷⁹: evaginations, invaginations, migrant letters mobilizing from one place to another.

The neuter speaks in every gender identification. This is not to say that anarchist gender is neuter, nor that every possible spectrum identification is straightaway neutralized. Instead, I mean that, for anarchism, every gender contains that which neutralizes and puts its identity *qua identity* into question. While patriarchal gender identity effectively performs the same operation by reducing woman to the sign of a sign, that is, to metaphoricity, anarchist gender does no

produce a ruse in the place of gender that dissembles the interminable murmur of the neuter. For patriarchal gender, that ruse is necessary in order to retain the impression that gender is fixed, permanent, and presupposed, reducible to two from one. For anarchism, that dissemblance is unnecessary, since anarchism both acknowledges the spectrum of gender identification and accommodates the fluidity within that fluidity, that is, the possibility of shifting identifications across that spectrum.

According to this passage, “woman” is not only that which is made; she is emergent. Thanks to insistence, never the same way twice, the image of the female body automatically materializes through language’s contingent coalitions engineering a partially, sensuously recognizable pattern through its own “destructive, negative work.” To be a woman is not only to be “interrupted,” incommensurable with oneself, but to give place to the neuter that makes that being impossible.

For the poem, woman is not a flower. She is a night-glory.

VII. PAREIDOLIA: ANTIGONE

If a face emerges from *Patriarchal Poetry*’s efflorescence, I would like to propose that it belongs to the figure of Antigone. According to Mitchell Verter, Antigone is not only a female character who disobeys the law and sacrifices her own life in order to bury her brother; she is also the first anarchist. In Aeschylus’ play *Seven Against Thebes*, Antigone states that she “is not ashamed to act in anarchist opposition to the rulers of the city” (qtd. in Verter 68). (Further, in Sophocles’ Theban play, Creon — whose name means “ruler” in Greek — tells Antigone that “there is no evil worse than anarchy” when he condemns her for fulfilling her obligation to her

brother [ibid.].) Verter notes that even her name, “anti-gone,” *against birth*, reiterates the challenge to origins and first principles implied by an-archy (69-70).⁸⁰ For him, Antigone’s anarchism alludes to Levinasian ethics. Refusing to leave her brother’s body for carrion, as Theban law requires for traitors, her “evil” consists in the responsibility she takes for her brother’s treachery: “she refuses to recognize the distinction between friend and enemy, anarchically subverting the foundation of the polis” (70). In the context of *Patriarchal Poetry*, her sacrifice suggests the flexibility of gender. While she had put herself in the place the father, leading the blind patriarch to Colonus, Antigone then makes the ultimate sacrifice and takes the place of her brother, whose citizenship is unrecognized by the sovereign.

As an anarchy-feminist figure, Antigone suggests not simply that gender is a performative construction; it emerges in response to the assignation of the (b)other. Within *Patriarchal Poetry*, that assignation comes from the neuter. It is the interruption, the incommensurability of itself with oneself, that both justifies and propels the repetitions organizing the poem. For Judith Butler, such iteration is at the heart of gender performativity: “[If] the ‘I’ is the site of repetition, that is, if the ‘I’ only achieves a semblance of identity through a certain repetition of itself, then the ‘I’ is always displaced by the very repetition that sustains it” (18). She adds: “The disruption of the Other at the heart of the self is the very condition of the self’s possibility” (27). (Despite tooling her post-feminist theory to complement the politics of identity and recognition, Butler calls herself a “provisional anarchist” [Heckert 93].) For *Patriarchal Poetry*’s anarchy-feminism, the effects of repetition imply not simply that the neuter murmurs in every gender identification, but that (as the CrimethInc. Collective states) “there is no male. There is no female.” Instead, as the character of Antigone suggests, there is only substitution, one-for-the-other, so that gender

becomes not only interminable permutation but responsibility for the enemy, the brother and the father.

Anarcha-feminism takes up similar questions about gender. For example, Rita Katrina-Andrews argues for “a post-feminist anarchy” that implicitly aims to break the noun “woman.” Criticizing politically engaged feminisms for dissimulating the singularity of gender identification, she writes: “When feminists proclaimed ‘the personal is the political’ they conveniently ignored the fact that politics require *de-personalization*: de-uniqueing and de-individualizing, massified roles with near verbatim scripts. I insist, the personal can only be *anti-political* — ungoverned and ungovernable unique humans whose liberation can have no interceptors, interpreters, or redirectors” (2). For her, gender is only an ideology. Her anarchist goal is to create a classless, raceless, and genderless society where individuals are not determined by political categories but are encountered in terms of their *Eigenheit*. “There is no womanhood to exalt, no manhood to destroy,” she writes. “If *anyone* treats you in a way that you don’t want — deal with *them as individuals*” (8). Implicit in Katrina-Andrews’s “post-feminist anarchy,” then, is the idea of a neuter — an un-gendered locus that engenders various gender forms. For her, “respect for the individual” requires an acknowledgement of this anarchic space anterior to the formation of the subject, that is, prior to socially recognized personhood.

However, *Patriarchal Poetry* has proven more radical than “post-feminist anarchy.” While Katrina-Andrews isolates the social constructedness of gender, she does not question the *place* of the gender subject.⁸¹ For her, before ideology and identity politics, there is a being, ego, or *einzig* that would be free in the absence of “spooks.” Like Mix and Spahr, she reproduces liberal-humanist assumptions about the primacy of the subject and its intrinsic nature. In

contrast, *Patriarchal Poetry* suggests that *einzig* comprises another metaphor. In the poem, not only is there no Eden, original plentitude, or innocence; there is no individual or state of freedom. There is only anarchy: an efflorescence of signs, technologies, affects, trajectories, and intensities of which freedom and the individual are effects. For the poem, Katrina-Andrews's criticism of feminism's misrepresentation of women is justified, but she neglects anarchy's extreme passivity. Representing the *primacy* of being, she massifies gender subjects and limits them to being *eigentum*. If *Patriarchal Poetry* is a "post-feminist anarchy," it demystifies the ipse and liberty, and it proposes to anarchy the possibility that the individual and freedom will not be revealed when every hierarchy, inequality, and domination has been abolished. In the poem, *the individual and freedom do not exist subtract for the other, and anarchy is fundamentally a "neutral" style of constructing them.*

Approaching this anarchic stylization implicit to *Patriarchal Poetry*, Lena Eckert's postanarchist examination of Beatriz Preciado's *contrasexual manifesto* and Donna Haraway's "A Cyborg Manifesto" locates the subject in a place where gender, sex, and sexuality are constantly being constructed by discursive regimes. She expresses the *anarchist* possibility with the phrase "anarchise perself!" (87). For Eckert, the pronoun "per" encompass every queer and gender subjectification; it is Antigone, whose formation at the site of substitution renders her for-the-other before she is "male" or "female." "Anarchise perself!" refers to the construction of the anarchist (gender) subject, that is, "the contra-productivity of the genealogical *cyborg* who can rearrange per own embodiment, desires, and practices in resisting moments" (86). In other words, effectively glossing *Patriarchal Poetry*'s vulvamorphia, Eckert's phrase refers to a body whose organization and value are not prescribed but are performatively produced through

technological prostheses that circumnavigate the naturalizing and hierarchical discourses of anatomical organization. For Eckert, this body is “becoming-resisting” (73; 87). Rather than “human,” it is flux capable of organizing otherwise than patriarchy, heteronormativity, phallogentrism, and logocentrism, and open the possibility of “concretis[ing] ourselves as non-hierarchically organized (internally as well as externally” (ibid.).

While Eckert’s “anarchise perself!” builds on Lewis Call’s command to “become who you are, create yourself as a masterpiece,” it does not reinforce the metaphysical subject. Like *Patriarchal Poetry*’s vulvamorph, which emerges from nomic combinations of “lively” parts of speech, Eckert’s cyborgian gender subject (“per”) is produced by arrangements and rearrangements of prosthetic and technological organs on the body; the subject does not exist qua subject prior to this combination. Thus, “anarchise perself!” cannot be paraphrased “become who you are,” since the ontological identity would be the effect of the action’s fulfillment. While Call’s language falls short here, Eckert’s formulations effectively accommodate “the anarchy of the subject,” that is, the subject that is *anti-gone*, “against birth.” (Eckert even characterizes the cyborg, qua genealogical, as that which “takes into account the questions which it produces” [86].) Thus, even though “anarchise perself!” is not an imperative that registers the passive voice, it nevertheless captures the passivity that inflects the anarcha-feminist obligations “let her be” and “let her try.” In other words, unlike Call’s “make yourself as a masterpiece,” Eckert’s imperative is not an action performed by a subject; it is a performative always already enacted wherever the subject takes place.

The difference between Eckert’s anarchic gender subject and *Patriarchal Poetry*’s vulvamorph is that Eckert’s emphasis on “becoming-resisting” limits the subject to a reaction

against patriarchy and other forms of domination. For her, contrasexual and cyborgian practices are tactics for “reclaiming the body as a non-hierarchical structure”; they hold the promise of “creating spaces within a discourse from which counter-discourses can emerge” (88; 78). The neuter in *Patriarchal Poetry*, however, suggests a conversation older than discourses and counter-discourses. Rather than a counter to patriarchal poetry, *Patriarchal Poetry* would be that which patriarchal poetry resists. It is not intrigued by the possibility of “building a new world in the shell of the old,” as though its cut-up effects could carve out a temporary autonomous zone within patriarchal language, where women might not be constructed as subordinate to men. Instead, it contains patriarchal poetry without dominating it or exercising hegemony; it is the “shell” itself, not the prefiguration of anarchy to come. Patriarchal poetry appears in *Patriarchal Poetry*, but the latter shows that the former’s appearance is only an infinitesimal emission — not beautiful, but tedious and dreary — amid other heaving flowerings and exfoliations. Counter to Eckert’s contrasexual practices, as Stein’s theme-and-variation and vulvamorph show, anarcha-feminist alternatives do not take place within that structure, but in its proximity, at its side.

For *Patriarchal Poetry*’s portrayal of gender, this difference implies that the anarchist gender subject is not defined by its resistance to patriarchy (or other hierarchical organizations, practices, and forms), but by its relation to the neuter that it is listening to and talking with. If Antigone is the model, “anarchise perself!” means to become a masterpiece in Stein’s sense: to *be made into* a subject by the anarchy activated through the call of the other. But the meaningful difference between Stein and Eckert is that Antigone, insofar as she represents the effect of this imperative practice, takes the place of the adversary. She sacrifices her life for the father; she gives her death to the brother. She is an “anenome” — one of the flowers that Stein refers to in

the poem, which would designate the gender subject without effacing the trace of “enemy.”

Patriarchal Poetry sustains its “inner fascist.” Rather than “killing” patriarchal poetry, the poem’s substitution opens alternative vistas to it. In the poem, patriarchy is a risk; “close, close, close,” it speaks within *Patriarchal Poetry* and might make it a monster. But the poem that has both named and borrowed the name of patriarchal poetry indicates that the outside surrounding that aberration is infinite, and the infinite alternative forms that threaten to throng its borders incessantly check its development. For this reason, the poem manifests Antigone’s face. It is not simply that the poem’s anarchy is “against birth.” Put in the place of the father, the poem leads him from place to place, but the father is sightless and broken by his own inexorable turpitude. In making its life a sacrifice that gives place to the other, the poem puts the brother in the ground.

If *Patriarchal Poetry* is a masterpiece, it is not simply because it draws a circle around patriarchal poetry with neither center nor circumference, but because it is installed *in* patriarchal poetry. While the poem is “interesting” because it antedates and contains that aberrant institution, its stutters, echoes, and false starts simultaneously give expression to the other in it, that is, give place to the neuter that is patriarchal poetry’s intimate exterior, outside and inside, doubling it from within. In these terms, Antigone’s sacrifice figures forth the neuter’s passivity; her suicide registers the violence of patriarchal poetry dashed to bits upon itself.⁸²

If Antigone is a bird — that final term of the floriographic list — she is only so mistakenly. The bird is a bat, a Tzotzile, and Antigone figures forth “the birds of the coming storm.” She scatters, dark dots rising into the air, and moves on the turbulence, a “daughter of the wind,” undulating on the taut thread that gives her life.⁸³

CHAPTER 4

MYOCLONUS:

WILLIAM S. BURROUGHS' NOVA TRILOGY AND POST-LEFT ANARCHY

Rub out the word — there is no one there to hear it.

— William S. Burroughs
The Ticket That Exploded

And all the while everyone wants to breathe and no one can breathe, and many say “We will breathe later,” and most do not die, because they are already dead.

— Raoul Vaneigem
The Revolution of Everyday Life (51)

If there were no anarchists, the state would have had to invent them. We know that on several occasions it has done just that. We need anarchists unencumbered by anarchism. Then, and only then, we can begin to get serious about fomenting anarchy.

— Bob Black
“Anarchism and Other Impediments to Anarchy”

From Silence rewrite the message that is you.

— William S. Burroughs
The Soft Machine

I. “THE WHOLE THING IS A MESS”

“[. . .] when you cut word lines the future leaks out,” William S. Burroughs famously said about the cut-up technique (Odier 14). The principle is that the cut, administered to a previously written text, releases a meaning impossible for that text in the present, and the text speaks the truth for which it was compelled to hold silence. While I have argued that the cut-up method is a fundamentally anarchist practice, I would like to argue in this chapter that Burroughs’ application of the method in his 1960s Nova trilogy prophetically envisions an anarchism to come. Close to de Cleyre’s response to the call from the Haymarket martyrs, this anarchism does not simply respect the primacy of the neighbor. The Nova trilogy offers a study

of substitution that carefully distinguishes it from alienation, indicating that that the former is not only an ethical relation that takes responsibility for the other, but a relation that gives place to anarchy.

In a 1964 interview, Burroughs characterized his cut-up Nova trilogy as an effort “to create a new mythology for the space age” (Lotringer 55). Consisting in *The Soft Machine* (1961, 1966, 1968), *The Ticket That Exploded* (1962, 1967), and *Nova Express* (1964), it concerns the intergalactic conflict “between controllers and those who are endeavoring to throw off control” (126). The “controllers,” the Nova Mob, are Venusian parasitical organisms. Figuring forth Burroughs’ notion of the “word as virus,” they infiltrate host bodies in order to intensify conflicts on the infected planet and produce nova, “the explosion of a planet” (*TX* 55). “Those who are endeavoring to throw off control,” the Nova Police, are a counterforce responsible for preventing this catastrophe. They are employed to “arrest these criminals and turn them over to the Biological Department for the indicated alterations” (56)

Written during the Cold War, Burroughs’ “mythology” endeavors to discover a literary form and style relevant for a world in which the threat of mutually assured destruction had insinuated itself into everyday life.⁸⁴ In this mythology, “nova” clearly refers to the imminent reality of nuclear warfare. Nova criminals produce such planetary destruction by “always creat[ing] as many insoluble conflicts as possible and always aggravat[ing] existing conflicts” (*TX* 55; *NE* 53). (In the trilogy, this process is called “feedback.” Nova criminals “record the most violent and threatening statements” of two “pressure groups” and then close those statements in a playback loop that keeps the hostility in circulation — for example, the United States and the Soviet Union stockpiling atomic weaponry — so that the antagonism intensifies

itself, escalating each time it travels the circuit from one party to the next, and culminates in planetary extinction [ibid.].) Such a characterization suggests that nova is not simply the threat of nuclear holocaust; it represents the practice of politics as such.⁸⁵

Placed in the context of Cold War political practice, the “word as virus” metaphor suggests a critique of the psychological hegemony that operates through intelligence, propaganda, and espionage. While the metaphor could refer to McCarthyism and House Un-American Activities Committee, wherein “the word” of an informant became a weapon against cultural nonconformity and political dissent, it more generally refers to the rhetoric of political slogans, commercial advertisements, and pulp and cinematic narratives that demonize political outsiders, criminalize political opposition, and valorize conservative ideologies of compliance, surveillance, and complicity.

Compared to Stein’s critique of “patriarchal poetry,” Burroughs’ “word as virus” metaphor extends language’s power to privilege male authority to the larger, global context of post-World War II ideologies. For Stein, the word “rose” suggested a metaphor for woman that limited her representation to a sign that feigned closure in an imagined, absent referent (“Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose”). For Burroughs, the same word produces a preprogrammed response that contracts and controls thought:

If you hold up a sign with the word “ROSE” written on it, and you read that sign, you will be forced to repeat the word “ROSE” to yourself. If I show you a picture of a rose you do not have to repeat the word. You can register the image in silence. A syllabic language forces you to verbalize auditory patterns. A hieroglyphic language does not. [. . .] It is precisely these automatic reactions to

words themselves that enable those who manipulate words to control thought on a mass scale. (Odiar 51).

For Burroughs, rather than figuring difference, the act of saying the word “ROSE” necessitates an acquiescence to the powers responsible for the word’s meaning. While the hieroglyphic image includes the option of silence, the vocalization of the word “ROSE” commits the subject to speech. Further, in the Nova trilogy, the word predetermines the subject’s reception of a particular meaning, referent, or “image.” Mr. Winkhorst, a pharmacist associated with the Nova Police, explains: “Word begets image and image is virus” (*NE* 48). Embodied by the Nova criminal, the operation of this viral word resembles Louis Althusser’s characterization of ideology as that which “represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (162). According to Althusser, ideology “*hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects*, by the functioning of the category of the subject” (173). In other words, within the context of Burroughs’ “new mythology of the space age,” the word is a political tool designed to alienate individuals — indeed, for which individuality is an alienation — through representations of material conditions that program subjects to act in the interests of world superpowers.

If the word is this delivery device for ideology, then Burroughs’ cut-ups in the Nova trilogy register an assault on the “cold” political practices targeted at the “hearts and minds” of individual citizens. While he stated that “in *Naked Lunch* and *The Soft Machine* I have diagnosed the illness, and in *The Ticket That Exploded* and *Nova Express* suggested remedy,” Burroughs has also claimed that “the basic theme is that the planet has been invaded by Venutians [sic] and *the book* attempts to cope with invasion” (Lotringer 55, 129, *emphasis added*). Burroughs’ indication that “the book,” the physical and formal apparatus itself — rather than the characters

in the book — tries to neutralize the Nova Conflict suggests that the cut-up method as such is a viable weapon against Cold War practices and conditions. In the Nova trilogy, metonymically figured forth by the word that disseminates and implants ideology, the Cold War falls under Burroughs' Stanley blade, suffering a series of cuts, folds, and rearrangements that garble its messages and expose its efforts to control individual thought and action.

Framing the Nova trilogy's Cold War anxieties augments the scope of critical reflections on Burroughs' critique of language. Recent critical scholarship frames Burroughs' word virus metaphor in relation to the Situationist International's anarchist-inflected critique of consumer capitalism. For example, Scott Bukatman interprets the "word virus" as "a metaphor for the power of the media" and compares it to Guy Debord's economic analysis of the spectacle, which "serves a similar function of creating a deceptive cohesion for the purpose of infinite self-regeneration" (230). Further, Timothy S. Murphy and Oliver Harris identify parallels between the SI's practice of *détournement* and Burroughs' cut-up technique (Murphy, "Exposing" 39; Harris 191). In these terms, recurrent phrases in the trilogy such as "Break through in Grey Room" "Storm the Reality Studio," and "Retake the Universe" do not only announce the cut-up's efforts to redeploy "preexisting artistic elements in a new ensemble"⁸⁶; for Murphy and Harris, they imply a critique of contemporary global capitalism.⁸⁷ While I earlier indicated that the cut-up presupposes a critique of consumer capitalism proposed by the SI, particularly Debord, this framework should be carefully applied to the Nova trilogy since its exclusive focus on capitalism (and its implicit affiliation with Marxism and anarchism) disassembles the Nova mythology's larger critique of both Cold War superpowers' economic ideologies, capitalism and communism.

In a 1988 interview, Kathy Acker questions the cut-up method's "political ramifications"

and the “necessity to destroy the word” in the Nova trilogy, and Burroughs disavows the trilogy’s political affiliation. He says: “There are no political ramifications that could be put into or fitted into any party. There’s no affiliations with socialism, communism — certainly not capitalism. There are no direct political affiliations. The whole thing is a mess. That’s the point” (Acker). Burroughs’ remark demonstrates the cut-up technique’s radical commitment to an attack on the Cold War’s acculturating values and propaganda. While he emphatically divorces the technique from capitalism, that separation does not propel him into the camp of the competing ideology, communism, which was also the only viable revolutionary, anti-capitalist position available at that time. Instead, the mythology of the Nova trilogy corresponds to a world in which ideologies have broken their promises and proven cataclysmically homicidal. There, the political has been interrupted by the anti-political, and ideological positions are promiscuous, contradictory, and fluid. “The whole thing is a mess” designates the world’s political turmoil, but it also indicates that “the point” of the Nova trilogy is to exhibit and study a post-ideological field where every discursive system (political, social, economic, sexual, racial, genderal, linguistic) is irreducibly contaminated and compromised.

Presumably Burroughs’s disavowal includes anarchism. Comparing his cut-up method to a form of deconstruction that “seeks to turn hierarchy into anarchy,” Brent Wood characterizes the trilogy as “*guerilla* resistance against the virus (or [. . .] Nova Conspiracy)” (14, 15).⁸⁸ Wood’s analysis implies that the Cut-Up trilogy does not only target ideology for destruction; its violence endeavors to organize horizontal and acentric relations of power that would liberate the individual from top-down control. But Burroughs’s commentary discourages identifying the trilogy with this anarchist position. For Burroughs, perhaps, anarchism would only be another

ideology: what Max Stirner calls “spooks” or “wheels in the head.” Rather than voluntary cooperation, direct action, and mutual aid, anarchism in the Nova trilogy’s world would only be another virus; its promises of freedom would only surreptitiously reproduce alienation and domination. In this sense, the cut-up method does not have “direct” anarchist “ramifications.” Instead, if it is not merely *l’art pour l’art*, the Nova trilogy is a critique of language and the ideologies that it contagiously transmits among populations. Non-ideological, its utilization of the cut-up method suggests that it would be a practice, an individual act unmotivated by any form of solidarity or party line.

However, in the context of the Nova trilogy, Burroughs’s word ought not be trusted. Earlier in his interview with Acker, he implies that his cut-up experiments exceeded him. Referring to the trilogy, he says: “I applied [the cut-up method] with great enthusiasm and, I think, in some cases, carried it too far. Writers can get carried away by a technique and carry it so far they lose their readers” (Acker).⁸⁹ Burroughs’ indecisive diathesis should be noted. That his descriptions vacillate between activity and passivity — carrying the cut-up method “too far,” then being “carried away by [it]” — suggests that he does not know precisely what the Nova trilogy achieved. (Here, the passive construction further removes Burroughs from the scene by stating that the technique carries away “writers,” rather than himself.) If Burroughs did carry the cut-up method too far, then his claims about the “point” do not carry his authority. His diathetic slip opens the possibility that the Cut-Up trilogy’s political ramifications belong to a form an anarchism beyond Burroughs’ knowledge and practice.

Indeed, in *The Job* (1969), when asked whether anarchists offer “a possible solution to the future,” Burroughs recognizes his unfamiliarity with anarchist practices and then proceeds to

outline a practice effectively consistent with anarchism:

I don't really know what [the anarchist solutions] are, although I would say this, that I don't believe in any solution that proposes halfway measures. Unless we can abolish the whole concept of the nation, and the whole concept of the family, we aren't going to get anywhere at all. It's the same thing with some other name. [. . .] The anarchists say do away with all laws, but laws, of course, are a result of nations. It seems to me that they don't go to the root of the difficulty, the basic formula, which is the formula of the nation, but rather they pose a solution for a *fait accompli* which isn't going to work. They leave the nation in existence, and say that we will abolish the laws. It's like trying to abolish the symptoms of a disease while leaving the disease untouched. (Odier 64-65)

Burroughs' remark suggests an uninformed affinity with anarchism. While he rejects anarchist practices for failing to "go to the root of the difficulty," his rejection is predicated on the false impression that anarchism does not aim to abolish the nation-state. Since anarchism does target the nation-state, the implication is not only that from Burroughs' perspective anarchists *do* "go to the root of the difficulty," but that the Nova trilogy and Burroughs' application of the cut-up method have anarchic "ramifications" deployed without his knowledge. When Burroughs says that "there are no political ramifications that could be put or fitted into any party" in the trilogy, he is not necessarily refusing the effects of all political positions, but only the economic ideologies of "party politics" in the United States and USSR relevant at that time. Hence, while the Cut-Up trilogy does attack Cold War ideologies and propose a non-ideological position in its place, these proposals and attacks may imply an affiliation with anarchism that would replace

both capitalist and communist world orders with anarchy.

Burroughs could not have known about this anarchism. Speaking to Acker in 1988, he leaves un-thought a political affiliation with anarchism whose emergence would become increasingly pronounced after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Named “post-anarchism anarchy” in 1991 by Hakim Bey, this post-Cold War anarchism aims to “wean itself away from the evangelical materialism & banal 2-dimensional 19th century scientism” of classical anarchism, and to “experiment with new tactics to replace the outdated baggage of leftism” (Bey 66).⁹⁰ Taken up by anarchists associated with the North American publication *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed* — including Lawrence Jarach, Wolfi Landstreicher, and Jason McQuinn — this new anarchism is also called “post-left anarchy.” For them, anarchism’s historical subordination to the left strains of liberalism, social democracy, and socialism that emerge from the Enlightenment have corrupted anarchism with ideological desires and goals incompatible with anarchy. Thus, post-left anarchists attempt to purge anarchism of leftist affectations, including political (rather than social) struggle, formal organization, democracy, legislative reform, identity politics, and collectivism.⁹¹ In a nutshell, recalling de Cleyre’s “Dominant Idea,” Bey’s “post-anarchism anarchy” and *Anarchy*’s “post-left anarchy” remove ideology from *anarchism*.

Such anarchism should be distinguished from Wood’s definition of it. For Wood, anarchy is given expression in the partisan leader and Nova Heat collaborator Hassan i Sabbah’s “last words”: “*Nothing is True — Everything is Permitted*” (14; NE 149).⁹² Reproducing Gerald L. Bruns’ notion of anarchism as a philosophy in which “anything goes, nothing is forbidden,” Wood’s framing of Sabbah’s pronouncement suggests that anarchism is the infinite play that emerges with the removal of external constraints. However, the Nova trilogy’s “post-anarchism

anarchy” exceeds the mere act of negation. Prescient, it responds to an anarchism whose irruption in the public sphere can be traced back to France’s May 1968 insurrections, and that would generate increasing visibility through the counter-globalization movement, gaining the mass media’s attention with the black blocs in Seattle’s 1999 World Trade Organization protests, Italy’s massive demonstrations at the 2001 27th G8 Summit, and 2011’s worldwide Occupy movement.

II. PARASITOID

The Nova trilogy offers a critique of substitution. While I previously characterized the cut-up method as the act of friendship par excellence, Burroughs’ representation of the Nova Mob vexes the nature of that intimate relation. In effect, as a parasitical, Venusian organism, the Nova criminal is a figure for alienation: *a replacement of the subject that disconnects the subject from itself by identifying it with another*. Nova officer Inspector J. Lee states that Nova criminals “operate in very much the same manner as a virus. [. . .] [The Nova criminal] invades damages and occupies some pattern or configuration of the human organism” (58). Indeed, Nova criminals operate through a style of contagion: “intersecting” a human host, or “coordinate point,” they then establish a “line of coordinate points,” which allows them to “operate through thousands of human agents” by spreading from body to body (57; *NE* 56). As figures for ideology, then, characters like Izzy the Push and Hamburger Mary suggest that Cold War psychological operations target the subject *at the level of tissue*, introducing a pathogen into the subject’s body, and the characters’ criminal actions imagine ideology’s infectious transmission among populations.

In *The Ticket That Exploded*, Burroughs imagines this alienating effect with the figure of the “Sex Skin.” According to an anonymous Army soldier, the Sex Skin is “a critter found in the rivers [on Venus]” (4). It is “a biological weapon” that “wraps around you like a second skin” and “reduces healthy clean-minded men to abject slobbering inhuman things” by consuming them “body and soul in the orgasm” (4, 5). Traumatized, speaking from a psychiatric hospital in which he is hiding from the “critter,” the soldier describes others “half eaten mostly shit and pieces of them falling off” (4). In the imaginary of Burroughs’ trilogy, the description of this parasitic organism does not only indicate that Venusian life forms attach to their host at the epidermal surface; the Sex Skin is a figure for *a substitution that alienates the host(age)*. Offering the figure of a so-called “second skin” — a foreign organ into which the subject dissolves and disappears⁹³ — the Sex Skin suggests that being for-the-other is a horrifying and psychologically damaging experience. The shock of the soldier’s testimony, registered by the unpunctuated and disjointed description of his mutilated comrades, indicates that such substitution separates the subject from itself by introducing a foreign body that swallows the subject whole, rather than affirming its singularity.

As a metaphor, the Sex Skin imagines the body as vulnerability itself. In *The Job*, Burroughs states that the body is “a very complicated machine which is occupied by someone in the capacity of a very incompetent pilot” (109). That is, since the human body is not mobilized according to its own will, it reserves a place of control that can be usurped and occupied. (Burroughs’ exclusion of the autonomic system is hard to account for here. I endeavor to reckon its role in the Nova trilogy below.) Further, Burroughs identifies such susceptibility with sexuality: “Now, there’s no question but [sic] what sexual stimulation could be caused by direct

electrical manipulation of nerve centers, etc., just as any machine can be manipulated” (ibid.). Inducing orgasm through the consumption of its host, the Sex Skin registers not only the vulnerability of the body, but its exposure to control. It implies that the body’s acts of volition, even its most intimate behaviors, can be activated by adverse, inimical, and invasive stimuli, so that the action a subject would call its own can always be attributed to a foreign agency. The epidermal organ is the barrier through which crawls in decrepitude and death.

“The ‘Other Half,’” the parasitical creature that preeminently embodies the “word virus,” locates this alienation within the subject’s central nervous system. In a chapter narrated from the Rewrite Department — a partisan office attempting to contain the Nova Criminals — at the moment that the mob unleashes “Operation Other Half” on the planet, an anonymous partisan office worker updates his colleagues: “the ‘Other Half’ is the word. The ‘Other Half’ is an organism. [. . .]The word is now a virus. [. . .] It is now a parasitic organism that invades and damages the central nervous system” (*TX* 49). Elsewhere, another narrator (ostensibly associated with Rewrite) describes the “Other Half” as “an amphibious two-sexed actor half-man half-woman” (159-60).⁹⁴ (In *Nova Express*, it is “the invisible Siamese twin moving in and out of one body” [93].) Within Burroughs’ mythology, this Other Half’s hermaphroditic dualism suggests that the word is a compromised being whose constitution programs it to compromise others. “‘The Other Half’ is ‘You’ next time around — ,” the anonymous narrator states, “born when you die — that is when ‘the Other Half’ kills you and takes you over” (*TX* 160). Contrasting with the Sex Skin, which ingests its host from the outside in, the Other Half takes the subject’s place at the cellular and autonomic level.

Rather than spoken language, this “Other Half” is a figure for the inner language of self-

consciousness. In his briefing, the office worker from Rewrite frenetically informs his colleagues that “the presence of the ‘Other Half’ [. . .] can now be demonstrated experimentally” (TX 49). “Modern man has lost the option of silence,” he explains. “Try halting your sub-vocal speech. Try to achieve even ten seconds of inner silence. You will encounter a resisting organism that *forces you to talk*. That organism is the word” (49-50). As “sub-vocal speech,” the “Other Half” is not simply interpersonal communication; it is the relentless, compulsory chatter within the consciousness that remains wakeful even when the subject sleeps. Not just thought, it is the stammering nonsense interrupting and insinuating itself between thoughts. Some critics identify this “other” in consciousness with the unconscious. For example, Neal Oxenhandler equates the Other Half with the “mother” (140-1), and Todd Tietchen correlates it with the Lacanian Other, claiming that “it is clearly located in the subject’s psychology” (112). However, Burroughs’ identification of “the ‘Other Half’” with the central nervous system suggests that this viral word belongs to the body.⁹⁵ Indeed, in his briefing, the Rewrite worker indicates that the “Other Half” forms an intimate connection with the subject’s autonomic functions so that the subject associates the sounds of its body with the word’s interminable palaver: “the word is spliced in with the sound of your intestines and breath with the beating of your heart” (TX 50). As a result of this association, the subject becomes convinced that a cessation of sub-vocal speech would be akin to an arrest of the autonomic system, ostensibly compelling the subject to consent to the Other Half’s parasitical occupation.⁹⁶ In this way, rather than “the discourse of the Other,” from which the subject derives speech, the Other Half is comparable to *Naked Lunch*’s “Talking Asshole Routine”: it is a voice that speaks in spite of the subject’s speech, at odds with the subject, muttering in flatus, and ultimately it overtakes the subject, replacing its autonomic and

nervous systems with its own.

As critiques of Cold War PSYOP, the images of the Other Half and Sex Skin figure forth a substitution that separates the subject *from* itself and that it misrecognizes as a relation *to* itself. For post-left anarchist Jason McQuinn, such substitutional action defines ideology. “Ideology,” he argues, comprises “systems of false consciousness in which people no longer see themselves directly as subjects in their relation to their world. Instead, they conceive of themselves in some manner as subordinate to one type or another of abstract entity or entities which are mistaken as the real subjects or actors in their world” (“Post-Left Anarchy” 10). Indeed, elsewhere, McQuinn describes ideology in figurative language homologous to the Nova trilogy’s intergalactic conflict. “It is as if all previous genuinely human communities have been invaded, taken over by an alien race of body-snatchers, and been supplanted by an entirely different and vacantly hideous form of life” (Chernyi 20).⁹⁷ For McQuinn, the voice that speaks in the subject infected by the Other Half is only the voice of another masquerading in its place. Host to the Sex Skin, the subject sees only the face of an alien reflected in the mirror. The subject cannot hear itself, it cannot see itself. It is cut off, but since the virus has engineered this intimate connection between its presence and the subject’s body, the subject identifies itself with the invasive, extraterrestrial being.⁹⁸

For Althusser, this moment of misrecognition would be the moment of “hailing” or “interpellation.” In the Nova trilogy, the subject’s identification of itself with the alien parasite effectively reproduces the scene in which a police officer calls to an individual on the street, shouting “Hey, you there!” and the individual turns in response to the call, recognizing “that the hail was ‘really’ addressed to him, and that ‘it was *really him* who was hailed’ (and not someone else)” (Althusser 174). For Althusser, “in this mere one-hundred-and-eighty degree physical

conversion, he [the hailed individual] becomes a *subject*” (ibid.). For the Nova mythology, the moment that the host identifies the voice of the Other Half with the noise of its own body, or the moment that he mistakes the Sex Skin for his own epidermis, the circle of *méconnaissance* opened by the PSYOP has been closed. This circle, this process of interpellation, is why “the Other Half’ is ‘You’ next time around”: the individual consents to an infection that reproduces him in the image of the alien that colonizes him, and he accepts the subordinate place assigned to him in the Nova Mob’s hierarchal, destructive order. In other words, interpellation produces a *fission* in the subject: it splits the subject’s nucleus so that the “individual” becomes the site of dual self-consciousnesses, one activated in order to disguise the other.

The Other Half and Sex Skin are, in other words, metaphors for Cold War conformity. At the level of ideology, they suggest adherence to a party line that punishes deviations and disagreement, and substitutes the individual’s thoughts and actions in order to guarantee compliance and cooperation. At the level of everyday life, the images of the Sex Skin and Other Half suggest the compulsory obligation to *keep up appearances*: to fulfill predetermined social roles, obey the appointed leaders, express expected desires, accomplish ritualized practices, and die the death prepared in advance.⁹⁹ It establishes a world in which the individual cannot experience its own life, but only undergoes an existence always already experienced and exhausted by an other: “Like all virus the past prerecords your future” (188). “There is no life left in the present sucked dry by a walking corpse muttering through empty courtyards under film skies of Marrakesh” (TX 189; 196). In this haunting, surreal image, Burroughs suggests that the host(age)’s present is a time in which the future has always already receded into the past; its life is only the image of an existence passively and coldly encountered.

While recent critics associate Burroughs' critique of the "word" with Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*, I would like to suggest that the Nova trilogy's historically specific critique of Cold War psychological operations intersects with the thought of Raoul Vaneigem, whose "anarchist" classic *The Revolution of Everyday Life* (1967) contributed to Mai 68's student occupations, wildcat strikes, and street demonstrations, and continues to enjoy tremendous influence among radicals, particularly post-left anarchists. Vaneigem does not only echo Burroughs' dystopian vision of a world exclusively comprised by images of the world when he argues that "the spectacle is a museum of images" and that "real events come to us as one-dimensional scripts" (128; 129); he characterizes ideology's effects in terms resembling nova. Characterizing the redundancy of the spectacle — the way in which all experience is always already past — Vaneigem announces that "nothing surprises anymore, there's the rub! The monotony of the ideological spectacle makes us aware of the passivity of life, or survival" (25). Prefiguring this description in *Nova Express*, an anonymous narrator describes the Nova Mob's caper leading to planetary explosion in terms of insipidity: "they [the Nova Criminals] start the same old lark sucking all the charge and air and color to a new location and then? — *Sput* — you notice something is sucking all the flavor out of food pleasure out of sex the color out of everything in sight? — precisely creating the low pressure area that leads to nova" (*NE* 75; 50; *TX* 54). Rather than producing a cataclysmic paroxysm, "*sput*" onomatopoeically accentuates the spectacle's underwhelmingness. Food's, sex's, and color's stultification is the effect of the fission that bisects the subject. In other words, nova is the point at which things cease to concern me: where I am alienated to such an extreme that the world becomes foreign and disengaging. Like the experience of junk, it is a *fix* — it is that point at which I am no longer in my own possession,

and the self with which I identify is a stable identity to which I have indifferently conformed, without concern for my neighbors or myself.

Parasitoidal, the Sex Skin figures forth this same detachment through attachment.¹⁰⁰ In *The Ticket That Exploded*, Inspector Lee explains the Sex Skin's Venusian origins: "In its native state it got its prey by touching it. After that neuro-contact had been established the prey was quite satisfied to be ingested [. . .] the victim doesn't want to get away once it has sampled the pleasure of the cloak" (22). This narcotizing effect suggests that the Sex Skin is not simply an image of substitution as a virulent form of alienation; its proximity to the subject produces an ennui that trains docility and acquiescence in the subject. However, according to Inspector Lee's description, the Sex Skin's contact does not render the subject docile and acquiescent; it channels the subject's desires so that it "doesn't want to get away," that is, so that it believes that it has voluntarily submitted to its death. For substitution, this hallucinatory desire implies that being for-the-other is a ruse that promises freedom on the condition of a surrender satisfied only in the subject's self-sacrifice. Further, if the Sex Skin is a representation of the neighbor, it affords the neighbor no trust. For Burroughs, metonymically identified with the "word," the neighbor is an extension of the state and its military that spies on and reports suspicious activity of those in its proximity to the authorities. Surveillancing, accusing, and testifying against its own citizens through its own citizens, such a state (or neighbor) is a parasite that consumes its own host.

Vaneigem shares Burroughs' abhorrence for the other. For him, the other belongs to the experience of spectacular alienation. Imagining the culture of late capitalism in which individuals fashion themselves after the commercialized images of athletes and actors, Vaneigem argues that "to define oneself with reference to others is to perceive oneself as other. And the

other is always object” (35). In other words, to model oneself after the image is to unknowingly submit to a position in an ideological matrix staked out in advance in order to support the spectacle. In conclusion, he adds: “Instead of basing our lives on our sovereignty, we try to base our sovereignty on other people’s lives. The manners of slaves” (37). The other, then, is a menace: it threatens the authenticity, consistency, and purity of the subject in its immanence. For Vaneigem, others do figure into radical ethics,¹⁰¹ but ultimately the neighbor’s role must remain secondary to the subject’s claim to his sovereignty. For this reason, evoking the Other Half, Vaneigem states that “I am in enemy territory, and the enemy is within me” (141).

Further, understanding it as a “role”¹⁰² — a second skin the subject wears — Vaneigem portrays the other in terms of an extension of state power. For him, “the role is a consumption of power. It locates one in the *representational* hierarchy, and hence in the spectacle: at the top, at the bottom, in the middle — but never *outside* the hierarchy, whether this side of it or beyond it” (132). If such roles refer to the politics of identity and recognition, they comprise “a consumption of power” to the degree that juridical, state-sanctioned recognition carries the promise of political privilege or marginalization, but since they come from the “other,” such exclusions and prerogatives tend the benefit those empowered to confer them, not their recipients. Explicitly opposing the state and other governing institutions, Vaneigem claims: “the more man views himself through the eyes of officialdom, the greater his alienation” (127-8). For him, liberation is a visionary act that apprehends the world in its truth. Freedom from roles means subverting substitution and seeing oneself *in oneself* through one’s own eyes: “If individuals could stop seeing the world through the eyes of the powers-that-be, and look at it from their own point of view, they would have no problem discerning which actions are really

liberating, which moments are lightening flashes in the dark night of roles” (138).

For anarchism, this whole thing is a mess. While the practice of the cut-up technique represents the anarchist act of friendship par excellence by placing the subject in the other’s place and giving place to the other, Burroughs’ myth of the Nova Mob indicts such substitution, suggesting that anarchism’s central principle betrays both the neighbor and the subject. In the Nova mythology, rather than an act of friendship, substitution seems to be a practice of alienation that objectifies and detaches the subject from itself and its social existence, drugging it with an apathy that protracts its death for the other. Insofar as this mythology refers to the “space age,” Burroughs’ virological metaphors indicate that substitution is a form of state-sanctioned violence that inculcates the subject with an ideology that turns him against his own neighbors and his private interests. Cast in the trilogy’s metaphorical terms, the state is an invasive alien species plotting the planet’s annihilation, and substitution is the fundamental weapon that it mobilizes to organize populations to its advantage. Ideology is a form of biological war. Substitution is the vector, the other the virus.

If anarchism is the hope of liberation from the homicidal practices of the Cold War state, then Burroughs’ viral metaphors straightaway evacuate that futural anticipation by calling attention to anarchism’s dependence on a parasitoidal relation. For this reason, perhaps, Burroughs’ Cut-Up trilogy retreats into a seemingly endless series of displacements and parodies, horrific in their dystopian scope. While the text’s hostility toward the neighbor gives expression to anxieties produced by McCarthyism and HUAC, the shell-game mobilized by Burroughs’ cut-up method — mixing textual fragments in bewildering patterns — leaves the impression that all is lost. Evoking the situationist critique of roles, an anonymous narrator voices this despair:

“Clearly no portentous exciting events are about to transpire. You will readily understand why people will go to any lengths to get in the film to cover themselves with any old film scrap. junky . . . narcotics agent . . . thief . . . informer . . . anything to avoid the hopeless deadened horror of being just who and where you are: dying animals on a doomed planet” (*TX* 151).

III. “IF YOU I”

Countering the practice of nova, the Nova Police’s efforts to apprehend Nova criminals and save the planet from doomsday do not only imply radical activities designed to bring modern political power to a halt; they suggest a counterattack that targets substitution and its alienating effects. Describing the Nova Heat’s principal strategy for arresting Nova Criminals, Inspector Lee indicates that “it is only when we can block the controller out of all coordinate points available to him and flush him out from host cover that we can make a definitive arrest — Otherwise the criminal escapes to other coordinate — ” (*TX* 58). Curbing their access to coordinate points, the Nova Police effectively prevent Nova Criminals from putting themselves in the place of a human host. In these terms, the basic Nova Heat tactic is analogous to the anarchist black bloc: it organizes geographical terrain (through erecting obstacles, creating diversions, mobilizing crowds, etc.) in a manner that limits the opponent’s tactical options and advantages, and puts its actions in a position that weakens rather than facilitates them.

However, these practices are implicated in substitution. In the opening of *Nova Express*, Hassan i Sabbah addresses those interpellated by the “boards syndicates and governments of the earth”: “What scared you all into time? Into body? Into shit? I will tell you: “*the word.*” Alien Word “*the.*” “The” word of Alien Enemy imprisons “*thee*” in Time. In Body. In Shit. Prisoner,

come out. The great skies are open. I Hassan i Sabbah *rub out the word forever*. If you I cancel all your words forever” (NE 3; 4). While Sabbah’s “last words” reiterate the “word virus” motif at the heart of the Nova trilogy’s mythology, they also point to the possibility of eradicating alienation through an erasure of the Nova Mob’s biological weaponry. However, though such erasure would eliminate the interpellation that substitutes the subject for the “Alien Enemy,” his statement suggests that such an act belongs to being for-the-other. “If you I” does not mean *if I am you, if you substitute me, I cancel the word*, but thinks the “I” as the substitute of a “you” that precedes it. “If you I cancel all your words forever” suggests that Sabbah’s insurrectionary cancellation of the word depends on the condition of a substitution that puts the “I” in the place of the “you,” the “Thee” menaced by ideology.

“The Mayan Caper” exemplifies this insurrectionary effect of substitution. (Burroughs perhaps intended this essentially uncut narrative — privileged by Jennie Skerl as “the most straightforward exposition of how a control system works and how it can be dismantled”¹⁰³ — to provide a key that unlocks the revolutionary political and cultural impulses driving the book’s less overly politicized cut-ups.) An episode of time-travel science fiction that Skerl calls “historical fantasy” (54), the chapter is framed as a interview segment on *The Evening News* with an unnamed speaker who liberates the Maya agricultural workers from the priests who control the laborers with their specialized knowledge of the Maya calendar and codices. To accomplish the liberation, the narrator performs a “transfer operation”¹⁰⁴ with a “vessel,” a “young Mayan worker,” wherein he is “moved into the body of the young Mayan” (SM 84). The two undergo complex preparations for the substitution. Over the course of three weeks, Jimmy the Take films the narrator and Maya boy individually against “Mayan backdrops,” “posed [. . .]

naked in erection and orgasm,” and then cuts the film down the middle and splices the respective halves into new composites, so that the images visualize each individual body as half of the other (86). The doctor — a “transfer artist” — then injects them with “a variation of the apomorphine formula”¹⁰⁵ that induces “simultaneous vomiting and ejaculating and several times I found myself vomiting and ejaculating into the Mayan vessel” (ibid.).

Burroughs’ attention to corporeality and erotogeneity calls attention to the proximity of the other in substitution. In the narrator’s account, the erotic imagery of the boy and himself exposed in states of arousal and sexual climax do not only suggest an intimate relation; they suggest an intimacy without origin, un-locatable in time and space, since the erection’s and orgasm’s cause remains unidentified. For them, the other is nearer than the most near; its contact does not touch them, but always already excites the sensation of a caress in their flesh. Their responses to this contact suggest extreme passivity. The actions of vomiting and ejaculating are discharges beyond the subject’s control: involuntary expulsions intimating shifts and displacements. Touching and exciting the two patients without entering their physical proximity, this disembodied otherness calls attention to the body’s vulnerability. While Jimmy the Take’s camera and postproduction work only engineer *images* of being for-the-other, the narrator’s disjointed, detached remark (“several times I found myself vomiting and ejaculating into the Mayan vessel”) implies the image’s incarnate effects. In that queer, elliptical description, the narrator is not only facing the Maya boy; he is prone to him, exposed in a moment when self-control disappears in the central nervous system’s functions, and through this orientation he loses all protection.

As Levinas said about the “*sub-jectum*” of the self, this transfer operation is not “science-

fiction fiction,” but that which substitutes one-for-the-other, seeking out the subject in the “intersidereal spaces” that refer to its responsibility. The narrator and Maya vessel are “arranged [. . .] side by side naked on the operating table,” and the doctor demarcates a line that divides each body in half, “from the cleft under the nose to the rectum” (*SM* 86). Then, after receiving an injection (“a blue fluid of heavy cold silence”), the narrator observes the transfer operation out-of-body: “From a Polar distance I could hear the doctor separate the two halves of our bodies and fitting together a composite being — I came back in another flesh the lookout different, thoughts and memories of the young Mayan drifting through my brain” (*ibid.*). “Polar distance,” in this context, suggests not only an aloof, impersonal distance; it implies the otherwise, on the hither side of being, where the “I” is responsible for the other. While the narrator’s disembodiment, his drugged ecstasy, reiterates his passivity in the other’s proximity, it also shows that he is outside himself, severed from immanence, that is, from the experience of self-consciousness and subjectivity. Rather than his own body, the narrator comes into contact with “another flesh” that positions him in the place of the other. Indeed, his “thoughts and memories” are no longer his own, but come from the boy with whom he had shared the ultimate intimacy. Disembodied, coming from the absolute distance of the “polar,” the narrator is neither himself nor the boy, but a “third mind,” greater than either one in separation.

If interpellation produces a fission in the subject that leads to nova, the substitution effected by the “transfer operation” suggests a *denucleation of the subject*: an alterity at the center around which the subject would self-assemble. I would distinguish this process from Robin Lydenberg’s examination of the “dispersal of the self” in *The Soft Machine*. For Lydenberg, “dispersal” is the event in which the subject is “sufficiently fragmented, emptied out,

and dispersed” so that “one will no longer fear its loss,” thereafter offering “the possibility of a more radical dissolution of identity” (63). Such “dispersal” is grounded in the cut-up effect that scrambles pronominal referents and trades one identity for another, so that “the actual physical possibility of body exchange” points to interchangeability in which the cut-up’s fragmentation breaks up and then reassembles the subject through new textual arrangements (*ibid.*). This conceptualization of “dispersal” implies that the dissected subject is hybridized, exchanging one subject for another, infinitely interchangeable, interminably decentered and reentered. Counter to Lydenberg, the denucleation exhibited in the “transfer operation” suggests that the subject is itself, not a hybrid form, not interchangeable, and that its singularity is constituted by the other in it. In this sense, denucleation is not the crystallization of the subject around a nucleus constituted through its self-assemblage; it is the polycentric formation of the subject across a constellation of stars, glimmers, and tremors. It “other-organizes” — affirming the neighbor rather than the self. Rather than the self-assembly of bubbles or vapor nucleating to form a coherent subject, the othering of the nucleus triggers an uprising of those particles.

The narrator’s subsequent adventure politicizes denucleation. After arranging the trip with a broker, the narrator travels back in time to Maya civilization. Disguised as a “mental defective,” he works in the field while gathering intelligence (e.g., recording festival music), until he gains access to the Maya calendar and codices that organize the “Mayan control system.” Given the right moment, the narrator uses a special drug that transfers him into a priest’s body, then photographs the codices (“which contain symbols representing all states of thought and feeling possible to human animals living under such limited circumstances”) (*SM* 91). He dismantles the “control machine” by rearranging the sound and image tracks that control the

Maya laborers' thought and prevent them from rebellion: "I had only to mix the order of recordings and the order of images and the changed order would be picked up and fed back into the machine" (92). Time then accelerates in the narrative. Receiving jumbled messages from the control system, the agricultural workers produce a famine by slashing-and-burning the fields too early in the year, and once hunger grips the population, the narrator introduces commands for the machine to "dismantle itself" and for the laborers to overthrow their masters: "Cut word lines — Cut music lines — Smash the control images — Smash the control machine — Burn the books — Kill the priests — Kill! Kill! Kill! — " (92-3).

Classical anarchist insurrectionary imagery infuses the conclusion. Recalling Bakunin's valorization of the *lumpenproletariat* — that social scum, flotsam, or slime excluded from revolution in *The Communist Manifesto* — the Maya field workers organize from the bottom up. Rather than the expropriation of the Maya calendar and codices, and thus the preservation of the prevailing sociopolitical and economic hierarchy, the narrator's substitution culminates in the destruction of the system at the root. Prefiguring Mai 68's *détournement* of Jean Meslier's statement ("humanity won't be happy till the last capitalist is hung by the guts of the last bureaucrat"),¹⁰⁶ the narrator describes the overseer's defeat by the insurgent workers: "pegged out in the field, his intestines perforated with hot planting sticks and crammed with corn" (93). He then obliterates the images of the priests and temple guards¹⁰⁷ and burns the codices, and the chapter closes with a tidal wave consuming the Maya control calendar.

Responding to Hassan i Sabbah's charge to "rub out the word forever," the anarchic action at the heart of this "historical fantasy" gives expression to a revolutionary desire to abolish Cold War propaganda's alienating effects by destroying the nation-state. Lulled into automatic,

repetitive behaviors by the Maya calendar and codices, the laborers are “scared [. . .] into time” and “into body” by the word; they are organized to occupy specific positions in the system’s sociopolitical hierarchy and to exist according to rhythms manipulated by and beneficial to the priests and overseers. The narrator’s interference with the Maya control system “rubs out” the discursive apparatuses deployed to maintain the underclass’s compliance with a system disadvantageous to them. Not only does he scramble the codices; the insurrection incited by that erasure burns up and washes away the Maya ruler’s technologies of domination. In the Nova mythology, such an action does not only neutralize the imminent danger of nova: it imagines what Burroughs believed to be a reasonable response to superpowers developing and stockpiling nuclear weapons. In *The Job*, when asked “does total destruction seem to you to be a desirable outcome,” Burroughs replied in Dadaesque terms: “I would say that total destruction of existing institutions, and very rapidly, may be the only alternative to a nuclear war which would be very much more destructive. If disorder reaches a certain point, they [world powers] will not be able to start a nuclear war, which I think is definitely and obviously the intention of the people in power” (101).

Yet, rather than these parallels, I would emphasize that the narrator’s relation to the Maya boy with whom he shares a body reiterates Sabbah’s queer phrase, “If you I cancel all your words forever.” Taking place before the insurrection, the “transfer operation” suggests that substitution is the precondition of revolutionary action. It implies not only that “revolution takes place when one frees man,” as Levinas stated, but that revolution may be the ultimate expression of responsibility to the other.

Critics overlook substitution’s central role in the Maya caper’s anarchic action. For

example, Anne Friedberg's brief analysis of the chapter does not mention the narrator's substitutions; she exclusively focuses on his technologies of subversion, that is, photography, his camera gun, and sabotage (171).¹⁰⁸ Similarly, John G Watters frames the chapter in order to emphasize "the workings and then the destruction of [a] control mechanism" (292). Assuming that "the system of control can only be destroyed by an insider," he recognizes that the narrator "must become Mayan" to accomplish the action, but rather than inferring the substitution's ethical and ontological implications, he concludes that the narrator "works within the system in order to bring about its downfall" (292; 293). While such critiques of "The Mayan Caper" leave the "transfer operation" unexamined, their attention to the insurrection also significantly attenuates the narrative's scope. In terms of the chapter's proportion, the insurrection only constitutes one-and-a-half pages of a thirteen page chapter. Hence, critics do not simply ignore more than ninety percent of the story, nor do their commentaries simply become only about insurrection, rather than the processes of being for-the-other and "time-travel"; their contracted frameworks produce reductive analyses of the insurrection itself that fail to account for that which makes the Maya caper more than an act of resistance and liberation.

Placed in the context of anarchic substitution, "The Mayan Caper" suggests that insurrection is an action for-the-other, otherwise than being. Although the narrator elaborates his "transfer operation" with the Maya boy *after* explaining his plans to travel back in time, implying that he pursued the operation in order to achieve his plans, the story's lack of narrative exposition and setting give the impression that substitution has always already taken place, prior to any commitments. In the course of narration, the narrator does not seem to act according to his will. He has not been hired (unless by *The Evening News*, which pays for the operation [SM 85]), nor

does he express any ideological allegiances that might explain his motives for the action. (While I have argued that his “caper,” leading to the abolition of the Maya control system, demonstrates anarchist affinities, the narrator’s “choice” to travel back in time and destroy a civilization already decimated by Spanish colonialism is difficult to affiliate with any political position.) It is as though the narrator never ceases to operate from a “Polar distance.” His devotion to the obliteration of the Maya calendar and codices seems to exist *before him*, so that the very fact of his existence obliges him to overthrow the priests and overseer. In this context, rather than an act of resistance and liberation, the insurrection follows Levinas’ “anarchic plot”: the narrator is incarnated, introduced into his own story, in order to offer himself, to suffer and to give. While his insurrection requires a disguise, corroborating Watters’ conclusion that the narrator “worked within the system to bring about its downfall,” the system’s collapse would not be possible without the passivity that gives place to the other. The “work” belongs to neither the narrator nor the Maya boy, but to the Maya workers who must have called those two forward, into the past, to give them justice.

Therefore, while the figure of the Sex Skin and the Other Half offer antagonistic metaphors for ideology and alienation, the “transfer operation” in “The Mayan Caper” reserves a productive place for substitution in revolutionary action. Substituted for-the-other, the narrator is not alienated by the “transfer operation.” The Maya boy (the “vessel”) does not interpellate him, nor vice versa. If the narrator is interpellated, it is not by the ideology of the Nova Mob, which would find the narrator’s actions inimical (or would have no interest in tampering with an efficacious control system). In the narrative, substitution puts the narrator in a position to resist controls effected by the Maya calendar and codices. Arriving in the ancient civilization, the

narrator is immediately accosted by “the crushing weight of evil insect control forcing my thoughts and feelings into prearranged molds,” but after he “turned on the thoughts of a half-witted young Indian,” the “probe of telepathic interrogation” withdraws (89, 90). This slackening of the psychological controls suggests that substitution is apomorphine. While the word is associated with junk and the idea of getting a fix, that is, being classified and positioned within an ideological matrix, substitution’s connection to apomorphine suggests that it alleviates the desire to be fixed and forestalls interpellation’s effects.¹⁰⁹ In this way, substitution is the antidote for alienation. It provides an alternative, an escape from ideology and control, that quickly tips into radical transformation and anarchy.

In the Nova mythology, there are two forms of substitution. Special Branch agent Mr. Taylor suggests that the difference between the Sex Skin and “transfer operation” concerns not only the incarnate body’s susceptibility but its physical proximity to other bodies. Referring to audio tape experiments similar to Jimmy the Take’s film splices, which involve recording two individuals’ voices and bodily sounds, and then mixing the two recordings together, Mr. Taylor indicates that such cuts produce one of two distinctive effects: “so long as the spliced tape finds an outlet in actual sex contact its acts as an aphrodisiac . . . nothing more . . . But when a susceptible subject is spliced in with someone *who is not there* then it acts as a destructive virus . . . the perfect murder weapon with a built-in alibi” (*TX 20*).¹¹⁰ The distinction implies that the “transfer operation” in “The Mayan Caper” is aphrodisiacal. Not only does it explicitly produce a marked erotic reaction that causes the narrator’s sexual organ to ejaculate; it suggests a responsive orientation toward the neighbor, preparing him to be received by the vessel. It intensifies a relation between two bodies in space. Contrary to that effect, the Sex Skin implies a

separation. For that Venusian organism, the “other” must be present, since the Sex Skin’s parasitism requires a host, but Mr. Taylor’s distinction suggests that the host is not present *as a neighbor*. Attaching itself to the host, the Sex Skin does not simply begin the work of absencing its victim through ingestion; it removes the other, holding him at a distance that prohibits being for-the-other and instead affirms the sovereignty of the one.

Mr. Taylor’s distinction suggests that the Sex Skin and Other Half represent substitutions that affirm the primacy of the subject; they are for-the-one, not for-the-other. In *Nova Express*, an unnamed Nova Criminal gives a deposition after his arrest that associates Venusian viruses with the one-before-two, thus identifying the word virus with a subject allergic to the substitution imagined by the transfer operation:

So I am alone as always — You understand nova is where I am born in such pain
no one else survives in one piece — Born again and again cross the wounded
galaxies — I am alone but not what you call “lonely” — Loneliness is a product
of dual mammalian structure — “Loneliness,” “love,” “friendship,” all the rest of
it — I am not two — I am *one* — But to maintain my state of oneness I need
twoness in other life forms — Other must talk so that I can remain silent — If
another becomes one then I am two — That makes two ones makes two and I am
no longer one — (77)

While this deposition identifies Nova Criminals with autarky, Burroughs’ cut-up implies a critique of the subject assumed by psychotherapeutical discourses. Such a subject requires others (“twoness”) in order to “maintain” its “state of oneness,” but that oneness, antedating “twoness,” would be independent and sufficient unto itself. Evoking “self-help” therapies designed to

remedy the individual's feelings of alienation under late capitalism, Burroughs' sardonic incorporation of the phrase "I am alone but not what you call 'lonely'" does not only suggest that the figure of the Nova Criminal exists in a vacuum, defined by an untroubled circular relation to itself, so that its every action, even its parasitical attachment to a host, would only affirm its own autonomy and sovereignty; it identifies the late capitalist development of the "self-helping" subject — one that forgives and heals itself, without the other — with the viral contagions contributing to the threat of planetary annihilation in the Nova mythology. Although the substitutions effected by the Sex Skin and Other Half figure forth the ideological alienation produced by Cold War PSYOP, Burroughs' trilogy does not imagine their gruesome results in order to affirm an autarkic subject whose truth is prior to the other. Instead, this cut-up — a Nova Criminal's confession — reveals that *such self-helping subjectivity is the alien that alienates the subject at a time in history when imminent mutually assured destruction demonstrates both its powerlessness and its obligation to help the neighbor.*

While in the previous chapters I identified this subject with liberalism, I would emphasize here that Burroughs' critique of ideology ensnares Vaneigem's anarchist individualism as well. Vaneigem contends that revolution is "the project of being a whole man, a will to live totally" (68). Contrary to Burroughs' characterization of anarchists' failure to "go to the root," Vaneigem understands this "whole man" in terms of "radical subjectivity," that is, subjectivity that would be grasped *by itself at the root* (ibid.). According to Vaneigem, such subjectivity "think[s] *other* in terms of *the same*" (196). It is "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" (ibid.). Counter to the Nova Criminal, Vaneigem's theorization of

radical subjectivity indicates that the “authentic” self avoids succumbing to a parasitoidal relation. It not only sees itself (rather than the other) within itself; it also sees itself in the other. Vaneigem later states: “Radical subjectivity is the common front of identity rediscovered. Those who cannot see themselves in other people are condemned forever to be strangers to themselves” (247). In other words, the experience of radical subjectivity follows the circular trajectory of patriarchal metaphor: rather than registering the difference produced by the encounter with the other, exposing the subject to “something else,” radical subjectivity reduces the encounter not simply to a meeting of the same, but to a moment of “self-help” that distances the shattered subject from disaffection and reconciles it with its inadequacies and offenses. For Vaneigem, as for the *Nova Criminal*, social relations refer first and foremost to the subject’s self-interest, and any responsibility that the subject feels toward his neighbor fundamentally serves his greater advantage: “The point is neither to lose oneself in oneself nor to lose oneself in other people. People who realize that they depend ultimately on society must still first of all find themselves, else they will find nothing in others save the negation of themselves” (243).

Today, post-left anarchists preserve Vaneigem’s assumptions about radical subjectivity. Landstreicher argues that “[freeing ourselves from the logic of submission] requires finding a different place from which to perceive the world, a different position from which to act. Rather than starting from the world as it is, one may choose to grasp her life as his own” (“Against” 12).¹¹¹ For Landstreicher, this “life” that one might “choose to grasp” is the place of a subject that would constitute anarchism’s first and foremost concern. Balancing his claim with the insurrectionary goal of “creating a world in which every individual is able to grasp too that they need to fully realize themselves,” he proceeds to underscore the primacy of this subject:

[. . .] equally important is the anarchist recognition of the primacy of the actual, living individual (as opposed to the collectivized ego and to the abstract concept of the individual) is [sic] the recognition that we need to become a certain sort of being, a being capable of acting on our own terms to realize our own desires and dreams in the face the most fierce and powerful enemy: the entire civilization — the state, capital, the technological system . . . (3-4)

“So the point,” Landstreicher adds, “is to make the decision to take one’s life back in its totality [. . .] and such a decision will transform all one’s relationships” (4). Landstreicher’s post-left enterprise thereby expresses an affinity with Vaneigem’s “will to authentic self-realisation.”

While Landstreicher’s characterization of “the entire civilization — the state, capital, the technological system . . .” — finds traction in the metaphor of the Nova Mob, his endgame (“the point”) only replicates the subject identified with the extraterrestrial parasitoid in the mythology.

Radical subjectivity is anathema to the Nova trilogy. In its mythology, the notion of an autarkic subject is not only associated with virus, alienation, and addiction; it is counter to the practice of the cut-up method. When the anonymous narrator, whose voice resembles Burroughs’, says “rub out the word — There is no one there to hear it” (*TX* 169), he intimates that the “one” is only an effect of language, a symptom of ideology, or the hallucination of a bad trip. Contrary to Ihab Hassan’s claim that Burroughs’ “anarchic” “central motive” aims “for a whole and free man” or Skerl’s inference that the cut-up narratives’ abolition of the “word virus” depicts “a self-regulating autonomous individual free of external social and psychological control” (Hassan 60; Skerl 62-3)¹¹², the cut-ups endeavor to arrive instead at the anarchic passivity more passive than all passivity anterior to the subject. Further, contrary to Tony Tanner,

who argues (in an essay titled “Rub Out the Word”) that “one of the demands Burroughs is making is for the restoration of an untouched, unsynthesized reality” (106), the idea that the subject is posterior to language suggests that Burroughs’ cut-up method neither makes demands nor possesses a will to assert, but answers to the call that gives place to the other.

While Burroughs does share Vaneigem’s abhorrence for alienation, the Nova trilogy does not express an aversion for the neighbor that terminates in radical subjectivity. For Burroughs, as for Althusser, the “radical subject” and the “actual, living individual” are forms of interpellation. In the Nova mythology, the self-recognizing subject gives expression to Cold War ideologies to the degree that *it refers to a subject that is an agent* — an autonomous individual whose “autonomy” always already dedicates it to service to the state. Based on the negation of the neighbor in the “I,” this alienating form figures forth the separation of the subject from social life and from itself through the tropes of allegiance and unification. Paradoxically, the un-alienated subject is the denucleated subject, that is, the subject retroactively produced by the “aphrodisia” of the neighbor. In “The Mayan Caper,” such a subject does not find itself in itself, but discovers in itself an assignation from the other obliging it to give itself up. Contained in this denucleating being-for-the-other is the anarchic “political ramification” that Burroughs could not identify in his interview with Acker. No authority figure activates it; no 180 degree “turn” converts the anarchist subject. For the Nova mythology, the anarchist subject is always already an orientation toward the other that jeopardizes its life not only for the neighbor’s freedom, but so the neighbor can have anarchy.

Indeed, in *Minutes to Go*, Gysin’s mandate to “be your own agent” is not a call to radical subjectivity. Placed in the context of the cut-up, the “agent” of the “one” is the figure of the

neighbor, not only because the neighbor acts before the one, but because it constitutes that one's ipseity. "Be your own agent" does not affirm a Dadaist form of "I don't give a damnism," nor does it mean "help yourself" or "realize our own desires and dreams"; it means responsibility that insurrects for the other.

A Sex Skin is not a Nessus tunic. This distinction reiterates the difference that I identified in Chapter 1 between spectacular separation that conceals its divisiveness through sham unification and the cut-up that binds through separation." While the Nessus tunic does suggest a "second skin" that poisons the incarnate subject and obliges it to be offered in sacrifice for the other, Levinas' figure cannot be reduced to a metaphor for alienation, since the subject's incarnation is the effect of being elected by that *alienus* and its "second skin" therefore is its one and only. In other words, prior to the Nessus tunic, no subject is available to be alienated.

Interpellation is not assignation. A police officer shouting "hey, you there!" is not the neighbor saying "after you." In the Nova mythology, the Nova Mob does not alienate a "free and whole" subject; they invade, damage, and occupy the subject always already responsible for the other. Further, their alienation does not separate the subject from its innermost subjectivity, making it a stranger to itself; it dissembles the otherness of the subject's ipseity and covers over its intimate bond with the other, so that the subject can be drugged into the self-certainty of immanence and tranquilized by an apathy that mitigates the burn attracting the subject to death. The heat of this burn is not the poison of compliance with alienation, but the feeling of being ill at ease in one's skin, where the other ceaselessly denucleates.

Framed by this distinction between interpellation and assignation, Hassan i Sabbah's statement "If you I cancel all your words forever" does not only associate the act that "rubs out

the word” with substitution; the jumbled syntax, “if you I,” silently indicates that the “hail” of ideology will be challenged by a “call” of the other given place by the cut-up. It suggests that the “transfer operation” that substitutes “I” for “you” is accomplished by cutting up. For this reason, it is no coincidence that Hassan i Sabbah is associated with Brion Gysin.¹¹³ The connection indicates that this substitution, the “transfer operation,” will emerge from the cut that binds in friendship.

IV. AFFECT

Burroughs’ claim that “the book [the Nova trilogy] attempts to cope with invasion” implies that the cut-up technique produces the substitution that preconditions insurrection and anarchy. “The Mayan Caper” already designated this insurrectionary effect of the cut-up. Not only does the narrator apply principles of processual and aleatory rearrangement and juxtaposition to the Mayan control system, recombining sound and image tracks and introducing revolutionary commands (e.g., “cut word lines” and “smash the control images”) into the machine, thereby instigating an anarchic insurrection through the cut-up method; the initiation to his trip back in time, to the ancient past of the pre-Columbian Americas, applies the cut-up method first to his image, then to his physical body, and through these applications produces the “transfer.”

Dividing the subject in half and fitting a bisection with the other’s opposite half, the “transfer artist’s” technique imagines Burroughs’ “fold-in method,” which Burroughs pioneered in the trilogy’s two later volumes. According to Burroughs, for the fold-in, “a page of text, my own or someone else’s, is folded down the middle and placed on another page, the composite

text is then read across, half one text and half the other” (Lotringer 58). Although Wood does not read “The Mayan Caper,” this fold-in technique provides a form of “*guerilla* resistance against the virus”. It not only places the narrator into contact with the anarchic; it does the work of the Nova Police, countering the alienating discourse of “the Other Half” and facilitating the collapse of hierarchical relations that support it.

“Substitute Flesh,” a routine in *The Ticket That Exploded*, represents this substitution as the incarnation of the subject that gives place to the other through its disappearance *in the cut-up*. The routine describes Bradley’s out-of-body experience during an operation. In the routine’s opening, a third person narrator describes the admission process to the “sex area of the amusement park” that both prefigures Bradley’s experience and replicates the transfer operation in “The Mayan Caper.” (The narrator explains that “the applicant is photographed in all stages of erection, orgasm, defecation, urinating, eating — the pictures are cut down the divide line of the body and fitted to prospective partners — the photos are vibrated and welded together in orgone accumulators” [68-9].) However, unlike the transfer operation in “The Mayan Caper,” the procedure’s description in “Substitute Flesh” applies the cut-up to visualize the substitution. In other words, to describe two bifurcated bodies being joined, the routine folds in texts divided down the middle on one another. For example:

[. . .] permutating the neck taped on a silver line until the two being flesh melts body in electric waves — rectums merging a few seconds after blue movies and other sex acts with flicker ghosts shifting back and forth orgasms of the world — tentative copulations of light down the dividing line — sound tracks merged in a smell of KY and rectal mucus — A maze of mirror and screens reflected sex acts

in slow motion to a thousand sound tracks shifted and permuted — slow waves of orgasm in a muttering sea of nitrous film flesh — slow knees up to the chin now — prostates quivering in pearly spasms — limestone flesh over silver pools — encrusted music releasing picture flares in moonlight — slow smooth bodies to sound track of phallic statues — pulsing human skin stuck to faces and pictures in scalpel flashes — Adolescent ejaculated in a thousand cots — First spurts he could feel the tip process together — Tentative being struck drums of memory on his back vibrating focus flesh — shifting erect penis and half-remembered skin instructions to accent of the attendant — thoughts and memories of melting ice — the prostate quivering pearly spasms to his penis in London hotel room — Adolescent lust ejaculated in stale underwear of penny arcades — The canals reflected excitement slipping through legs — Cock flipped out and up — (70-1)

The cut-up's imagery evokes the imagery of substitution. While the phrases "two being flesh melts," "rectums merging," and "tentative copulations of light down the dividing line" visualize bisected bodies in juxtaposition, the pornographic imagery of sexual arousal and climax ("smell of KY and rectal mucus," "prostates quivering," "adolescent lust ejaculated," and "cock flipped up and out") reactivates the aphrodisiacal erotic reactions produced by the subject's contact with the other. However, that these images refer to a "transfer operation" is chiefly acknowledged at the level of technique and form. The patient does not see himself on the operating table, providing some situation to contextualize the fractured syntax and flickering images. The bifurcation of the patient's body and its combination with another is communicated by the fact the descriptions of the bisected and amalgamating bodies are themselves cut up and

arranged into composite descriptions. The result is a vignette that oscillates between one description and another, flickering between two depictions, so that one description gives place to the body in the other: “screens permutate partners divided down the middle line until there is no way to distinguish film from flesh and the flesh melts” (*TX* 69).

If they refer to the scalpel’s incision in the transfer operation, the cuts of this cut-up suggest a therapy for the word virus. In the trilogy’s mythology, this cut can be associated with apomorphine. In his “last words,” Hassan i Sabbah identifies the agonist with a “cut” that relieves the subject of ideological interpellation: “apomorphine is the only agent that can disintoxicate you and cut the enemy beam off your line. Apomorphine and silence” (*NE* 6).¹¹⁴ Elsewhere, the drug is considered “no word and no image” (48). These figures for apomorphine imply that the cut is not simply the remedy for the word virus; it is a silence that exposes the sham connection between self-consciousness and death, since it shows that the cessation of sub-vocal speech does not induce the subject’s demise. It is an absence that refers to the place of the subject.

Further, if it refers to an interruption in the for-the-other, the cut of the cut-up introduces a myoclonic twitch into the substitutional subject’s body. Such a connection frames “apomorphine as a hiccup” (*NE* 166). For “Substitution Flesh,” such an association suggests that that cut is not simply that which joins and separates two bodies; it is a spasm, a contraction, or a signultus that explosively shudders across the incarnated subject’s skin — blasting, jolting, and vibrating the “Other Half” into the street.

In “Substitute Flesh,” Burroughs often registers this fold dividing and joining the two text with a written mechanical mark — most often a dash.¹¹⁵ (It seems evident that he also frequently

leaves the fold unpunctuated. For example, while the phrase “The canals reflected excitement slipping through legs” occurs between two dashes, the disorienting imagery of “excitement slipping” suggests that an unmarked cut might lie between the two words.) Even if unwritten, such a mark leaves a trace of the cut-up’s assault on the symbolic, discursive, ideological order that introduces an odd, silent bump into the text. While the figure of the “cut“ suggests an *interruption* in the text (e.g., Stein’s “one as one not mistaken but interrupted”), the figure of the “fold“ implies the effect of a page brought back to itself, bent and angled toward its origin, as in the circle of self-consciousness, where it shatters on the other. In this sense, while both apomorphine and hiccups offer metaphors for the fold, the dash itself suggests the voice of other: the mark hints at the neuter’s susurrations, but also evokes August Spies’ “silence [. . .] more powerful than the voices you strangle here today.” Indeed, it points to Albert Parson’s last word, his last sound, prematurely cut off, which Avrich represents with the silent, incomprehensible marker, “O — ” In the Nova mythology, such a dash refers to the place of the other, but as this anarchist voice, the dash also registers an unprintable, non-ideological effraction extraneous to the Cold War rhetorical order.

Critical responses to the Cut-Up trilogy ignore the cut itself. While Lydenburg exhibits the greatest sensitivity to the cut-up’s instrumental plasticity, her analyses emphasize the method’s epiphenomenal effects, rather than the cut as a constitutive factor integrated into the text. For her, the cut-ups disperse subjectivity and provide “the possibility of a more radical dissolution of identity” (65); they dissolve spatiotemporal forms, “reveal[ing] the open cosmos of a new script” (91); and they create “an exercise in collaboration and citation” that “explode[s] the notion of ownership of voice, name, and word” (96). Similarly, Murphy indicates that the

trilogy embodies the weaponry deployed by Nova police to combat Operation Other Half: “The *Nova* trilogy itself is nothing but such a cut-up recording, a Trojan horse aimed at the control machine of language that is most effective, paradoxically, when it makes the least syntactic sense” (*Wising* 135-6). For him, the method “break[s] — if only for a moment, in a certain place, and for a small group of readers — the habits, language, and history that bind its readers to a self-destructive past” (139). Such characterizations of the trilogy approach the cut-up method as a procedure of juxtaposition and association. For them, the cut-up is about the placement of textual fragments side by side, and then the effect of the relation randomly engendered by those combinations. Identities “disperse” because different narrative characterizations are intermixed; spatiotemporal forms “dissolve” because the historical and geographical settings that conventional narrative plotting would distinguish roll into one another. Similarly, the method “breaks” “habits, language, and history” because random juxtapositions introduce unexpected associations that loosen ordinary compulsory correlations. In a nutshell, such analyses concentrate exclusively on the trilogy’s language and narrative referents, neglecting the constitutive role of the non-symbolic silences, gasps, and flutters that tremble along the surface of the cut-up text.

Laszlo K. Géfin’s “Collage Theory, Reception, and the Cutups of William Burroughs” (1987) is the one exception. For Géfin, the cut of the cut-up creates a “seam” — a rent in the text that joins two fragments into a single unit — and that “seam” produces a “mind jolt” in Burroughs’s reader. He writes:

[. . .] when attempting semantically to integrate the cutup, the attentive reader’s mind should stop as it reaches the juncture where the cut-in fragment begins; or

rather the mind is coerced to “jump” *over* the invisible yet perceptible “seam” as part of the initial syntactic reading, while also attempting a semantic reconciliation *across* the “seam.” [. . .] Even after repeated readings, the “mind jolt” at the “seam” remains. Whether the “jolt” is experienced as something disquieting, unpleasant, upsetting, ironic, silly, mystical, or just boring will hinge on the particular reader’s past experience, horizon, and receptivity. (96)

In other words, while the reader’s experience of the text is partially determined by the cut-up’s juxtapositions and associations, the “seam” engendered by process of rearrangement introduces unpredictable affects into the text.¹¹⁶ Contrasting with Murphy’s and Lydenburg’s approaches to the cut-up text, Géfin indicates that when I read the trilogy, I do not only experience the cognitive dissonance produced by disturbing and subversive associations of fragments; if I am an “attentive reader,” my experience assimilates the interval between each textual fragment in the form of feelings that would depend on the contingencies of my own unique subjectivity. The trilogy’s difficulty resides not only in leaping “over” and “across” each fissure that joins and separates its narrative imagery, but in the duty to “semantically [. . .] integrate” my unruly, unanticipated affective response to the cut into the narrative.

Contrary to Géfin, however, “Substitute Flesh” suggests that the *cut* of the cut-up affects the body, not the “mind.” While the routine acknowledges “thoughts and memories of melting ice,” its overwhelming attention to somatic experience indicates that the psychic life of consciousness, language, and ideology is a secondary concern. If the cut is a “hiccup” — “no word and no image” — its primary relation is not to the reader’s knowledge of the narrative, that is, the content generated by juxtapositions and associations, since the cut figures forth the

absence of such knowledge; instead, it relates to the feelings that traverse the body of the reader. In “Substitute Flesh” (and throughout the Nova trilogy), these feelings are not emotional responses (finding something “disquieting, unpleasant, upsetting, ironic, silly, mystical, or just boring”); they are the incarnate sensations of substitution, that is, the engorgement of the sexual organ (“shifting erect penis”), muscle spasms (“prostate quivering”), and contractions in the bulbospongiosus (“slow waves of orgasm”) that the Nova trilogy associates with contact with the other. For Géfin’s reader, these somatic responses suggest that the cut calls attention to the susceptiveness of the cut-up’s recipient. The sudden involuntary bursts of energy do not only “vibrate the ‘Other Half’ right out into the street”; they affirm that such an evasion from the word does not place the cut-up’s subject in itself, but locate it in the place of the other.

The cut of “Substitute Flesh” — the cut that marks the place of substitution — resembles “the missing half second” that Brian Massumi connects with “unqualified feeling.” In “The Autonomy of Affect,” Massumi provides experimental evidence that a “half second” of affective stimulation precedes acts of cognition and decision-making. Acts of consciousness and will, he argues, are “*limitative, derived functions*” posterior to somatic events (29). “The missing half second” is an excess of somatic stimulation that precedes and remains unrecognized by thought and volition, suggesting that such “higher” functions “are apparently performed by autonomic, bodily reactions occurring in the brain but outside consciousness, [. . .] prior to action and expression” (ibid). Antedating the word, registering in the body before entering the subject’s consciousness, this “missing half second” suggests that Géfin’s metaphors of “seam” and “mind jolt” inadequately express the cut’s radical absence. While “mind jolt” locates the cut’s effect in the “higher” functions that the cut reveals to be restricting and secondary¹¹⁷, “seam” implies a

repair, cohesion, or restored unity; the metaphor closes up and smoothes over a rent that disrupts every claim to uniformity and completion. Rather than these limitative and derived metaphors proper to a reception theory aiming toward “semantic reconciliation,” the cut is not simply both a rent and a seam, as Japanese *kireji* intimated; it is the aleatory element of the “missing half second” that makes the cut-up less a matter of *chance* than *contingency*, *potentiality*, and *incipience*.

If “the book attempts to cope with invasion,” the cut as somatic stimulation does not simply provide a remedy for the parasitoidal, interpellating PSYOP supposedly installed in the reader’s central nervous system; it introduces affect into the reader’s body that marks the anarchic locus prior to the formation of the subject. In “The End of the Body” (1973), Cary Nelson ascribes this power to the trilogy’s language: “Internalizing Burroughs’ language, the reader finds it incompatible with his own speech. Yet the [language of the] novels [. . .] now exists in his body” (130). For Nelson, this intrusion into the reader’s flesh marks “the end of the body.” Though Burroughs’ sensuous imagery pervades the trilogy, “his violent imagery does not make us at home in our bodies. His radical space destroys the self as a structure continuous in time by ravaging and irresistibly transforming our biologic existence” (131). Here, emphasizing the cut rather than Burroughs’ language, I mean to slightly modulate Nelson’s analysis. While the entrance of Burroughs’ language into my body would point to that within “my” body that is not proper to it, the affectivity activated by the cut alludes to the other for whom I am a substitute. If Burroughs’ Cut-Up trilogy transforms “our biological existence,” it is through the suggestion that autonomic function is the sign of ipseity, that is, the sign of the other in the subject. Fulfilling its charge to “rub out the word,” it does reveal “the end of the body” to the degree that “there is

nothing there,” but rather than the body’s “end,” that absence figured forth by the cut is the locus before the beginning and ending, which Stein figured forth as the neuter’s acephalous, nomic organizations: not the “end of the body,” but the anarchy of incarnation where the other speaks.

Here, there is no subject, only denucleation. In “Substitute Flesh,” the cut-up’s form suggests that the subject has slipped under the collected textual fragments. Rather than a “subject,” the passage presents an amalgamation of body parts and sensations divorced from the trilogy’s characters. For example, “sound tracks merged in a smell of KY and rectal mucus” evokes audio tape splices and the erotic reactions elicited by the experiments, but the “sound tracks” and olfactory images are dissociated from characters who might be identified in the narrative. In the place of the subject, the cut-up creates white noise: flickers, static, fuzz. It is a series of affects, vibrations, flows — crimes and arrests. Insofar as this white noise registers the anarchy of the incarnated body, anterior to language and consciousness, Burroughs’ acephalous writing suggests that “Substitute Flesh” cannot even be experienced. While Géfin indicates that the cut-up must be “experienced as something,”¹¹⁸ the affectivity of this experience implies a non-symbolic language *from which the subject is excluded*. There is, then, no experience of the cut-up per se; only affect, only bubbles, efflorescence, mess.

Perhaps the asubjectivity in “Substitute Flesh” expresses Burroughs’ desire for distance from “the soft machine” vulnerable to contagion. In an interview, he articulates this desire with his apprehension about the body’s exposure to language’s alienating effects: “Words, at least in the way we use them, can stand in the way of what I call non-body experience. It’s time we thought about leaving the body behind” (Lotringer 65). Later, looking forward to man’s biological and anatomical evolution, he adds: “The hope lies in the development of non-body

experience and eventually getting away from the body itself, away from three-dimensional coordinates and concomitant animal reactions of fear and flight, which lead inevitably to tribal feuds and dissension” (80). While Burroughs’ statements seem to contradict the idea that the cut of the cut-up introduces an affect that incarnates the body, such incarnation is not reducible to “three-dimensional coordinates” and animal instincts; instead, as the beginning before the beginning and end of the body, it is the locus of contact with the other, where the affectivity of an assignation has always already drawn the subject outside the body and located it in the place of the other. Such incarnation is not the “non-body experience” identified with astral projection or the dissociative states produced by psychedelic drugs; it is “otherwise than being,” the “Polar distance” for-the-other in substitution.

In the Nova mythology, a cut-up such as “Substitute Flesh” is an encounter with the other that would register as “the missing half second” in the skin. “Operation Rewrite,” a chapter that resembles a “rewrite bulletin,” indicates that the cut-up method is not merely a contestation of “Operation Other Half” that harkens back to Mr. Taylor’s audiotape splices, it is an ethical relation of friendship:

Remember that you can separate yourself from the “Other Half” from the word. [. . .] The first step is to record the sounds of your body and start splicing them in yourself. Splice in your body sounds with the body sounds of your best friend and see how familiar he gets. Splice your body sounds in with hammers. Blast jolt vibrate the “Other Half” right out into the street. [. . .] Feel right out into your nabor’s intestines and help him digest his food. *Communication must become total and conscious before we can stop it.* (TX 50-1)

The bulletin indicates that the cut-up technique constitutes an intimate collaboration with the “best friend” and “nabor” that puts the subject in the place of the other. That Burroughs’ cut-ups can “blast jolt vibrate the ‘Other Half’ right out into the street” implies not only that the technique clears out a space that might give place to connections other than the automatic associations triggered by the word (e.g., “ROSE”), but that such “clearing out” is the result of affectivity . Counter to the ersatz identification that the Other Half fabricates between its chatter (disguised as the subject’s somatic noises) and the subject’s autonomic system, the bulletin’s recommendation to splice recordings of the subject’s internal organs with recordings of its friend’s internal organs implies that the trilogy’s cut-ups formally register the relation of proximity that Burroughs’ represents with erotic images of human body parts. (Elsewhere, the subject of the cut-ups is encouraged to “select as your partner someone with whom you are on intimate terms” because “the experiment may give rise to erotic reactions” [210].) Further, while the order to “feel right out into your nabor’s intestines and help him digest his food” implies that the subject’s body gives place to the other, it also suggests that the Nova trilogy is this site of that takes responsibility for the neighbor. In other words, while “the book attempts to cope with invasion,” it also incarnates a relation to the neighbor that demonstrates friendship through its sacrifice of the (radical) subject.

“Substitute Flesh” suggests that communication becomes “total” once the cut is folded into the text. In a world where the Nova Mob rigs the game so that “the past records your ‘future,’” the Nova trilogy indicates that such totalization is achieved by splicing the “future” into the prerecording¹¹⁹: “The only thing *not* prerecorded in a prerecorded universe is the prerecording itself which is to say *any* recording that contains a random factor” (*TX* 188, 166). In

“Substitute Flesh,” that “random factor” is the fold itself. The fold introduces a non-symbolic language into the text. Where the text attempts to control and bamboozle the body into submitting to an image of its routine and relentless operations, the fold places into circulation an affectivity that alerts the body to its relation to the “nabor,” rather than the word. Hence, in the context of the “Rewrite Bulletin,” “communication becomes total and conscious” once it accounts for the absence of the subject, that is, once it ceases to pretend to be launched from the place of the subject and occupies the site of substitution: the locus of the anarchy anterior to the subject from which the other assigns it responsibility.

Read beside “Substitute Flesh,” “The Mayan Caper” suggests that substitution does not only form a relation of friendship that places the “nabor” before the subject; *that anarchic relation gives place to anarchy in the form of insurrection*. In the “Mayan Caper,” such insurrection establishes conditions for anarchy: it abolishes the systems of domination, neutralizes hierarchical organizations, and redistributes power among the subordinated classes. From Burroughs’s perspective, such an action was the only choice under the duress of nuclear war. Reflecting on the civil unrest in the United States during the late 1960s, particularly the student movement, Burroughs stated: “There should be more riots and more violence. Young people in the West have been lied to, sold out, and betrayed. Best thing they can do is take the place apart before they are destroyed in a nuclear war. Nuclear war is inevitable if the present controllers remain in power” (Odiar 73). In the context of the Nova trilogy, such a statement does not only approve of insurrection as a response to Cold War PSYOP; it implies that the order that would prevail over the “present controllers” would be based on the figure of the “nabor” and the subject’s substitution for-the-other, lest the word virus be reactivated and spread again amid the

population. In effect, the cut-up method's denucleation of the subject in the Nova trilogy expresses an insurrectionary desire to de-nuclearize Cold War superpowers.

Therefore, the Nova trilogy holds out the possibility that the relation to the other — responsibility and substitution for-the-other — is an *anarchist* act not only to the degree that it respects the primacy of the neighbor because *such responsibility involves the abolition of hierarchical and centralized authority, including the alienating effects of ideology itself*. It suggests that the neighbor asks the subject not to build a world that serves it as a detached and sovereign power, a king or God, as though a world that begins in substitution can only lead to monarchy, but to build a horizontally organized system that relentlessly desystematizes itself. It suggests that *respect for the relation to the other*, that is, substitution, otherwise than being, *is respect for anarchy* — the origin before all origins. It does not erect a law of the other, a state of the other, except to the degree that it institutes a law that cannot be instituted, a state that loses its center before it consolidates into a sovereign power.

If the cut-up trilogy embodies this anarchy, it hesitates to step farther than the exposure of the subject to persecution and death. “Substitute Flesh” closes with the revelation that the “transfer operation” staged by the cut-up technique's effects is in fact Bradley's out-of-body experience while a doctor surgically extracts parasites from his body.¹²⁰ Bradley sees himself from a polar distance, cut in half, while “a doctor with forceps was extracting crab parasites from his brain and spine — a squeezing green fish parasites from the separated flesh” (TX 85). Focalizing the narrative through Bradley's perspective, this conclusion suggests that every return to the subject marks a return to infection¹²¹, but it also leaves the subject permanently open, susceptible, and face-to-face with death. That, for Burroughs, is perhaps the true cut — the

exposure to that which calls the subject forward to live on death for-the-other: a night-glory.

“My God what a mess,” says the doctor.

V. LEMURS

In the Nova mythology, the subject of the cut-up is not simply a subject opposed to hierarchical institutions and ideologies; it is an anarchist subject incarnated by the affects that produce the body that they traverse. In *Nova Express*, such a subject is figured forth by “The Lemur People.” Delicate, fragile, quick to recoil into the trees, these strepsirrhine apparitions are symbols of denucleation.¹²² They represent susceptibility to the extreme. They cannot be held, for “they die in captivity,” nor can they endure the approach of interlopers: “the lemurs are of such delicacy that they die if one sets foot on the island” (112; 113). They are bubbles. Indeed, cut into the exposition of the Lemur People, Burroughs splices a fragment that seems to refer to the sheen of the fur in sunlight but that also evokes the bubble’s opalescence: “ — iridescent brown copper color — ” (ibid.). The image of that glinting shimmer on the surface of their coats, itself produced by the flash of cuts marked by two glistening dashes, visualizes the skittish and quicksilver play of affects fluttering in their muscles and scintillating across their skin.

Indeed, the Lemur People are affectivity itself. According to Willy the Rube, lemurs are “all affect you understand — That is why they die in captivity” (112). In the context of “the missing half second,” to be “all affect” does not necessarily imply absolute affectivity, as though the Lemur people were reducible to unqualified emotion; it means that they embody the intensity of incipience, that is, they embody that which is “begun but not completed,” or a vibration that does not yet belong to the subject that will be constructed by its throbbing and pulsation

(Massumi 30). For Massumi, such a body would not be *lived*, that is, experienced by a self-consciousness; it would be *felt*. Such a body “is as immediately virtual as it is actual” (ibid.). In other words, to be “all affect” points to an embodiment that incarnates potentialities that remain in reserve, un-activated, in the Lemur People’s very flesh. The title of Burroughs’ *Ghost of a Chance* registers this affective potentiality; identifying lemurs with “chance,” he suggests that such spectral creatures hold in reserve certain possibilities, accidents, and strokes of luck. In this way, the Lemur People are not only affectivity; they are figures for the cut. “They die in captivity” not only because they are removed from their arboreal homes, but because such confinement prohibits the exercise of those potentialities and random factors

It is this affectivity that elects them anarchist subjects. Creatures that have evolved to slip from every form of confinement and possession, the Lemur People can neither be taken into nor give themselves to binary, dialectical, master-slave relationships:

No one has ever been able to hold a lemur for more than a few minutes in my memory — And it is a thousand years since anyone had intercourse with a lemur — The issue was lost — They are of such a delicacy you understand the least attempt-thought of holding or possessing and they are back in the branches where they wait the master who knew not hold and possess — They have waited a long time — (112-3)

Affect does not equal affection. While the lemurs are touched in the most intimate manner by the proximity of the other — contacted from the inside, so that fur glitters — they are compelled to recoil from the clutch. This is not to say that the Lemur People resist being coerced into hierarchical relations, but that evolution has provided them with an allergy to relations that

diminish their affectivity. In other words, affect constructs them so that every practice of domination repulses them. For anarchism, that the lemurs “wait for the master who knew not hold and possess” does not mean that they await a state to come, as though the right leader could inspire their submission, nor that they have abandoned all relations to the outside; it means that their involuntary reactions maintain a relation to the other in their proximity on the only possible terms. Rather than some pathogen, their flight is a form of the patience, passion, and passivity that responds to the call of the other. Indeed, insofar as affect registers the assignation of the other, the lemur’s nervousness, frailty, and distance indicate that the neighbor obliges him not only to “let her be” and “let her try,” that is, “step aside” and “leave her alone”; but to contribute to a space where hierarchical and centralized power regimes cannot take place, and every relation organizes around the denucleating distance of the neighbor.

Though Landstreicher did not have lemurs in mind when he indicated that “we need to become a certain sort of being, a being capable of acting on our own terms to realize our own desires,” the Nova trilogy’s placement of affectivity at the heart of the anarchist subject implies that the Lemur People embody that “sort of being.” Landstreicher’s post-left project is a philosophy of *grasping*, an ontology of possession as well as apprehension: it seeks conditions in which the individual can “grasp [. . .] that they need to fully realize themselves” and s/he “may choose to grasp her life as his own.” However, the Lemur People represent *ungraspable* beings. That they retreat into the trees at “the least attempt-thought of holding or possessing,” absconding when confronted by either the hand’s or mind’s “grasp,” demonstrates that external power cannot control them. Yet that the Lemur People’s retreat does not sever the relation to the other, that they patiently await “the master who knew not hold and possess,” demonstrates that

they are not their own to “grasp” either. For the Nova mythology, there is nothing “certain” about this “certain sort of being” except the uncertainty that desystematizes every claim to ownership and every fixed form of knowledge.¹²³ While Landstreicher’s post-left anarchy preserves the notion of the centralized and sovereign subject, Burroughs’ Lemur People show not only that such a subjectivity belongs to an ideological regime of knowledge homologous with the Nova Conspiracy; it reiterates *Patriarchal Poetry*’s implication that the subject that forbids hierarchical relations and subverts the place of domination shatters rather than self-organizes; the affects of obsession, persecution, and repulsion, belonging to the other and partaken of by the subject, place the subject into flight whenever it would approach itself or the neighbor.

Burroughs’ depiction of the Lemur People implicitly argues that Landstreicher’s efforts to theorize “the living, actual individual” without accounting for its affectivity, that is, without accounting for the place of substitution, redouble the very reifications of the individual that post-left anarchy targets for excision. Landstreicher’s “point” — to “make the decision to take one’s life back in its totality” — does not simply disregard that within the subject which prevents totalization, nor does he simply disregard the detotalizing, denucleating soft spot that would make the anarchist subject commensurable with anarchy; his notion of radical subjectivity forbids him from theorizing the possibility that *the absence of a root in the subject constitutes the radical in subjectivity*. While Vaneigem underestimates the passivity of the subject, his disciple Landstreicher’s fixation on origins and ownership overlooks that the subject is “total” only when it has been totaled. In other words, rather than that which grasps itself at the root, the Lemur People indicate the anarchist subject is that which has been cut from the root. Such a cut does not constitute another reification. Similar to the communication that is totalized when it

incorporates the “random factor” of the fold, the subject is totalized when affects have a place within it, that is, when the site of its interiority accounts for the place of the “nabor” extraneous to it.

For post-left anarchy, the Nova mythology demonstrates that anarchy that abandons “political affiliations” — a “post-anarchism anarchy” or “type-3” anarchism — is a mess. Anarchy, the Lemur People suggest, is affected; it is corrupted by influences that compromise it, and such corruption is its beauty. Rather than a sincere realization of this mess, post-left anarchy comprises a form of *purism*. It wants the first, the unadulterated, the for real for real, all or nothing. In the conclusion of “Anarchists, Don’t let the Left(overs) Ruin your Appetite,” Lawrence Jarach encourages anarchists not merely break with leftist practices and separate from leftist political movements, causes, and organizations in order to territorialize spaces for autonomous anarchist interventions; he encourages them “to return to authentically anarchist principles” (16). While such principles include mutual aid, voluntary cooperation, and direct action — principles historically consistent with anarchist thought and practice — the notion of *authenticity* seems naïve after the Nova trilogy. Today, after the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the triumph of global capitalism, the anarchist subject is not pure — not total, immanent, or self-identical. If it has a root within itself and if it can grasp that root, the “radical” subject only grasps the other, which obliges its sacrifice.

If the cut of the cut-up registers affect that incarnates the subject, Burroughs’ technique is not simply an act of friendship that takes responsibility for the other; it is a technology of anarchism. It is a tactic for becoming-lemur, that is, for constructing the anarchist subject in a manner that respects the absolute distance of the neighbor and aims to answer the revolutionary

call to die in its place. This possibility of the anarchist subject's self-stylization should not be conflated with McQuinn's notion of "self-theory."¹²⁴ For McQuinn, "self-theory" comes from an impulse similar to Burroughs' cut-up technique: "[. . .] everyone must become his or her own theoretician. We must cease to allow others to think for us. We must criticize all thought ruthlessly, especially our own. Instead of allowing the reference points of our lives to always be somewhere else, we must become conscious centers of our own self-theories" (Chernyi 24). The fundamental difference between McQuinn's and Burroughs' impulse to purge the effects of interpellation is that whereas McQuinn would locate such theorizations at the subject's "conscious center," Burroughs's Nova mythology insists that emancipation will only be discovered "somewhere else," where the idea of freedom is a lost cause.

"From Silence rewrite the message that is you."¹²⁵ This sentence, from the first edition of *The Soft Machine* (14), points toward the Eckert's "anarchise perself!" However, rather than a post-left "self-theory," this discursive stylization of the anarchist subject incorporates the cut, the "ghost of a chance" that preserves for the subject a principle of the aleatory. If the cut-up is the method of rewriting and mythologizing, "the message that is you" is not an affirmation of autonomy, self-organization, or self-government, or an order to take charge of one's life and determine its values for oneself; it is a relation to "Silence." For the Nova mythology, written with a capital "S," such silence signifies the "nabor," and the instruction to "rewrite the message that is you" can only mean correcting the humanist version of the subject inculcated in every individual and rebuilding it around that irreducible jerk.

CHAPTER 5

CHATOYANCE:

KATHY ACKER'S *EMPIRE OF THE SENSELESS* AND RACE TREASON

Is I *me*, or who *is* I? Is I heah, or what is I?"

— Mark Twain

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (82)

"If you are black you can't be white / and you can't be yourself."

— Kwesi Balagoon

"Big Ben" (100)

"I only had myself to save. I couldn't save myself."

— Kathy Acker

Empire of the Senseless (13)

I. "NO ROSES GROW ON SAILOR'S GRAVES"

Kathy Acker's *Empire of the Senseless* (1988) is a postmodern quest narrative that follows its two nomadic narrators, Thivai and Abhor, through France's "Algerian revolution" and its aftermath. According to Acker, the quest exhibits a tripartite structure. Beginning in Reagan-era society "defined by the Oedipal taboo," the novel thrusts its characters into a society defined by alternative politico-sexual relationships and ends with "hints of a possibility or beginning: the body, the actual flesh, almost wordless, romance, the beginning of a movement from no to yes, from nihilism to myth" ("A Few Notes" 35, 36). In the narrative, this tripartite structure corresponds to Thivai's and Abhor's mercenary activity in Berne — a white, patriarchal, neoliberal society — , the Algerian revolution in Paris, and the post-revolutionary period during which Thivai and Abhor struggle to reorient themselves and their relation in a world where the familiar regimes of power have been annihilated. If Burroughs' "mythology for the space age" portrayed the practices of Cold War superpowers in order to justify anarchist insurrection,

Acker's "myth" imagines anarchy after the euphoria of Dadaist destruction has subsided and the difficult questions about the future must be resolved.¹²⁶

"Anarchy" is the novel's last word. In Acker's commentary, the "hints of a possibility or beginning" refer to Abhor's concluding statement: "I thought that one day, maybe, there'd be a human society in a world which is beautiful, a society which wasn't just disgust" (227). Critics tend to understand this ending in terms of an indefinite futurity. Robert Siegle suggests that Abhor's conclusion is the beginning of a new quest, unwritten, faintly defined and largely undetermined, committed to "keep[ing] the beauty of dreams off the bow and the society of disgust astern" (76-7). Angela Naimou similarly argues that Abhor's excessively tentative language ("I thought that, one day, maybe") "evokes the failed or ephemeral moments of imaginative and social decolonization witnessed by Abhor in *Empire*, even as it continues to locate hope for collective decolonization with certain notions of beauty and futurity" (135). In other words, while Abhor's conditional construction ("there'd") implies that the Algerian revolution has perpetuated "disgust" — the same affect, perhaps, that Tzara ascribed to Dada's origin — rather than established a "beautiful" world, Abhor's thought preserves an irresolute possibility that suffices to forestall pure nihilism and secures the chance at a world without colonial hegemony, racial supremacy, or hierarchy.

But the end of Abhor's narrative is not *Empire*'s conclusion. The novel's last page features an illustration resembling tattoo flash: a dagger plunged through the corolla of a bleeding rose, wrapped in a banner that reads "DISCIPLINE AND ANARCHY." Appearing in this privileged place, the illustration suggests that the ideas of "discipline and anarchy" anchor Thivai's and Abhor's quest through revolution and its aftermath, and that "anarchy" itself forms

the novel's ultimate point, consummation, or seal. It retroactively renders "discipline and anarchy" *Empire's* central motif. Every cut-up, every episode, and every sentence will have referred, directly or indirectly, to this double theme. If Abhor's and Thivai's narratives confront the obstacles of neoliberal globalization, colonialism, patriarchy, and racism, the last page suggests that "discipline and anarchy" resolve those problems. Thus, while Abhor's narrative ends with uncertain but powerful expectancy, *Empire* suggestively concludes that discipline and anarchy, not minor recognitions and ambiguous hopes, promise to build a society better than the present.

In this chapter, I would like to argue that the motif of discipline and anarchy in Acker's *Empire* relates to race. Many critics examine *Empire's* intersection with anarchy.¹²⁷ Joseph Conte, for example, argues that "Acker's writing is anarchic to the core" and that *Empire* "articulates a treatise on anarchism" (14, 13). However, these analyses overlook the central role of "blackness" for *Empire's* anarchism. I propose that in *Empire* Acker practices an aesthetics that Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks calls "discoloration." Arguing that "race itself must be dismantled as a regime of looking," Seshadri-Crooks advocates for an aesthetics that implicitly applies Stein's efforts to break the noun to race: "an adversarial aesthetics that will throw racial signification into disarray" and "destabilize racial looking so that racial identity will always be uncertain and unstable" (158, 159). In *Empire*, this practice produces an anarchic racial identity that does not rely on visible features or other discursive codes, but comes from the other, through processes of citation and iteration.

I would like this reading to build on the critical concentration on sex and gender in Acker's work. Martina Sciolino observes that "identity is plastic" in Acker's cut-up texts:

“[identity] mutates in Acker’s innovative characterizations; gender is often, finally, in indeterminate relation to identity. Moreover, both identity and gender are social constructions, works-in-progress whose very indeterminacy enables a politically motivated interruption” (443). Reading Acker’s cut-ups as a practice of “discoloration” frames such plasticity in terms of race: it suggests that the fictional Algerian revolution dislodges the hegemonic position of “whiteness” from racial discourse and opens a space in which race can be a “work-in-progress,” subject to the aleatory and experimentation, rather than a fixed feature of the body, ostensibly visible at birth.

Abhor embodies this “discoloration.” Spoken by Thivai — a pirate marooned in a world where “there’s no more pirate ships” (26) — *Empire*’s opening sentence states: “This is what Abhor, who’s my partner, part robot, and part black; told me was her childhood” (3). While Thivai’s frame includes these brief expository details, the *bildungsroman* that follows only traces Abhor’s Jewish genealogy. Mediated by Thivai’s voice, Abhor explains that her grandmother (her father’s mother) “came out of a German Jewish family” that fled to Paris during the Third Reich (3). Abhor provides no information about her biological mother — a peculiar omission, since the novel commences with her racial identification. Indeed, in a text so sensitive to the interrelations between race and sex, Abhor seems obliged to discuss what would have been her mother and father’s interracial marriage. It is not that a biracial Jewish woman is unimaginable, but that Abhor does not include “my mother was black” in “her” narrative. The effect of Abhor being identified as “part black” and Jewish shortcircuits her image as a character: Abhor’s image flickers, myoclonically contracting and shuddering, between lighter and darker complexions.

Is this racial identity a fiction? Perplexed by this incongruity, Jon Stratton feels compelled to fix Abhor’s identity, and determines that she “would count as Jewish” through her father based

on the decree of liberal American Jewish leadership (81). Stratton's compulsion, I believe, is telling. The image of Abhor's fluttering does not correspond to a racial code, and Stratton's need to fix her with a racial order suggests that that absence causes anxiety. (C. Jody Castricano notes that the etymology of Abhor's name, *abhorrére*, means "to shrink back in dread, to be far from, to be inconsistent with; to regard with horror, extreme repugnance or disgust; to hate utterly, loathe, abominate" [105].) "Discoloration" designates this *absence of the racial image*. "Invisible," a "work-in-progress," such a racial identity possesses the "plasticity" ordinarily ascribed to sex and gender in Acker's texts. Rather than a set of phenotypical features or a verifiable lineage, Abhor's race is a question, an uncertainty that cannot be verified by a specular act of looking.

When Abhor speaks "for herself," she identifies her origins with such plasticity, but rather than sex and race, such plasticity is first and foremost imbricated with the anarchic. Indeed, her "birth" invites comparison to de Cleyre's confessional primal scene. Looking back on her grandmother's life, Abhor recounts the execution of Alexander, her Nana's teenage lover, who was sentenced to death for murdering four Vice Squad officers, accomplishing "one of the final nineteenth-century revolts of the non-existent against the economic controllers" (6). On the day, his execution incites a riot. "In blood and change," Abhor states, "my childhood began" (*ibid.*). Identifying herself with this "blood and change," Abhor's *bildungsroman* implies that her life answers a revolutionary call. She does not only originate, prior to birth, in socioeconomic tumult; her life begins in a pain that responds to the state's injustice against the other. Her racial identity, her "discoloration," must first be squared with the anarchy that precedes it.

In *Empire*, such change is identified with the figure of the sailor. In Acker's mythology's

imaginary, sailors are not only anarchist figures (“Sailors leave anarchy in their drunken wakes” [*Empire* 113]); they are figures of the *hombre invisible*, whose nomadic and homeless existence places them outside the state’s disciplinary and biopolitical order “Though the sailor longs for home, her or his love is change. Stability in change, change in stability occurs only imaginarily. No roses grow on sailors’ graves” (114).¹²⁸ While the idea of “stability in change” and “change in stability” points forward to “discipline and anarchy,” Daniel Punday indicates that the phrase “no roses grow on sailors’ graves” suggests that sailors “inhabit a non-place within a temporary and self-negating but nonetheless real and precisely defined existence” (n.pag.). In other words, sailors live in a temporary autonomous zone that (to borrow the Wobblie slogan) constructs a “new society in the shell of the old.” For Siegle, sailors are “lost at sea if they’re really sailors” (74). The sea is their grave; their death, and thus their life, is fraught with uncertainty. They are figures that shrink from fixity, recoil from final placement within the state, and thereby point to an identity that does not rely on a regime of looking for validation and does not deflect the anxiety produced by the impossibility of that identification.

II. DUAL POWER

Acker’s representation of “black” revolution in *Empire* hearkens to Kwesi Balagoon’s and Lorenzo Kom’boa Ervin’s anarchist writings. Perhaps two of the United States’ first postanarchists, Balagoon and Ervin argue for what Balagoon calls “anti-imperialist anarchism”: anarchism that accommodates racial and ethnic groups excluded from classical and contemporary anarchist models, particularly “New Afrikan people.” Writing in prison during the 1980s, Balagoon argues that anti-imperialist and anti-colonial struggle complement anarchism.

For him, only anarchism's practices of inclusion and fluidity respect the transnational solidarity of colonized people: "anarchy would have to be anti-imperialist," he states, because "there's no other ideology that refuses to recognize borders" (118).¹²⁹ Rather than exclusively pursuing anarchist aims, he encourages anarchists to contribute to nationalist and anti-imperialist causes of "third world peoples": "It is beside the point whether black, Puerto Rican, Native American, or Chicano-Mexicano people endorse nationalism as a vehicle for self-determination or agree with anarchism as being the only road to self-determination. As revolutionaries, we must support the will of the masses" (79). Anarchists, Balagoon notes, simply must make sure that they "don't get lost in the sauce, so to speak — that is abandon anarchist principles and the objective of building anarchist organizations" (105). Anarchists who do not get lost, he suggests, are "real get down anarchists" (114) — *disciplined anarchists*, dedicated to creating anarchic conditions, not simply ideology.¹³⁰

In *Empire*, the neocolonial confinement of Algerians in Paris silently points to the confinement of black people in the United States during Reagan's presidency. For Balagoon, the "New Afrikan people" that would be aided by anti-imperialist anarchism are "Black people held within the confines of the present borders of the U.S." (115, 69). Ervin describes the status of racial and ethnic minorities in the United States thus:

Blacks (or Africans in America) are colonized. America is a mother country with an internal colony. For Africans in America, our situation is one of total oppression. [. . .] Ours is a captive, oppressed colonial status that must be overthrown, not just smashing ideological racism or denial of civil rights. [. . .] We must destroy the social dynamic of a very real existence of America being

made up of an oppressor white nation and an oppressed Black nation, (in fact there are several captive nations). (15)¹³¹

Similarly, in Acker's dystopian Paris, "the Parisian and French government desired simply to exterminate the Algerian trash, the terrorists, the gypsies" (75). Evoking the rising unemployment rates, disintegration of public services, and intensified incarceration among African Americans that Acker would have witnessed during the rise of the neoliberal New Right and the escalating War on Drugs, the French government's practices of extermination include ghettoization, police terror, and surveillance: "The urban sections inhabited by Algerians were literally areas of plague to the Parisians who knew how to speak properly. The French authorities murdered pregnant women. They made every Algerian they could carry a computerized identity card" (ibid.).

When the French government's mistreatment pushes Paris' Algerian population toward revolution, the Algerians form temporary autonomous zones hostile to state governance that Ervin argues are central to anti-imperialist anarchist strategy. In *Empire*, Abhor calls this TAZ an "urban rather than a political situation" (76). The Algerian occupation of Paris begins with isolated, local, neighborhood rebellions ("one rebellion, for instance, that took place over a vast city block, part of which was a deserted parking lot, in the South, lasted a hundred years until every Parisian deserted the zone altogether" [75-6]) and gradually builds in response to intensifying Parisian "security" measures. Eventually, the Algerians occupy "the slums, the shadows, the alleyways, the deserted metro stations" and "by 1985, an official police report states that 'security was now non-existent' for whites in Paris. It was unwise for whites to act" (76). Ervin calls such an "urban situation" a "dual power structure." For him, "dual power means that

you organize a number of collectives and communes in cities and town [sp] all over North America, which are, in fact, liberated zones, outside of the control of the government” (20). Centered by racial solidarity, Ervin’s “liberated zones” entail “Black control of the Black community” (24). While dual power circumnavigates and minimizes state power, it fundamentally aims to occupy ghettoized territories coded by white power and to recode these zones around collectively and directly determined black needs and desires. Ervin states: “The realization of this aim means that we can build inner city Communes, which will be centers of Black counter-power and social revolutionary culture against the white political power structures in the principle cities of the United States” (25).

Dual power characterizes Acker’s cut-ups. Popularly known as her “plagiaristic” method, Acker’s approach operates through a process of citation, iteration, and conflation. Following Gysin and Burroughs, she fragments and rearranges other writers’ texts, often major canonical literary works, and then writes over them, introducing extensive and minor revisions. While Burroughs often incorporated texts by writers that he admired (“cut up Rimbaud and you are in Rimbaud’s place”), Acker often integrates texts in order to kill those writers’ joy. She may respect these texts, even love them, but her supreme act of friendship is to confront them with their repression of the other. Further, Acker’s “plagiarism” frequently borrows the pilfered text’s internal logic in order to organize her own “myths.” While my analysis of Burroughs’ Cut-Up trilogy suggested that pleasure is to be found in the rhythm and pulsation of the cut itself, so that one could read the trilogy without a familiarity with Burroughs’ sources, I would argue here that the pleasure of Acker’s cut-ups is to be found less in the narratives themselves, which are iterations of other literary works, than in the interplay between her text and the “master.” The

failure of most Acker scholarship is that it does not enjoy this pleasure. That is, it does not read Acker as a cut-up artist, and too often endeavors to elucidate her texts “in themselves,” as though they were anchored by a subject, not ceaseless denucleation.

In *Empire*, this dual power structure gives place to the unconscious of the master texts that repressed the other.¹³² Victoria de Zwaan suggests that Acker’s cut-ups do not simply gloss their source text, effectively reading it while writing over it; they relinquish back into the text the hostile and prohibited impulses transformed into “civilized” conventions and attitudes in order to defend against them: “Acker does not do violence or destroy her source texts: rather, in what turn out to be cogent, creative, and even sensitive readings, she creates a narrative of desublimation for each of the narratives she uses” (461). In other words, while it does not treat the “word virus,” Acker’s application of the cut-up technique adds a twist to Burroughs’ claim that “when you cut word lines the future leaks out”; it dissects the master text, places it into conversation with other texts, and modifies its actual language *in order to tease forth that which the text ceaselessly utters without articulating for itself*. For this reason, Acker describes her project in terms that transcend modernist collage: “What I’m doing is simply taking text to be the same as the world, to be equal to non-text, in fact to be more real than non-text, and start *representing text*” (“Devoured” 13). As a dual power structure, this “desublimation” breaks the codes of the master text, showing to the master the immanence of a taboo that it must disavow about itself in order to maintain its dominance.

As I suggested above, critics focus on sex and gender in relation to these desublimations. Pointing out her proclivity to bring canonical literary texts face to face with the repression of sex and gender differences that maintains their patriarchal hegemony, Svetlana Mintcheva notes that

“Acker’s re-writing of texts is both a form of exposure of their gender and power dynamics and a way of finding means of expression” (268). Rob Latham even attempts to feminize the cut-up technique by identifying it with anti-Oedipal strategy:

At the heart of the collage discourse itself is an anti-Oedipal dynamic. Collage is a system of writing that denies paternity, asserting — in a violent act of *decoupage* that inaugurates it — a castrating prerogative over the texts constituting official culture. The collage text is the issue of a promiscuous mingling of materials that makes its authorship radically problematic; it is impossible to know who fathered it. Such texts, too, have many mothers, nurtured in the wombs of innumerable discourses. (50-1)

Occupying a patriarchal discourse based on the incest taboo, Acker’s plagiarisms of canonical literary works do not simply tease forth the presence of sexism and misogyny in language and narrative devices that pretend to be gender neutral; they interpolate the desublimated imagery of the incest taboo. In *Empire*, the primal scene is Abhor’s rape by her father. Acker describes the scene in detail, and the narrative’s disjointed, elliptical cut-up rhythms underscore Abhor’s passivity and helplessness in the traumatic experience.¹³³ While Mintcheva and Latham do not use the language of anti-imperialist anarchism, their characterizations of Acker’s dual power structure suggest that such taboo imagery makes patriarchal literature vulnerable to “castration,” that is, to a practice that cuts away the symbol of its power and prestige.

However, rather than sex and gender, dual power structure in *Empire* implies that Acker’s plagiarisms re-occupy a space colonized through racial segregation by U.S. imperial power and mobilize the cut-up in order to form racial identities that cannot be recuperated by the identity

politics that failed both the Civil Rights and the Black Power movements, albeit for different reasons. While such a re-occupied area resembles Punday's description of the sailor's heterotopia — a “non-place within a temporary and self-negating but nonetheless real and precisely defined existence” — the novel's identification of the structure with revolt against white neocolonial power indicates that the “non-places” that it stakes out within canonical literary works are not simply “anarchic” liberated zones but a series of racialized “collectives and communes” that take back a literary territory colonized by racist and white supremacist discourse. Grounded in dual power, Acker's plagiaristic technique does not coincide with what Christina Milletti calls her “poetics [enacted] through a terrorist model” (355). Instead, it aims to give the subaltern place to speak in a discourse based on its repression.

In *Empire*, the cut-up's anarchist dual power structure constitutes a form of substitution that takes the place of the other that would murder it. While Acker's text does inscribe sex and gender, I argue that its “desublimations” confront race with its own disavowed historicity and defensive deflections before “the body, the actual flesh, almost wordless.” If “the future leaks out,” the disturbing information revealed through Acker's cut-ups is the taboo idea that race itself is a myth: a construction designed to fix the subject in a hierarchical order that supports racism and white supremacy.

III. ABOLISHING WHITENESS

In *Empire*'s mythology, whiteness becomes inoperative as a racial category. In “Let the Algerians Take Over Paris,” the Algerian revolution does not only aim to eliminate white power in Paris; the death of “the Parisian” figures forth *the abolition of whiteness*. While the Parisian

identifies himself with “we who rule,” Abhor hints at his pretensions to sovereignty: “he thought he controlled everything, even death” (71). In this context, the Parisian’s sovereignty refers not only to his biopolitical power, but to the multinational corporations that plague Thivai’s and Abhor’s world and subordinate state power to economic policy. Abhor encounters this figure after being raped.¹³⁴ He appears from the bewildered thick of her trauma, holding her at gunpoint. In the course of the encounter, the Parisian reveals that he has overdosed on drugs and that, “sick to death of the world of humans, of how humans hurt each other, he was about to suicide” (69). Then, close to the chapter’s end, Abhor indicates that he slips into “total insensibility,” drops his pistol, and apparently succumbs to the lethal narcotics (72).

Acker’s cut-up constructs this myth around cyborg Molly Millions’ assassination of Ashpool — the aging, cryogenically preserved patriarch of the plutocratic Tessier-Ashpool family — in William Gibson’s *Neuromancer* (1984).¹³⁵ Acker’s appropriation of Gibson’s novel preserves several details: Ashpool’s cryoconservation suggests that he believes he controls death; Ashpool holds Molly at gunpoint (and threatens to take Molly with him¹³⁶); and he is attempting to commit suicide. “He was very pale,” Case observes. “Sick. [. . .] Or drugs“ (239). (On the side, I would note that Ashpool does not rape Molly. If Abhor’s rape corresponds to an event in *Neuromancer*, it registers the instant that Case “jacks into” Molly through the simstim switch, right before this confrontation.¹³⁷ Acker’s sexually violent revision highlights the misogyny latent in the imagery of the simstim switch by reconfiguring Case’s access to Molly’s perceptions as a hostile penetration of her body.¹³⁸ It is not, as Brian McHale argues, a form of “blank parody” (234). Instead, Acker’s citation and iteration of Gibson’s text mimics the latter’s logic in order to comment on it.) The fundamental difference between Gibson’s and Acker’s narratives is that

Molly does not let Ashpool succumb to his overdose; instead, she assassinates him with a poison dart before he completes his suicide. Later, underscoring Ashpool's power, Case considers his demise "the death of a mad king" (264).

Abhor's descriptions racialize the Parisian's power. Acker's cut-up transforms Case's observation that Ashpool "was very pale. Sick" into a commentary on the Parisian's racial identity: "He was old," Abhor observes, "and white" (66). Later, she attributes a hyperbolic form of whiteness to him: "In the pallor which was almost black of the room," she says, "he looked almost pure white" (68). This purity, this virtually absolute whiteness, suggests that the Parisian is not simply deathly pale; his extreme sallowness refers to a metaphysical concept of whiteness "Almost pure white," the Parisian is a symbol not only of white racial privilege in Paris but of Whiteness itself. In other words, he embodies a myth: the essence of whiteness, its first concept, which does not concretely exist but nevertheless exercises material effects on a planetary scale. Acker's "dual power structure," interpolating changes into the text that her narrative occupies, thereby implicitly locates the concept of Whiteness at the top of political, economic, and even genetic hierarchy.

Indeed, the Parisian's death takes place at the Algerian revolution's commencement. Acker interrupts the plundered episode with snapshots from Paris's streets. "Outside the window Paris was in chaos," Abhor observes (67). Intermittently cutting away from the Parisian, Abhor's narrative drifts outside. From the window, she hears Algerian women crying (perhaps ululating) the "banners of war" (68). Connecting the Algerian revolution back to her origin in "blood and change," Abhor hears her Nana's voice in these women's cries: "From that room up there, I could hear the old women. My grandmothers" (ibid.). Further, she hears revolutionary leaders'

vehement public exhortations. Baron Samedi harangues the French colonial powers (“Tell me, then, masters, more about your RIGHTS OF MAN and your CONSTITUTION. Tell me what my freedom is”), while Mackandal comically raises a bee-bee gun, proclaiming “here is your liberty!” (70-1, 71-2). Oscillating between the interior where the white Parisian is dying and the exterior where colonial subjects are organizing their rebellion, Acker parallels the death of the white “mad king” and the ascendant insurgence.

Modeled after anti-colonial narratives, particularly the late eighteenth-century Haitian Revolution and the twentieth-century Algerian War for Independence,¹³⁹ *Empire*'s myth of the Algerian revolution endorses a program of racial liberation that targets systems of white skin privilege. Baron Samedi's speech outlines the program. Invoking rhetorics of dialectical materialism, anti-imperialist struggle, and “Third World Marxism,” Samedi indicates that the imminent upheaval signals both an effect of white supremacy's death throes and the revolutionary tipping point that establishes the racialized Parisian underclass's ascendant rule. Speaking before “Algerians so thin they were skeletons” (70) but addressing white Parisians, Samedi says:

‘Gone are the glorious days of sailing when white men, by marketing slaves, ruled the entire earth. No longer do you mine in our depths cut open: for now we've been cut open so long so deeply, we're stripped. Clean. Dead. We are your death. May this be the slogan on your toilets or for your cities. No longer will you work in our muscles and our nerves creating herpes and AIDS, by doing so controlling all union, one and forever: being indivisible and narcissistic to the point of fascism, you have now closed down shop. Sick of democracy which has failed

you, you've split. Shits. Forever.' (70-1)

Samedi's speech frames the Algerian contestation of white power in Marxist terms. Named after the Haitian voodoo Ghede loa — a psychopomp of the dead who mediates between God and humans — Samedi effectively deploys his speech to raise the Algerians from their socioeconomic and political graves.¹⁴⁰ Indeed, while the Parisians call them “zombies,” Abhor's descriptions of the Algerians evoke the undead's corporeal decay and rudimentary brain activity: “Thousands of Algerians were walking freely. Ragged. Dirty. Sticks. Dolls. Voodoo. Blood flowed eyeballs out. Hatred distaste from mistreated on every level desecration of human being botched up face” (76; 67). However, when Samedi states “we are your death,” his point is not simply that the Algerians will abolish Paris's (neo)colonial regime, as the Haitians did; he means that the death that Algerians *are* is a product of the very racial hierarchy it will destroy. In *Empire*, white Paris has produced its own gravediggers. Positioned on the brink of the Algerian revolution, the Parisians' “suicide” represents the final option (“all that's left”) for Paris' white male capitalists (“we who rule”) (69). Through ghettoization, electronic tracking, state surveillance, and police brutality, they have exploited and degraded the Algerians to such an extreme that the only remaining choice is to revolt and seize power for themselves.

“Death,” being-death, identifies Paris's Algerians with subalternity. For Samedi, the Algerians are white Paris's racial other. Drawing on anti-white and anti-slavery rhetoric, Samedi's speech conflates Haitians and Arabs, identifying his Algerian audience as “black.” In *Empire*, this conflation may reflect the toxic attitudes of a poisoned, dying city; it marks Arabs as other precisely by misrecognizing them. However, Samedi's rhetoric of living death indicates that *Empire's* Algerians are *subaltern* because they have a place in Paris, they are an other *in*

Paris, but they occupy a place within white Paris' view of itself that white Parisians must systematically disavow in order to perpetually re-legitimate their claim to supremacy. In an interview, referring to resistance to neoliberal globalization and "Americanization," Acker states that "Muslims" are the Global North's "other" ("A Few Notes" 35). Disavowed, driven underground, unconscious, these mythical Algerians constitute the soft spot that initiates white Paris's subversion, and in the context of multinational capitalism, the myth's racial language imagines larger questions about cultural homogenization and global economic policies.

Mackandal, one of the inspirational figureheads of *Empire's* Algerian revolution, translates Samedi's political rhetoric of living death into revolutionary strategy. Plagiarized from James' *The Black Jacobins*, *Empire's* Mackandal is based on Francois Mackandal, a maroon who led an early but unsuccessful slave rebellion against French colonists in eighteenth-century San Domingo. Presenting him as a prototypical revolutionary figure, James indicates that Mackandal's "great plan for the destruction of white civilization in San Domingo" would be achieved by poisoning the capitals of the province's water supply and attacking the dying white colonists (21). In *Empire*, Algerian Mackandal similarly "dreamed of paradise, a land without whites. He determined to get rid of every white" (76-7). To poison the white Parisian ruling class, Abhor implies that Mackandal uses the "tetrodotoxin" from the puffer fish that, when ingested in small doses, produces the sensation of "insects crawling just beneath the skin" (77). In context, this neurotoxin evokes the disciplinary practices of English Caribbean slave-owners who injected poison from "members of the stinging nettle family" into "recalcitrant slaves," producing a similar sensation ("ants crawl[ing] ceaselessly under the top layer of skin" [74]).¹⁴¹ Echoing Samedi's proclamation that "we are your own death," Mackandal turns hegemonic

strategies for suppressing black subjects against the white Parisians and, as Naimous notes, “reverses the positions of Parisian and colonial slave by using the weapon of zombification against an unwilling national body“ (Naimou 142):

In time, like ink on a blotter, poison seeped into the lives of the whites. Poison entered the apartments of the bourgeoisie. There is a way to stop guns and bombs. There’s no way to stop poison which runs like water. The whites had industrialized polluted the city for purposes of their economic profit to such an extent that even clean water was scarce. They had to have servants just to get them water and these servants, taught by Mackandal, put poison in the water. (77)

The coincidence of Algerian Mackandal’s contamination of Paris’s water supply in order to “get rid of every white” and the death of the Parisian, himself fatally overdosing on a chemical substance, suggests that the myth of the Algerian revolution in *Empire* imagines the abolition of Whiteness itself. Indeed, when Abhor refers to Mackandal’s anti-neocolonial campaign against the white Parisians (“one day Mackandal arranged for the poisoning of every upper-middle and upper-class apartment in Paris”), she adds: “The old man didn’t need to suicide” (77). Her offhand remark underscores not only the coincidence of the revolution and the Parisian’s death; it indicates that the Parisian’s suicide embodies the end of the concept of whiteness as such.

In *Desiring Whiteness*, Seshadri-Crooks’s analysis of Whiteness suggests that the Parisian’s suicide represents the removal of the lynchpin that orders racial signifiers and organizes white skin privilege. For Seshardi-Crooks, “Whiteness” is not a physical trait or ideological position; it is the first principle of racial discourse that endows all other racial classifications with meaning and places them within a hierarchy of racialized socioeconomic,

juridical, and sexual positions. It is “a master signifier (without a signified) that establishes a structure of relations, a signifying chain that through a process of inclusions and exclusions constitutes a pattern for organizing human difference” (3-4). In these terms, every racial identification refers to Whiteness, so that the racial subject’s place within a white supremacist society is always already predetermined and designed to reinforce that primary term. Further, Seshadri-Crooks argues that “race identity can have only one function — it establishes differential relations among the races in order to constitute the logic of domination. Groups must be differentiated and related in order to make possible the claim to power and domination” (7). For *Empire*, Seshadri-Crooks’ analysis implies not simply that the Parisian’s death represents the disappearance of this “master signifier,” this “almost pure whiteness” that would stand in the place of and speak for every race, supporting global white supremacy; it suggests that the Algerian revolution figures forth the scattering asunder of the links in the “signifying chain” that have lost their leader and center.

Mackandal’s revolutionary agenda effectively endeavors to disconnect this lynchpin that orders racial difference. In Mackandal’s plan to “get rid of every white,” “every white” may refer to all Caucasian individuals, but the articulation’s metonymic displacement — replacing the individual subject with the sign of his complexion — refers more specifically to the construction of Whiteness. Rather than a genocidal desire to kill white people, the awkward circumlocution designates a desire *to expunge the primacy of “white” determining the racial order in the signifying chain*. In effect, the Parisian’s suicide punctuates the inaugural moment in the text that the master link (Whiteness) unclasps and the racial hierarchy supporting white supremacy in Paris comes undone. In *Empire*, the result is a city that is *black* — a racial signifier that could

refer to Algerian sovereignty, but also may imagine the absence of race as such, subtract the wreckage of the old order. Thivai “looked at the black city,” Abhor notes after the Parisian’s suicide. “Black except for white ash” (82).

Acker’s plagiarism of the conclusion of Gillo Pontecorvo’s *The Battle of Algiers* (1966) suggests that the abolition of whiteness and the establishment of a “black city” belong not only to the Parisian’s suicide and Algerian sabotage; they are animated by the trauma of Mackandal’s botched execution and escape. In *Empire*, after white American soldiers capture Mackandal, the soldiers burn him alive. Abhor, while held at gunpoint by the Parisian, recalls the spectacle:

As the first flames lit up the bottoms of his pants and socks, being more inflammable than his shoes, Mackandal whose guiding spirit, surprisingly, was Erzulie, the spirit of love, that is not of fertility but of that which longs beyond reality infinitely, of all unrealizable desire, screamed so awfully that soldiers who were burning him thought they were in the presence of a victim of madness. His body began to shake, not in spasms, but regularly, not as if from flames, but as if possessed. He tried to tear his wrists from the handcuffs. A small section of a corner of that room had been decimated by a bomb. With a single almost invisible spasm the black leader in flames succeeded in wrenching himself out of his handcuffs. Before the dumbed Americans could react, still burning he was half-way across the room and through the hole.

It was not known what happened to Mackandal. Poisonings of white continued: finally the Algerians won Paris. Except that a third of the city was now ash. (80)

Intimating a parallel between Mackandal and Ali la Pointe, Acker's narrative pacing plagiarizes *The Battle of Algiers*' protracted episode in which the French military attempts to coax la Pointe from his shelter behind a wall (ultimately detonating an explosion that destroys the building and kills him). After this event, in the film's last ten minutes, Pontecorvo rapidly brings the narrative to a close. Jumping ahead to 1960, almost three years after la Pointe's death, he covers the resurgence of demonstrations and suddenly concludes with the 1962 announcement of Algeria's independence. Similarly, while Mackandal ostensibly survives his execution (fleeing through a hole in the wall "decimated by a bomb" — perhaps an allusion to the explosion that killed la Pointe who died walled in), Abhor's narrative about Paris' Algerian revolution reaches a rushed, successful closure. Prefaced by the horrifying, detailed description of Mackandal's body in flames, Abhor's lackadaisical "finally the Algerians won Paris" reproduces the imbalance in Pontecorvo's film that seems to subordinate the efforts of the Algerian masses to the martyrdom of their leader, even though in both cases those masses triumph in their revolutionary goals only after the leadership perishes.

Casting Mackandal as the hero of the Algerian revolution, Acker's revision of Pontecorvo's concluding scenes suggests that Ali la Pointe did not perish in the detonation. (Indeed, in the film, Pontecorvo does not portray la Pointe's body; he replaces that evidence with images of crying babies, clouds of dust in corridors, and commiserating French soldiers. "You never know," the general says to the officers that will confirm la Pointe's death, tantalizing the audience with the possibility that he survived the blast.) Rather than the end of the "battle," his disappearance represents the moment that the Algerian masses become revolutionary leaders themselves. In *Empire*, Mackandal's escape and Abhor's hasty dénouement similarly intimate

that the uncertainty of Mackandal's demise *transforms every Parisian into his substitute*. As Sorenson notes, "Mackandal's revolutionary story does not end; rather it fades out of the narrative, allowing the trope to live on as a source of potential future insurrections" (187). Read beside *The Battle of Algiers*, Mackandal's disappearance indicates that he can reappear in the form of the question of identity anywhere. Undead, he becomes a night-glory. He could be dead¹⁴², but he could also be anyone on the street. Is Thivai or Abhor Mackandal? Is Mackandal in me? Is *Acker Mackandal*?¹⁴³

The immediate result of the abolition of Whiteness — the Parisian's suicide and every Parisian's substitution for Mackandal — is anarchy, that is, conditions in which Abhor and Thivai are no longer obliged to answer to racial, gender, and economic hierarchies, but can be made through anarchist practices of the outsider without recuperation by state power.¹⁴⁴ Indeed, after the Algerian revolution's triumph, Thivai indicates that he and Abhor are their own leaders. Looking over the "black city," he asks himself: "What are we going to do now we don't have a boss? [. . .] What are we going to do now we don't have no more bosses?" (82).¹⁴⁵ In the context of *Empire*'s racial themes, such questions do not only indicate that the Algerian revolution has abolished hierarchy, collapsing capitalism, patriarchy, white supremacy, and the state through demonstrations and guerilla warfare; they suggest that, now that the master signifier (Whiteness) has been pulled out and the links in the signifying chain that constitutes race uncoupled, race and racial identity is a problem for Thivai and Abhor to solve, rather than one to be solved for them. "What are we going to do now we don't have no more bosses?" means *now that Whiteness has been abolished, what is my race? How am I to account for my racial identity now that the only racial order I have ever known has imploded under its own impossible weight?*

Abhor's oblique answer to this racial question implicitly connects the future of racial identity to "discipline and anarchy." Seemingly replying to Thivai's plea ("what are we going to do . . . ?") in the last sentences of "Elegy for the World of the Fathers," Abhor enigmatically states: "There was nothing left to do. So Thivai and I went and got tattooed. Carved into roses" (86). In *Empire*, tattoos represent the mark of the outcast. Explaining that "tattoos were originally icons of power and mystery designating realms beyond normal land-dwellers' experience," Abhor indicates that this primal power intimates the subject's outsider status: "The extraordinary qualities of the tattoo's magic-religious origin remain constant even today, transferring to the bearer some sense of existing outside the conventions of normal society" (140).¹⁴⁶ In interviews, Acker suggests that tattoos in *Empire* refer to voluntary action and self-determination: "it concerns taking over, doing your own sign-making" ("A Conversation" 17). Further, she links this practice to a writing of the body¹⁴⁷: "For me tattooing is very profound. The meeting of the body and, well, the spirit — it's a *real* kind of art, it's on the skin. It's both material and not material and it's also a sign of the outcast" (18). Arthur Redding associates the figure of the tattoo in *Empire* with a disciplinary practice (or a "counterdiscipline") that constructs "the heterotopia of the body, a form of masquerade" (236, 241). In the context of the Algerian revolution and the Parisian's suicide, such a "masquerade" would be a heterotopia of a racialized body. Rather than rewriting "the message that is you" from "Silence," the "counterdisciplinary" tattoo would incarnate the subject of race through a writing on the body that delimits the surface of the skin.

In interviews, Acker's descriptions of the tattooing process suggest that such racialization constitutes a relation with an other. For Acker, receiving a tattoo involves a partnership that is

being for-the-other: “[. . .] to ask some artist to do their artwork on your body . . . What trust! Jesus, that’s incredible art” (“Devoured” 21). While the exclamation (“What trust!”) indicates that consenting to being tattooed places the subject in the custody of the tattooist’s expertise (“I invented someone to help me make my body,” she says. “And I had to trust that person, I have to believe I like his artwork” [ibid.]), within the space of the hiatus that induces that exclamation — within the pause represented by the ellipsis — is inscribed the unthinkable relation to the other who produces the body through the inscription of pain. Such a body would not simply be a modified body; it is a body incarnated by the other through an acquiescence prior to the possibility of assent. In terms of this substitution, “what trust!” does not signify the subject’s tremendous reliance on the tattooist’s dexterity, but a confidence that cannot be shown to the other, both because the other cannot be trusted (unless the subject invents a story about him that rationalizes its acquiescence) and because the trust is not the subject’s to show, but comes from the other that calls.

In *Empire*, then, the tattoo is not an embellishment of the body; it is the material and spiritual racialization of the anarchic body: a body conditioned by the assignation from the other. More than a writing-of-the-body, it is a body modification that alters the subject and its self-knowledge by tuning the subject’s embodiments. It is an art of embodiment: a subjective stylization that foregrounds susceptibility

“Carved into roses” means that finding anarchy requires going under the needle, that is, confronting the pain of the relation to the neighbor. It means substitution, taking the place of the other, “becoming Algerian” — that intriguing, unexplained subtitle in *Empire*. becoming-other. Salah el Moncef suggests that Abhor’s “becoming Algerian” is “emblematic of a kaleidoscopic

subjectivity ‘open to all people’ and ‘losing [itself] in the desert’ (134). In other words, when the bosses are gone, when the lynch pin of Whiteness has been pulled and the father suicides, then the signifying chain’s rings and linkages proliferate: “I” engages in a process of becoming-black, whatever “black” may mean, perhaps, but “I” also is exposed to the other in itself. It is the tattoo: a physical mark, visibly and tactually registered on the individual body’s surface, that ceaselessly reminds the subject that her body is not absolutely her own: it is a work of art, but that artwork belongs to an other responsible for its incarnation. No roses grow on sailors’ graves, but they grow on sailors’ bodies and sailors’ bodies grow into them.

In *Empire*, it belongs to Mackandal. After the abolition of whiteness, each subject, inspired by his specter, becomes a person of color *in the first place*, regardless of his or her complexion, cultural affiliations, or privileges. Unanchored from Whiteness, “I” becomes chimerical: simultaneously Jewish, black, Haitian, Algerian, Parisian . . . Hence, in *Empire*, the “plasticity” ordinarily ascribed to sex and gender in Acker’s texts belongs to race. No roses grow on sailors’ graves, perhaps, because sailors cannot die. They are the sarcophagi. The roses that grow on their bodies and the bodies that grow into roses immortalize them.

IV. RACE TREASON

Acker’s cut-ups indicate that the anarchist practice of “race treason” constitutes these post-racial formations. In *Anarchism and the Black Revolution* (1979/1993), Lorenzo Kom’boa Ervin identifies “class suicide and race treachery” as a tactic that can achieve “an abolition of the category of the ‘white race’” (14).¹⁴⁸ For him, similar to *Empire*’s dystopian neoliberal Paris, “white race” does not refer to skin color or genealogy, but to “the system of white skin privileges

that really undergirds the Capitalist system in the U.S.” (13).¹⁴⁹ In this sense, for anarchists who are the recipients of these privileges, “class suicide and race treachery” is not simply the white subject’s disavowal of inherited class and racial identity. It is *a refusal to participate in, benefit from, or contribute to the socioeconomic prestige and privilege conferred upon him or her who is deemed “white.”* Ervin believes that authentic solidarity among whites and people of color originates in this refusal. Furthermore, for white anarchists, the refusal radically redetermines race and social relations: “If white people do not want to be saddled with the historical legacy of colonialism, slavery, and genocide themselves, then they must rebel against it. So the ‘whites’ must denounce the white identity and its system of privileges, and they must struggle to redefine themselves and their relationship with others” (15).

Race Traitor — a publication to which Ervin contributes — shares this project.

Subsumed by the banner “Treason to Whiteness is Loyalty to Humanity,” *Race Traitor* represents an attempt to theorize “the struggle to abolish the white race from within” (*Race Traitor* 10, 2). Focusing on the practices of white subjects, it examines strategies for subverting racial privilege and systemic forms of white solidarity through individual and collective acts of “race treason.”¹⁵⁰ For white subjects, such acts monkeywrench systemic forces that confer white privilege on them. They do not simply disavow or reject but strategically prevent the privileges from reaching the subject. In this way, they aim for “a human society in a world which is beautiful” and is not “just disgust.”

Acker never uses the term “race traitor.” In *Empire*, it circulates stealthily, underground, unconscious, dissimulated by rhetorical disfigurements that render its form virtually unrecognizable. While the substitutive process of “becoming Algerian” does point toward

“treason to whiteness,” particularly Abhor’s post-racial identity, I would like to argue that *Empire* assimilates the idea of race treason through contact with Mark Twain’s *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, which Acker calls “one of the main texts about freedom in American culture” (“A Few Notes” 36). In Twain’s novel, Huck represents a figure close to *Empire*’s anarchist commitments — he rejects filiality, white supremacy, religious authority, and “sivilization,” and endeavors to determine his own rules — but he also represents a white “race traitor” who befriends a slave and conspires in his escape. Indeed, *Race Traitor*’s editor, Noel Ignatiev, considers Huck to be their project’s supreme embodiment. Focusing on Huck’s decision to continue assisting Jim’s flight from slavery, that is, to “go to hell” rather than inform Miss Watson of Jim’s location, Ignatiev argues that Huck “betrays” the white race and abdicates the privileges associated with his membership. He further indicates that “the entire project of *Race Traitor* is to examine, from every possible angle, the moment when Huck Finn (and all modern Huck Finns) decide to break with what Huck calls ‘sivilization’ and take steps that will lead to Jim’s (and their own) freedom” (n.pag.).

Acker plagiarizes this exemplary scene. In *Huckleberry Finn*, Huck attempts to figure out a scheme to assist Jim, who has been captured by the Phelps family and is being detained on their plantation for the reward. When Huck considers enlisting Tom Sawyer for assistance, he implicitly acknowledges that his complicity threatens his privileged position as a white male. Recoiling at the thought that his involvement would place him in a subordinate position to other whites (“anybody”), Huck states: “[. . .] think of *me!* It would get around that Huck Finn helped a nigger to get his freedom; and if I was ever to see anybody from that town again I’d be ready to get down and lick his boots for shame” (204).¹⁵¹ Huck’s reasoning implies that his participation

in Jim's flight would revoke the privilege conferred upon him in white society and deny him the racialized solidarity with white people that he previously enjoyed, despite his lower class status. That Huck's collusion with a "nigger" would oblige him to "lick [white folks] boots for shame" further indicates that he would not be sufficiently white for other white folks. While Huck's language does not overtly racialize such subordination, the expression that imagines him prostrated at his fellow white men's feet implies that Huck believes his complicity in Jim's liberation would demote his sociopolitical status, reducing him to the same humiliating rank as his friend. In this case, Huck would not be "black," whatever that means; he would cease to be the recipient of the social and juridical privileges that define whiteness. In the signifying chain anchored by Whiteness, Huck's distance from and relation to that master signifier would shift and remove him from its proximity, obliterating his rights and disavowing his humanity.

Twain's episode further dramatizes Huck's oscillations between the ideological order that he believes to be righteous and a visceral affect that, unconsciously and involuntarily recognizing the competing order's turpitude, lures him toward damnation. Initially influenced by the Christian view that he "was stealing a poor old woman's nigger," Huck writes a letter to Miss Watson, Jim's former owner, that identifies Jim's whereabouts and conveys Mr. Phelps's willingness to relinquish Jim for a reward (205). But then his and Jim's friendship comes to Huck's mind. He remembers Jim's sacrifices, endearing words, and physical caresses, but also Jim's avowal of their exclusive bond, Huck's *selection* by him, which renders Huck "the *only* one [friend] he's got now" (206). At this moment, Huck says "all right, then, I'll go to hell," and tears up the letter (*ibid*). As Ignatiev proposes, Huck's violence to the letter symbolizes his race treason. Tearing the letter asunder symbolically exonerates his body's abhorrence for the

hegemonic racial order and indicts white supremacy's claims to righteousness. Further, it affirms his relation to Jim. His destructive act acknowledges their friendship, but his affective memory suggests that such ripping also registers a responsibility toward Jim, an indebtedness instilled by Jim's election, for which Huck's knotted viscera demand fulfillment. Shredding the letter, choosing damnation, stigmatization and ostracism among white society, and death over betraying the obligation elicited by Jim's call, Huck abdicates his affiliation with the "white club" and accedes to a racialization that rescinds the socioeconomic benefits awarded for his white complexion.

Empire occupies the narrative of Huck's race treason, interpolating alterations that accentuate a betrayal of the white race precisely because they elide the treachery. In Acker's version, Huck is Abhor. Reflecting on her sexual "frigidity," she effectively renounces "civilization": "rather than being autistic dumb feelingless ice, I would like the whole apparatus — family and memory — to go to hell" (52). She adds: "I will be mad" (ibid.). While Acker's plagiarism excludes Huck's letter-writing and moral indecision, it reproduces the phrase "go to hell" and, in the form of Abhor's rejection of "being autistic dumb feelingless ice," revises Huck's visceral affective response. To be "mad," in this context, is to be *affected*, involuntarily compelled toward and responsible for the spectral call, enunciated in Mackandal's or Jim's voice, that obliges Abhor to abandon the humiliating hegemonic order. Moreover, rather than damning herself, Abhor traduces the systems that would turn their culpability against her: she consigns family and memory, not her own body and soul, to perdition. Castricano identifies Abhor's invective with "an indictment of the family as it functions not as an organic unity but as a modern ideological state apparatus in the service of capitalism" (207). Here, however, the idea of

race treason insinuates itself unconsciously into *Empire*. If family and memory metonymically substitute “civilization” and racism, then the *absence* of Huck Finn’s abdication places race treason into circulation. Acker’s revision interprets Huck’s gesture to be against the “empire of the senseless,” making him an outcast and restoring his feeling. Further, Abhor’s rejection of “the whole apparatus” frames her as a race traitor, stepping toward a “society which wasn’t just disgust.”

In the novel’s penultimate chapter “I Realize Something,” Acker confirms Abhor’s race treason through further adaptations of Twain’s narrative that place Abhor in the place of Jim, not Huck. There, she extensively plunders *Huckleberry Finn*, concentrating on the episodes following Huck’s race treason, when he and Tom Sawyer scheme to liberate Jim from the Phelps plantation. Now, Thivai’s narrative reproduces Huck Finn’s ambivalent oscillations. Echoing Huck’s intention to contact Miss Watson, Thivai ponders informing on Abhor for her mercenary activities in Berne. For him, similar to Huck, the question knots around the idea of partnership. However, while Huck automatically responds to Jim’s call, without reciprocity, Thivai believes Abhor’s imprisonment will resolve the problem of her “unrequited love” for him (192). According to Thivai, he is “in unrequited love” because “Abhor was as strong as I was” (*ibid.*). In other words, insofar as Thivai’s desire to squeeze her “out of my life forever” (193) manifests his love, Abhor’s equal power exposes Thivai to the risk that she will leave him first and thereby debilitate his capacity to love her through rejection. His urge to contribute to Abhor’s captivity is a perplexed, perplexing, and perverse urge: it would be an act of love, but the love aims to control and maintain asymmetrical power relations propitious to him.

Thivai’s ambivalence toward Abhor, like Huck’s toward Jim, culminates in a catharsis

that seems to reverse and undermine the efficacy of race treason.. Initially, he writes the CIA, alerting them to Abhor's crime and location. As in Twain's narrative, Thivai is purged by his decision. While Huck said "I felt good and all washed clean of sin for the first time I had ever felt so in my life, and I knowed I could pray now" (206), Thivai remarks: "Now I was cleaned of all sin and pure. The truth was that I had never known sin before I had met Abhor" (192). Here, however, Acker does not reproduce Huck's violence to the letter, since Abhor's denunciation of the "empire of the senseless" already gave place to that violence. Instead, rather than tearing the letter to pieces, Thivai sends it. Unlike Huck, Thivai prays. First he begs for Abhor's disappearance, then he belatedly realizes "I can't give Abhor to the cops" (193). Struggling with his choice, Thivai leaves Abhor, but soon thereafter misses her, and returns. But upon his return he discovers that his struggles are for naught: the Algerian police have arrested his friend.

Removing the words that express Huck's resolve ("all right, I'll go to hell then"), Acker's revision of *Huckleberry Finn*'s exemplary episode implies that Huck's "race treason" does not abandon whiteness. While Ignatiev asserts that Huck's rejection of "sivilization" and its white privileges actively contribute to the liberation of people of color, Thivai's actions reveal the limits of Huck's treachery. Thivai's ambivalence reduces Huck's moral dilemma to frivolous agitation. When Thivai mails his letter to the CIA, Acker's plagiarism suggests that Huck's decision to write the letter to Miss Watson is equal to the decision to send it. In terms of white privilege, regardless of his ambivalence or his final decision, whether he consents to "go to hell" or not, that Huck has the agency to write a letter (and inform on a black man) or to tear it to pieces (and commit himself to his friend's emancipation) presupposes the place of Whiteness that grounds the power of his betrayal. Indeed, that he can choose "damnation" (rather than be

predestined to exclusion) demonstrates that he possesses a freedom forbidden to his friend *by virtue of his abrogation of the freedoms conferred through his membership to white society*.

Whiteness, Acker suggests, cannot simply be renounced. Thivai's attempt to rescue Abhor by surrendering her to the Algerian police — an aim that can only miscarry his friend's deliverance — literalizes the fact that Huck's renunciation of white skin privilege recapitulates his white male position.

Thivai's insensitivity shows Huck's sympathy to be sheer narcissism. For Huck, even to the end of *Huckleberry Finn*, Jim remains a "nigger." Perhaps Jim is Huck's friend, but Acker's modulations to Twain's text imply that Huck responds not to Jim's call but to the call of that degraded construction of Whiteness. His fellow-feeling coincides with Thivai's "unrequited love": it touches the other only through antagonism and antagonizes only for its own protection and reproduction. Contrary to Ignatiev's interpretation, Acker's revision indicates that Huck's race treason adds to Jim's captivity. Indeed, Huck's and Tom Sawyer's elaborate schemes to "free" Jim only prolong his humiliating imprisonment on the Phelps plantation and coerce him into mutilating his own body. Twain's final chapters, while perhaps the book's most racist — subjecting a free black man to two white children's whims and violence without examining his reasons for submitting to the abusive charade — are also arguably its most superfluous, since Jim's manumission has already been officialized prior to his imprisonment. Acker's plagiarism does not only uncover "the undercurrents of racism to be found in Huck throughout Twain's novel," as de Zwaan states (469, note 7); it jabs at the massive, bloated, squishy spot in this American masterpiece.

Exposing Huck's racism through Thivai's "unrequited love" for Abhor, Acker's

adaptations of the satirical master's narrative simultaneously examine the sexual violence at the heart of the concept of race anchored by Whiteness. Acker states: "Twain was obsessed with racism; me, with sexism" ("A Few Notes" 36). Read beside Thivai's "unrequited love," this statement implies that Acker does not simply alter *Huckleberry Finn* in order to tease its racist "undercurrents" to the surface; in *Empire*, Acker problematizes Huck's racism in order to exhibit Whiteness' relation to attitudes toward sex. Reconstructing the frame narrative for *One Thousand and One Nights* to point toward "the beginning of patriarchy," Thivai identifies a connection between the race of the virgins murdered by King Shahryar and his brother, 'Shah Zamam, and women's perceived nymphomania: "In order to control women, Zamam murdered his wife and her lover who was black and his cook. Sexuality and negritude are allied" (152). This imbrication of female sexuality and black racial identity does not only suggest that female sexuality is always already a clinical aberration and that blackness is always already pejorative (*nègre* rather than *noir*)¹⁵²; their alliance suggests that to think one is to think the other, so that *Empire's* dual power relation unconsciously refers to sex when it registers race from other texts, particularly *Huckleberry Finn*.. The character of Abhor, constituted around Molly Millions and Jim — "part robot, part black" — indicates that to be a woman is to be black, and to be black is to be a woman.

For example, in "I Realize Something," Acker rewrites *Huckleberry Finn's* scene that depicts Jim, who believes Huck is dead, happening upon his friend. In Twain's narrative, Huck nonchalantly refers to his partner as "the nigger" and Jim reacts to Huck's appearance with a terror whose dramatic irony aims to invalidate black folk traditions. "Doan' hurt me — ," Jim says. "I alwuz liked dead people, en done all I could for 'em" (42, 41).¹⁵³ Acker's plagiarism

sexualizes this racist narrative. In her rendition, Thivai happens upon Abhor after a long absence. His narration twists Huck's white supremacist language into a misogynistic rhetoric, and Abhor's response to him explicitly registers *Huckleberry Finn's* unconscious racism. After nonchalantly calling Abhor "my cunt," Thivai narrates her reaction to his unexpected appearance: "'Don't you hurt me!' Abhor shuddered and winced. Abhor was always saying strange things because she wasn't quite right in the head because she had had a hard life. Her father had made love to her" (177). Written over the erasure of Twain's "the nigger," "my cunt" does not simply derogatorily refer to a woman; it identifies an alliance between sex and "negritude" that designates a *black woman*. However, the "cunt," Abhor, is not a black woman merely because she is "part black" — a dubious designation posited by Thivai — but because *Abhor is Jim*. Her flickering face registers his countenance. In her character, "sexuality and negritude are allied," and the violence done against her in the name of her gender and sexuality is the violence perpetrated upon a body because it is coded "black."

For Seshadri-Crooks, this alliance between "sexuality and negritude" in *Empire* would speak to the very notion of "desiring whiteness." In her "Lacanian analysis of race," sex and the order of sexual differences belong to the Real, to the body extraneous to the Symbolic. As Lacan states, "there is no sexual relation," that is, the difference between man and woman "is missing a signifier that can organize male and female in a binary relation," and sex is "that which escapes or confounds language," forming the incalculability of the subject (6). For her, the construction of race attempts to compensate for this lack through Whiteness, a plenum or "the lack of lack."¹⁵⁴ In her analysis, race is "a practice of visibility" in which a symbolic order built around phenotypical traits ("hair, skin, bone") determines racial difference, so that the "belief" in race

antedates racial difference as such (2, 5). While modern conceptions of race argue for its constructedness, Seshadri-Crooks hypothesizes that these “desiderata of race” provide “a powerful prophylactic against the anxiety of race as a discursive construction” (8):

We make such an investment because the unconscious signifier Whiteness, which founds the logic of racial difference, promises wholeness. (This is what it means to desire Whiteness: not a desire to become Caucasian [!] but, to put it redundantly, it is an “insatiable desire” on the part of all raced subjects to overcome difference.) Whiteness attempts to signify being, or that aspect of the subject that escapes language. Obviously, such a project is impossible because Whiteness is a historical and cultural invention. However, what guarantees Whiteness is place as a master signifier is visual difference. (21)

For *Empire*, Seshadri-Crooks’ argument implies that the irruption of sex into Twain’s text through Acker’s cut-ups showcases Whiteness as an alibi for the raced subject’s otherness. That is, while Acker’s cut-ups in *Empire* stage the intersection of sexuality and race, they also suggest that the discourse of race in Twain’s text, anchored in the master signifier Whiteness, represses the failure in the signifying chain — i.e., the failure that is sex — not only to preserve white supremacy but to guarantee the autotelic subject. Situated in the context of Huck’s decision to “go to hell,” they show that the notion of race grounding the practice of race treason is designed to recoil from sex — “the body, the actual flesh, almost wordless” — and to reinforce the sovereignty of the subject precisely where the incarnate body would shatter it.

This irruption of sexuality into Twain’s white supremacist racial order’s articulation suggests that the anti-imperialist anarchist notion of race effectively desires Whiteness. While

Ervin identifies whiteness as an invention, albeit an invention of capitalism rather than unconscious impulses, he does not frame blackness and other racial identifications in the same terms. For Ervin, black people in the United States are “Africans in America,” that is, they are a racial group defined by a geographical origin or motherland. Further, as a coherent group, the “Black masses” are effectively autotelic: they “know exactly what they want” (*Anarchism* 19). Rather than a link in the signifying chain that is assigned a social position based on its proximity to the master signifier Whiteness, Ervin’s notion of racial identity suggests that blackness constitutes a separate identity, sufficient unto itself, that is subordinated but not defined by that lynchpin. According to Seshadri-Crooks’ analysis, such a definition of blackness reiterates the place of Whiteness precisely through its disavowal. Separating “blackness” from the invention of whiteness in order to authenticate the former’s truth, Ervin saves the place of Whiteness by identifying blackness with being. In other words, his anti-imperial anarchism succumbs to the “promise of wholeness” — the claim that the subject belongs to itself — that is instituted through repression of the anxiety that black subjects do not exist, which would be denied and confirmed by very visible racial marker.

If Acker’s commentary on race treason in *Huckleberry Finn* can be applied to the anti-imperialist anarchist aim to “abolish the white race,” her interpolation of sexual references in the place of racial language emphasizes Ervin’s and Balagoon’s exclusion of the otherness of the body, particularly in relation to sex and gender. In both anarchists’ cases, neither considers the place of women and LGBTQ people in the “black revolution.”¹⁵⁵ While Ervin includes women, the scope of their involvement underscores the magnitude of their repression: “Although there definitely will be an attempt to involve women and white workers; where they are willing to

cooperate, the strike would be under black leadership because only black workers can effectively raise those issues which most effect [sp] them” (*Anarchism* 24). Ervin does not only assume that black women would refuse to “cooperate” with the “black leadership”; his language implies that women, black and white, do not belong to the social workforce. For him, workers are men, and black revolution is black men’s business, not white workers’ or women’s. From Acker’s perspective, this is how anarchists “get lost in the sauce.” The repression of sexual and gender subjects at the social and revolutionary level is symptomatic of a deeper cultural repression at the level of race. Ervin’s stringent enclosure of women in revolutionary practice acts out an unconscious anxiety about the sexed body that threatens to disrupt the white supremacist racial order that guarantees being to the raced subject assigned a place in the signifying chain. In other words, if Ervin participated in the Algerian revolution, he would recoil in horror from Mackandal’s substitution: he would hold fast to his position in the signifying chain, even after the abolition of Whiteness, because the prospect of “becoming Algerian” requires confronting Antigone, the vulvamorph.

Such abhorrence precludes the Algerian revolution from anarchy. When Thivai searches post-revolutionary Paris for a new partner, he observes: “There were only prostitutes; the women had all become prostitutes” (93). Later, reinforcing Thivai’s claim, Abhor notes the same: “In this city, women are just what they always were, prostitutes” (109). Then, queerly including men in this category, she adds: “Most humans are now women” (*ibid.*). This prostitutionalization of the Algerian population in Paris implies that the revolution preserved forms of gender and sexual inequality.¹⁵⁶ Arguing that the revolution was ensnared in a “trap of dualistic logic” that defined it through its resistance to the white Parisian order, Sorenson makes a similar observation, noting

that “elements of domination, particularly patriarchy, crop up in the rest of the text” after the Algerians take Paris (188). However, in the context of the alliance between sexuality and negritude, Acker’s interpolation of sexual references in the place of Twain’s racial language suggests that the Algerian revolution failed because its focus on race prohibited the revolutionaries from coping with sex and gender, not because it opposed white supremacy. In these terms, the revolt did not simply retain patriarchal forms and continue women’s repression; the violence of poisoning the white Parisians and overtaking the city was both a phobic response to the threat of the body’s otherness and an anxious effort to take refuge in the fantasy that the subject is not historically constituted, so that the Algerians may continue desiring Whiteness.

Perhaps this failure explains Acker’s displacement of the instant that Huck decides to “go to hell” and consummates his race treason. Since Abhor, not Thivai, utters these words, the transposition implies that she is *Empire*’s real race traitor. Revolutionized by Mackandal’s otherness, she constitutes not only a queer series, but is constituted by the process and effect of citation and iteration. She is a cut-up: her subjectivity flickers, an iridescence or chatoyance, in which the effects on the epidermis of the body constitute the “I.” She is a frothing, a shimmering, a stone that, once cut, ripples with depths on a surface that remains flat. Unlike Huck’s, her race treason acknowledges the myth, the unconscious myth, with which *Empire* grapples: the myth of whiteness and blackness — the myth of race.

V. RACE MYTH

“Black Heat” explores this alternative to race treason. Following Thivai’s/Huck’s liberation of Abhor/Jim from the Algerian prison/Phelps plantation, *Empire*’s final section gives

Abhor an opportunity to verbalize her departure from the white supremacist and patriarchal orders maintained in post-revolutionary Algerian Paris. “Black Heat” continues to pirate *Huckleberry Finn*, but since Twain’s narrative ends after Tom Sawyer reveals Jim’s manumission, Acker’s narrative represents its unconscious, taking place beyond the scope of Twain’s plot while still anachronistically referring to it. Putting Abhor in the place of Jim, it gives place to the voice of the racial other silenced in the work that Hemingway famously said “all modern American literature comes from,” forming the unwritten episode, following Twain’s last page, that would narrate Jim’s ongoing quest for freedom. According to de Zwaan, in this plagiarism Acker “has written a wish-fulfillment narrative for herself in which freedom from slavery is possible“ (462). However, in the context of *Empire*’s dual power structure, mere “wish fulfillment” oversimplifies Acker’s revisions. Through the character of Abhor, Jim steps outside the frame of Twain’s novel, and her voice gives expression to his outrage at his torment.

Foregrounding the race motif, the chapter title “Black Heat” refers to Madonna’s pop song “White Heat,” from *True Blue* (1986). The song begins with a sample from Raoul Walsh’s 1949 film *White Heat*, starring James Cagney and Edmond O’Brien. Evoking multiple clandestine identities and troubled partnerships, the sample refers to the climactic moment that the gangster Cody Jarrett (Cagney) realizes that his partner, Vic Pardo (O’Brien), is Hank Fallon, an undercover police officer. (Jarrett/Cagney, taken now into police custody, states: “A copper. How do you like that boys, a copper. And we went for it, I went for it. Treated him like a kid brother. And I was going to split fifty-fifty with a copper.”) The song’s bridge situates this duplicitous partnership in the context of patriarchal heterosexual narcissism. Addressing a “boy” with whom she has severed a romantic relationship, Madonna sings:

I don't want to live out your fantasy

Love's not that easy

This time you're gonna, gonna have to play my way

Come on make my day

Since Madonna sings these words to a “boy,” her declaration implies a break with a heterosexual partner’s “fantasy.” However, this orientation is queered by the sample. In Walsh’s film, Pardo/Fallon replaces the figure of Jarrett’s mother, for whom the gangster longs sexually, after her death, facilitating a transference of Jarrett’s feelings from her to him. In one scene, Walsh confirms this homoerotic relation: while the two men commiserate under low-hanging tree branches, the camera lingers in a close-up on Jarrett’s face as he amorously gazes at his friend. While the female singer Madonna says “boy,” permitting audiences a heterosexual orientation toward the song, these homoerotic intimations encourage a queer reorientation that transforms the lyrics into Jarrett’s rebellion against his male partner’s duplicity, so that her voice becomes the vehicle for Jarrett to step from the closet that forbade him speech and openly confront Pardo/Fallon with the injuries inflicted by his sexual exploitation and emotional perfidy.¹⁵⁷

In “Black Heat,” Acker enfoldes these substitutive identities and betrayed partnerships within her fantasy “postscript” to *Huckleberry Finn*. Out of prison, Abhor/Jim writes a letter to Thivai/Huck and Mark — who corresponds to Tom Sawyer, pretending to be “Sid” on the Phelps plantation, and alludes to Twain himself — that acknowledges the redundancy of their intricate ruse to liberate her: “The whole world is men’s bloody fantasies,” she writes. “You two collaborated in keeping me in jail by planning escapes so elaborate they had nothing to do with escape” (ibid.).¹⁵⁷ She adds: “You’re always fucking deciding what reality is and collaborating

about those decisions” (ibid.). While Acker’s extrapolation of *Huckleberry Finn* reproduces *White Heat*’s clandestine identities (implicit to Madonna’s song), Abhor’s letter registers the treachery implied in Madonna’s sample: it represents her acknowledgement that Thivai is her enemy, not her “partner,” and that he and Mark have double-crossed her. Speaking in the place of Jim, but unfettered now from *Huckleberry Finn*’s racist values and attitudes, Abhor utters the admonishments that Twain prohibited Jim from formulating. While Abhor’s statements fault Thivai and Mark for their sexism, her outrage simultaneously condemns the idea that two peckerwoods would subject a free black man to their humiliating ruse. In effect, Acker creates a myth about sex/race in which Abhor/Jim/Cody tells Thivai/Huck/Vic and Mark/Tom/Sid that “I don’t want to live out your fantasy.”

In “Black Heat,” Abhor’s stages a departure from patriarchal and heteronormative “fantasy” when she abandons the “boys,” Thivai and Mark. Appropriating a “pre-revolutionary” Honda motorcycle and declaring herself a motorcycle gang member, she rides away in order “do“ her “own sign-making.” On the road, she discovers *The Highway Code*, a driving manual, and proceeds to recode and repurpose its instructions, so that the *Code* produces effects comically and dangerously at odds with the system responsible for it. According to Richard House, Abhor’s alterations to the text emulate the form of deconstruction. They “may unavoidably reproduce the terms and conventions of existing structures of power, but the consequences ordinarily associated with those terms are revealed to be contingent and mutable” (476). However, after experimenting with that method, Abhor abandons it. If driving is a metaphor for control, this shift suggests that the *Code* cannot teach Abhor to direct her own affairs; it can only teach her to obey or disobey the code. She decides that “the problem with

following rules is that, if you follow rules, you don't follow yourself," and resolves "to listen to my own heart" (*Empire* 219).

Conte claims that Abhor's resolution "endorses an essential principle of anarchism" — "the impulse to personal freedom" (27). For him, the decision to "listen to my own heart" refers to the rehabilitation of Abhor's direct and immediate relation to herself; the act of heeding "my own heart" places Abhor into contact with the interiority of her interiority, the *sanctum sanctorum* of her body that would constitute her most prized possession, and completes the circle of self-consciousness disrupted by her enthrallment to her male captors. Implicitly contesting the idea that anarchism would give primacy to the other, Conte's characterization of Abhor's "impulse to personal freedom" associates her anarchism with a Dadaist form of "I don't give a damnism" that first and foremost empowers the individual to govern her own affairs: "Abhor's repudiation of externally imposed authority in favor of listening to the heart implies a commitment to spontaneity, self-discipline, and self-organization" (*ibid.*). While Conte does not associate Abhor's departure from the patriarchal, heteronormative, and racial order with Madonna's "White Heat," his characterization of anarchism suggests that Abhor's/Jim's resolution paraphrases Madonna's/Jarrett's declaration, "this time you're gonna, gonna have to play my way." It implies that Abhor no longer answers to her neighbors; her story is a myth that she is composing in the process of discovering it for herself.

However, when Abhor begins "to listen to my own heart," the rhetorical strategy that grounds her act disrupts the "self" of "self-discipline" and "self-organization." Doodling on the pages of the *Code* itself, Abhor begins to reproduce the "pictures" that she encounters when she "looked into the heart." Each picture literally is a sign: a diamond-shape — a square rotated

ninety degrees — that reproduces not only a signifier but also the material form that would deliver it. In each square, she writes warnings associated with industrial sites: “radioactive,” “spontaneously combustible,” “compressed gas,” “oxidizing agent,” “corrosive,” and “toxic” (219-221). Brief parenthetical interpolations accompany each illustration, narrating an elliptical story loosely associated with the signs that mimics the story of the Algerian revolution. Set in a post-apocalyptic wasteland, the story seems to replace the neocolonial Parisian ruling class with the CIA and the Algerians with “riders and motorcyclists,” and mythologizes the neocolonial power’s collapse by suggesting that the CIA ultimately succumbs to the heat of the sun, an apparent figure for “Arab” or “black” power.

Abhor identifies herself with these vignettes. Indeed, here, she draws the picture that will bring *Empire* to a close: a red rose pierced with a dagger, a banner inscribed with the words “discipline and anarchy” twisting around it. This picture “summed up all the other pictures” (221), she says. Then, echoing Madonna’s “you’re [. . .] gonna have to play my way,” she adds: “This was me. From now on *The Highway Code* no longer mattered. I was making up the rules” (222). In other words, identifying herself with this drawing, Abhor’s doodle (which resembles tattoo flash) *carves her into a rose*. Rather than a voluntary act that begins with her own subjective will and gives expression to her true being, the practice of drawing produces Abhor as an effect of the illustration. Ultimately, these illustrations come not from *her* “heart,” but from “the” heart — a figure that seems to be the unconscious (“all of this came to me for no reason at all and so it all had to be true”), but also refers to the other *in her*. Her interiority, the *sanctum sanctorum* that would enshrine her freedom, is not “hers,” but is instead constituted from the outside — in this case, by Madonna and “White Heat.”

In the context of the Algerian revolution's unsuccessful abolition of whiteness, Abhor's commentary on this illustration suggests that it produces her body as the sexualized "Real" repressed by racial formations. She associates the rose with her sexual organ ("then I thought about how a sword pierces a cunt" [224]), suggesting that the illustration portrays her victimization as a woman, but connects the sword and penetration with the singularity of the subject *elected by the other*: "It doesn't matter who handled or shoved in this sword. Once the sword is in me, it's me. I'm the piercer and the pierced" (ibid). Contrary to Conte, to be "piercer and pierced," doer and deed, does not mean that Abhor is an autarkic subject, disciplining and organizing herself so that her identity conforms to rules invented by her; it means that her incarnate self, the fact of having the embodied capacity to act in the world, presupposes a violent relation to the other.

Vulvamorphic, Abhor's illustration reflects Eckert's assignation to "anarchise herself!" If the "sword" is Abhor, her illustration forbids patriarchy's and heteronormativity's discursive control. In effect, strapping this figure for the male genitals on to her pelvic area, she transforms the phallus into a removable, transferable toy fastenable to different places on the feminine body. In terms of gender, this appropriation suggests that Abhor ceases to be "woman," "cunt" or "prostitute," without becoming "man." The prosthesis accentuates her relation to Gibson's Molly, the cyborg. But it re-imagines Molly's body equipped with organs queer to phallocentricism's binary sex/gender rules. Thus, like Acker's own plagiarisms, Abhor borrows but does not accept the sexist attitudes inherent in her sources; she mutates them through the process of incorporation. Further, if Abhor's "cunt" refers to her "negritude," the illustration further suggests that her unique racial identity is not only the broken link in the signifying chain

anchored by Whiteness; it is always already the effect of a citation.

Revising “White Heat” to read “Black Heat,” Acker registers this racial fluctuation. While this alteration suggests a racial fluctuation based on binary racial terms — from white to black, Parisian to Algerian — Abhor’s illustration frames that fluctuation non-dialectically. Summing up the other drawings, the illustration of the rose and sword that produces Abhor points toward a racialized form of denucleation under which the “self” has slipped: an admixture of substances and volatile conditions, systems in states of imbalance and chain reactions producing rapid transformations: an atom’s nucleus emitting ionizing particles; matter generating its own heat, suddenly igniting from within; a gaseous substance contained under extreme stress; a substance attracting electrons; a rust, a patina, or verdigris that builds on and breaks down surfaces with which it comes into contact; and material that can harm organisms. In the illustration, Abhor is not each substance individually; she is the aggregate serialized into a new signifying chain that excludes all reference to Whiteness.

This is Acker’s race myth. Abhor embodies a monstrous mutation composed by strange serial couplings: she is part radiation, part gas, part toxin, as well as the grotesque amalgamation of media that manifest these series: part caution sign, part *Highway Code*, part illustration, part tattoo. Her interior does not define her; her surrounding environment composes her interiority. In a sense, Abhor remains “part cyborg, part black,” but the anarchic doodle shrivels and removes those designations from the foreground. Her body is racialized and technologized, but in this illustration, under the banner of “discipline and anarchy,” the vocabulary and grammar of whiteness and multinationalism desist from communicating those identities. “Black heat,” then, does not only recode “White Heat,” nor is it merely a decision to break with patriarchy,

whiteness, and heteronormativity and discover other definitions; it names race without naming it. It is *race as temperature, intensity, incandescence* — *race as gleam, shimmer, chatoyance*.

“Discipline and anarchy” reflects this practice of discoloration. Contrary to Ervin and Ignatiev’s claims about race treason, Abhor’s becomings suggest that practices that refuse white skin privilege are not actions that a subject does; they are that which is done to produce a subject. The “adversarial aesthetics” of discoloration is less about committing acts of defiance and renunciation — acts with limited revolutionary effects — and more about mobilizing subjectivity, arranging and rearranging the molecular building blocks of identity and, through their *derangements*, modulating them to the core.

Abhor becomes “a real get down anarchist.” Drawing herself, drawing a sword piercing a rose, Abhor does not *kill* the white supremacist within, as Ervin require of the anarchist; she respects its presence in her, but respects it through dual power practices that feed Whiteness its own poisons. The “race traitor,” then, respects Whiteness, through such respect requires neutralizing and minimizing its effects.

Conte misreads the performative element of this “discipline.” For him, discipline represents a form of control that anarchists exercise over chaos rather than a discourse that “imaginarily” constructs anarchists and anarchy itself. In his concluding sentences, he states:

Acker finds that even in the domain of anarchy — in nomadic space, after the disruption of the state apparatus [. . .] — there must be discipline present. [. . .] [In *Empire*,] discipline and anarchy are recognized as interdependent functions. Discipline without anarchy is repressive; discipline in anarchy promotes endurance. Anarchy without endurance is destructive; anarchy in discipline

promotes creativity. Spontaneity *and* organization. Beauty *and* violence. A rose and a sword. (28)

His words echo Newman's "postanarchist" theory." Sketching the "conscious and patient organization" required by "anarchist politics," Newman includes (among building autonomous zones and experimenting with democratic decision-making) "even a form of discipline, as long as it is a discipline imposed voluntarily and without coercion by the subject on him or herself, rather than by a revolutionary leadership — a discipline that comes, for instance, with a commitment to a cause (here we might speak of *a discipline of indiscipline*, an anarchist discipline)" (*Politics* 112). For *Empire*, Newman and Conte are correct that anarchy requires discipline. Thivai's and Abhor's quest implies that anarchy will not be achieved without labor, trial, and torment. However, if Abhor's illustration relates discipline and anarchy, it does not suggest that one supplements the other. Discipline does not, as Conte indicates, give form to an "anarchy" that would be formless chaos without its regulation, and anarchy does not hold discipline open to experimentation and flux. Moreover, for *Empire*, counter to Newman, anarchist discipline is not the *work* that destabilizes regulatory measures. Instead, anarchy is always already a disciplinary practice. There is no "anarchy" prior to discipline. While there may be more or less regulated forms of anarchy, those forms cannot be said to *lack* discipline; disciplinary practices constitute them. Furthermore, Abhor does not "voluntarily impose" the illustration on herself; the anarchist that she is and the possibility of voluntary self-imposition are effects of the discursive practices mobilized by the drawing.

For anarchism, this discipline of discoloration is unprecedented. If the illustration produces Abhor as an anarchic racial subject, Abhor's act of "listening to the heart" implies that

“anarchist discipline” is not simply that which produces the subject as the effect of non-hierarchical practices; it is a practice that incorporates the processual and aleatory, change and chance. In the Algerian revolution’s aftermath, after the father’s death and Whiteness’s abolition, her vignettes suggest that race, gender, and sexuality can be reconfigured without reference to white and black, male and female, heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual categories. The terms can be invented and reinvented. In Abhor’s character, constituted by and containing these multitudes, such familiar identity categories are not simply practices of citation and iteration; they are moments of denucleation in which the subject has always already taken responsibility for the pain of the other. Thus, the rose and the sword do not symbolize “beauty *and* violence” as Conte concludes; they represent embodied processes of racialization and gender production, and express both the refusal to be victimized and the dignity of healing.

VI. TATTOOS

Abhor’s “discipline and anarchy” drawing constructs not only an ethical relation to the subaltern; it contributes to Seshardi-Crooks’ efforts to explore “an ethics and aesthetics of racial passing that is more than imaginary — a ‘symbolic’ passing that will alter the subject’s relation to the signifier in ways that risk his/her de-subjectification as a subject of race” (10). In *Desiring Whiteness*, such “‘symbolic’ passing” is represented in Toni Morrison’s short story, “Recitatif,” which Morrison indicates “was an experiment in the removal of all racial codes from a narrative about two characters of different races for whom racial identity is crucial” (Morrison xi). For Seshardi-Crooks, Morrison’s removal of racial codes creates an “impossibility” for “identification on the basis of the image”; like an “etch-a-sketch,” the two characters (Roberta

and Twyla) “change shape in our minds even as we try to see [them] now as black, then as white, according to the codes we employ” (148).

In *Empire*, Abhor’s illustration similarly removes the race of her character from the economy of visibility. While Stratton’s compulsion to fix her Jewish identity prefigured this challenge to the regime of visibility, so that Abhor’s racial identity would always remain a question, the exchange of the visual language of *color* for *a language of molecules, gases, and chemicals* in “Black Heat” relocates the place from which race belongs to thought, rather than simply tampering with racial codes. Abhor’s tattoo, registering the effect of uncertainty, does not only put her surface into doubt, destabilizing every racial identification; it defines race in terms of the surface of the body incarnated by the call to responsibility by the other — the call that gave birth to Abhor in the “blood and change” incited by Alexander’s execution by the state. Anchored in “discipline and anarchy,” this “‘symbolic’ passing” facilitated by decolonization does not simply hold out the hope for “a society which wasn’t just disgust”; it points to the possibility of an anarchic “New Afrikan people” who can leave Whiteness behind.

Indeed, insofar as Abhor’s illustration is a tattoo, the tattoo does not merely figure forth the myth that rescues the mark of race; *it becomes a racializing mark*. While tattoos in *Empire* represent the anarchic body’s disciplining, the mythico-historical events of the Algerian revolution and abolition of Whiteness engineer a context that ascribes to tattoos the power to *recode the color of the skin*. This is not to say that tattooed individuals are persons of color. One can be tattooed and remain white, black, or brown. It is to say that *Empire*, through the figure of the tattoo, dreams an alternative vocabulary for race: not one linked to skin color or other visible features, but to illustrations, the practice of designing through pain, in collaboration with an

other. In *Empire*, such symbolic passing does not authorize racial hierarchy and benefit multinational capitalism; it is a myth that supports anarchic societies, and its story eliminates hard and fast racial distinctions and oppositions without obliterating diversity and difference.

Perhaps Abhor's illustration's iteration fully formulates *Empire's* equation of tattoos with race. While Abhor's illustration is black and white, the drawing that concludes the novel removes the blade's black/white contrasts. Instead, it is clear, transparent, blank. Perhaps this transparency suggests a discoloration that irreducibly constitutes a limpid surface. If the last illustration models this limpid surface, its taut placidity scintillates with the play of serial juxtapositions and penetrations. These scintillations create a scale of racialization that can define any given individual subject across the span of time. Race, in *Empire*, would be neither that with which one is born nor that which is seen, whether by oneself or by others, but that which is plundered and pirated. It is *citational*. Abhor insists "the body must matter" (64).

This is anarchy, but not Ervin's and Balagoon's anti-imperialist anarchism. Describing a brewery's wall, Thivai observes that "the wall was graffitied. One of the graffittis was a red circle around a red cross, the anarchist 'A' for those who are beyond death, those who live in the world of multinationals. Next to the cross were the words 'LONG LIVE DEATH'" (103-4). Critics ignore this passage, but the detail illuminates *Empire's* anarchism. Like the graffiti written on the walls of Paris during May 1968, the sign reiterates the Algerian revolution's anarchist affinities. However, the fact that it is an "anarchist 'A'" *that is not an anarchist "A"* but "a red circle around a red cross" indicates that the Algerian revolution modulates and reinvents anarchism.¹⁵⁹

The words "long live death" reconnect that "anarchism" to Baron Samedi, who is "Papa Death" and creates the undead, and Mackandal, who inspires and galvanizes Paris's Algerian

“zombies.” If the Algerian revolution models postanarchism, it exceeds all anarchist models and defines anarchism for itself. Differing from “anarchy without adjectives,” it is an *anarchy with no name*. It is a style, but a style of living death. Its “zombies” are those dead to race as a regime of visibility, colonial subjectivity, and slave logic. Impervious to these numbing discourses, they are “real get down anarchists.” Black heat: the spirit of Eurzile, love that eludes death through its embrace.

No roses grow on sailors’ graves for this reason. Night-glories choke them out.

CHAPTER 6

“<<NEMURI GA MIENAI>>”:

KENJI SIRATORI’S *BLOOD ELECTRIC* AND GENETIC BIOPOWER

How can one both make a biopower function and exercise the rights of war, the rights of murder, and the function of death, without becoming racist? That was the problem, and that, I think, is still the problem.

— Michel Foucault
“Society Must Be Defended”

An(archic) art is precisely that because it refuses to call itself by any name. So-called an(archic) art is one of the many manifestations of active desire. It does not react to a Structure, it does not refer back to an authority, it is a flow of desire, like the free molecular flow without the invariance of the DNA code.

— Rolando Perez
On An(archy) and Schizoanalysis

What I realized with modular synthesizers is that there was really no right or wrong way of — you know — patching them. You could try all these different things and things would happen unexpectedly. It was almost like it had its own personality. It was like a living organism that would sort of do its own thing. These circuits would come to life. Even the little slightest thing would cause it to change and be different. I don’t know how to explain it. I call it the analogue voodoo effect.

— Richard Devine
I Dream of Wires interview

The variety of noises is infinite. We certainly possess nowadays over a thousand different machines, among whose thousand different noises we can distinguish. With the endless multiplication of machinery, one day we will be able to distinguish among ten, twenty, or thirty thousand different noises. We will not have to imitate these noises but rather to combine them according to our artistic fantasy.

— Luigi Russolo
The Art of Noise: A Futurist Manifesto

Life is noise.

— Kenji Siratori
:theQuestionnaire

I. "SCHIZOGRAPHY"

In *Postmodern Anarchism*, Lewis Call concludes that "the politics of cyberpunk is, in short, a radical politics for the new millennium: a politics of postmodern anarchism" (24). For him, "cyberpunk" refers to the science fiction novels of William Gibson and Bruce Sterling, which portray "the deconstruction of Enlightenment subjectivity" as well as "new cultures and new economic systems" (ibid.). For example, Call suggests that Gibson's cyborgian apparatus, the "simstim switch,"¹⁶⁰ represents a postmodern anarchist form of the subject that radically calls into question "simple assumptions about the nature of human subjectivity" (132). In *Distraction*, Sterling's descriptions of the "prole" gang's "prestige-based economy" prefigure anarchic economies based on intangibles (reputation), rather than "material production" (129). For Call, then, cyberpunk's "politics of postmodern anarchism" finds expression in the mode of late nineteenth-century realism. It endeavors (as William Dean Howells wrote) "to picture life just as it is" under the conditions of a given narrative world, and thus *imagines* a "politics for the new millennium" in a story that logically follows from character and setting.

This study's last two chapters tacitly proposed that Burroughs' Nova trilogy and Acker's *Empire of the Senseless* substantiate Call's claim more compellingly than those classic cyberpunk writers. While not science fiction per se, Burroughs' and Acker's works inscribe the cyberpunk topoi of futuristic dystopian worlds, gritty undergrounds of social outcasts, and mutations that occur at the interface of technology and the human body. Further, their cut-ups gesture toward a postanarchism that contests Enlightenment political values and philosophical categories. As I argued in Chapter 5, Acker's plagiarisms of *Neuromancer* critique Gibson's cyberpunk politics for its conservative attitude toward sexuality and gender.¹⁶¹ In a nutshell,

though classic cyberpunk novels interrogate the Cartesian subject, their reliance on realist literary conventions indirectly legitimate such subjectivity by preserving the place of the subject at the center of the narrative. Alternatively, calling attention to the primacy of the other and the responsibility of substitution through the cut, the form of Burroughs' and Acker's work respects the place of the neighbor under conditions impossible for realist narratives and their assumptions about the subject.

Yet perhaps no cut-up better corroborates Call's claim than Kenji Siratori's so-called "new Japanese cyberpunk classic," *Blood Electric* (2002). Suspected of being generated by a computer (or translated from Japanese by digital software), Siratori's work does not establish a post-industrial setting or develop marginalized characters as much as borrow cyberpunk's atmospheric language, pushing it to the extreme, until it shorts out and crashes. Siratori's online persona reinforces this association with digitally generated text. In interviews, rather than directly answering questions, he replies in his cut-up cyberpunk style.¹³² For example, when asked "who is Kenji Siratori — man or machine?," Siratori responds: "He is one hardweb that hyperlinked to our genetic information" (Wild n.pag.). Sandy Baldwin indicates that Siratori's self-stylization turns his name into a trace: "The mysterious Siratori: nothing is known of the writer beyond the style and signature, nothing more than texts, nothing beyond, a silence of which he terms HUMANEXIT or 'abolition of the world.' Nothing but an inscription that fades, downloaded too many times, wiped clean" (73). Portraying Siratori himself as a cyberpunk character, Baldwin's description places the writer *in the cut* — on the margins, off the grid, underground — while also highlighting his identity as an effect of his ostensibly digitized literary technique.

On his blog, *Official Kenji Siratori*, Siratori explicitly aligns his project with the “avant-garde,” placing his writing in the lineage of Surrealism, Antonin Artaud, and William S. Burroughs. Far from cyberpunk’s verisimilitude, he describes his work in anti-realist terms: “Embracing the image mayhem of the digital age, [Siratori’s] relentless prose is nonsensical and extreme, avant-garde and confused, with precedence given to twisted imagery, pace and experimentation over linear narrative and character development” (n.pag.).¹⁶³ Borrowing one of Siratori’s coinages, I call this anti-realist mode “schizography.”¹⁶⁴ Close to the Deleuzian practice of “schizoanalysis,” which Rolando Perez considers “an an(archic) psychology” that “promote[s] the breakdown of hier(archical) institutional frameworks” and “help[s] [. . .] [release] our over-coded flows of desire without putting us back in a mental institution” (22), schizography designates a cyberpunk mode that insists in the absence of a subject. Rather than representing or imagining, it relies on the cut-up technique that arranges miniaturized “genetic” units in order to produce a story. It does not “picture” an alternative; it is the alternative. While Siratori claims to “[embrace] the image mayhem of the digital age,” I would like to argue that *Blood Electric*’s schizography produces a post-digital narrative that figures forth the physical manipulation of genetic code in order to produce an “analogue voodoo effect” from sequences of uncorrelated random variables.

Blood Electric’s minimalist narrative world foregrounds the idea of genetic code. Ostensibly, it narrates the “gene war” between Sato Corporation and a gang of mutants, cyborgs, and clones (ADAM, Super Cherry 666, Creature 13, Clone Boy K).¹⁶⁵ In Siratori’s mythology, “/Sato Corporation declares gene war/” (50). While this statement appears at the end of the first paragraph of “Coda,” the book’s second longest chapter, giving it particular weight, the two

forward slashes enclosing it further accentuate its importance. Siratori's idiosyncratic punctuation effectively italicizes the sentence; it suggests the tremendous intensity and scope of a conflict that spans the totality of the narrative.¹⁶⁶ Filled with this punctuation that resembles HyperText Markup Language, the form of *Blood Electric* indicates that the "gene war" *concerns the transcription of code*. While Burroughs' virulent metaphor for language aligns his Cut-Up trilogy with a response to the McCarthyist weaponization, *Blood Electric's* central narrative conflict alludes to the weaponization of biotechnology and genetic data — a nightmarish dystopian scenario in which megacorporations that legally own genetic sequences deploy gene therapies, prenatal screening, and cloning in order to biologically manage populations.

Siratori encourages comparisons between his "relentless prose" and genetic engineering. When asked if his writing has been translated from Japanese into English by digital software, he states that "my writing is no translation . . . it's a hyperreal genetic-code . . ." ("Kenji Siratori" n.pag.). Differentiating his cut-ups from Burroughs' "word virus," Siratori's statement reframes the word as the deoxyribonucleic acid that encodes the proteins foundational for biological life. That Siratori considers this "genetic-code" "hyperreal" does not only reiterate his anti-realist mode; it locates his writing's context in a global capitalist economy where neoliberal policies of deregulation and privatization encourage potentially dangerous genetic experimentation. Borrowing Jean Baudrillard's notion of "the precession of simulacra," wherein the spectacular image that caused Burroughs' anxiety achieves an onto-epistemological supremacy so absolute that images of reality come before "the real," referring the image to no reality except its own, Siratori's metaphor "hyperreal genetic-code" suggests that his cut-ups are

produced from miniaturized units, from matrices, memory banks and command

models — and with these it can be reproduced an indefinite number of times. It no longer has to be rational, since it is no longer measured against some ideal or negative instance. It is nothing more than operational. In fact, since it is no longer enveloped by an imaginary, it is no longer real at all. It is hyperreal, the product of an irradiating synthesis of combinatory models in a hyperspace without atmosphere. (Baudrillard 2)

Siratori's schizographic, hyperreal cut-ups form what I call "micromontages." In its original sense, "micromontage" refers to an approach to electronic musical composition that arranges "microsounds," that is, "microacoustic phenomena lasting less than one-tenth of a second" (Roads viii). According to Curtis Roads, "the term 'montage' derives from cinema, where it refers to a sequence of rapid images, connected through cutting, splicing, dissolving, and other editing operations. With micromontage, a composer can position each [microsound] precisely in time, constructing complex sound patterns by assembling dozens of smaller sounds" (183). In *Blood Electric*, arranging these informational bytes — smaller than the verbal units combined in Burroughs' and Acker's cut-ups — synthesizes "larva language" or "genome language," and "chromosome syntax" (Siratori, *Blood* 30; 130, 211; 109). While "larva language" implies a linguistic state antedating the subject, "genome language" indicates that *Blood Electric*'s cut-ups are genetic strands that blueprint biological organisms. "Chromosome syntax" would package this "genome language." Siratori's micromontages, then, are not simply arrangements of very small fragments; they point to molecular organizations engaged in processes of division, replication, and sequencing.

These micromontages are comprised by what I call *phraselets*. Characterizing a verbal

phrase analogous to microsound, the phraselet is based on a “realm” of “sound particles” “beneath the level of the note” (Roads vii). For my purposes, the phraselet is a verbal particle. It is a bit of a phrase: *a literary chirp or pip anterior to the formation of a grammatical unit or fixed expression*. In *Blood Electric*, such phraselets include “sickly period,” “cobalt rock death,” and “cold-blooded disease animals.” Recalling Stein’s method of insistence, Siratori recycles these verbal formations, repeating them dozens of times throughout the novel.¹⁶⁷ Siratori borrows this technique of repeating motifs from Burroughs. However, while motifs such as “shift linguals” and “storm the reality studio” refer to the Nova police subverting the Nova criminals’ efforts, the referents for Siratori’s phraselets are simulacra, referring only to the phraselet. His insistences place them into grammatical and narrative relationships that incessantly modulate both the phraselet they connect to and their own identity. While Burroughs’ motifs were like a melody — a shrill, alarming melody woven throughout the trilogy — Siratori’s phraselets behave more like pulses. Soft, fuzzy, evanescent, they circulate throughout *Blood Electric* and, in the course of their circulation, constitute an environment that, at one moment, solidifies into a grammatical phrase, and then, a moment later, disappears, only to return in a new cluster of phraselets elsewhere.¹⁶⁸

Phraselets are accompanied by what I call “microcuts.” Defining a phraselet’s parameters, the microcut marks the site of the incision in the body of a phrase that segments it into smaller units. In other words, wherever a phraselet occurs, a microcut always already will have taken place, so that every “microsonic” phraselet is preceded by a glitch or click that retroactively defines it. Like the cut in Burroughs’ cut-ups, the microcut registers an affective bump that intimates the anteriority of the other to the subject. However, I call Siratori’s cuts “microcuts”

due to their *fineness*. Though Siratori's method has never been confirmed, Robinson indicates that "Siratori can be seen as exploiting available software" to create his "digital cut-ups" (260). While Burroughs' cuts were produced by a blade or fold, technologies applied to the physical paper on which words are printed, Robinson's comment suggests that Siratori's microcuts are generated by the greater-than-surgical, laser beam-like precision of ones and zeros, and that they operate on language not simply in its materiality but *through the processes of its materialization*. Such cuts are not visible on the surface of the text. They are too delicate, too infinitesimal. They belong to the very fibers of Siratori's language.

Splicing strands into larger, more complex forms, these phraselets and microcuts intimate a comparison between *Blood Electric* and a genome. Siratori's "hyperreal genetic-code" suggests that the narrative is a long strand of DNA coiled within each cell of a living organism. The book comprises an instruction manual, a hieroglyph, or a cryptogram whose assemblage places its "code" prior to meaning. Its schizographic arrangements of phraselets and microcuts transform Siratori's literary micromontage into a self-dividing and self-replicating system homologous to a molecular organization anterior to the biological organism as such.

Biopolitical practices are central to Siratori's micromontage. Since his cut-up method relies on fractal iterations, works such as *Blood Electric* invite a statistical approach to literature; rather than imagination or inference, they encourage systematic data collection that tracks phraselet motifs and documents their development over time.¹⁶⁹ *Blood Electric's* formal attention to biopolitical practices place his cut-up method in a historical context unavailable to his predecessors. Biopolitics are not millennial, but the juridical instrumentalization of DNA in forensic police work, immigration eligibility, and paternity disputes reaches its contemporary

status only after Burroughs' and Acker's deaths. In the context of Sato Corp's "gene war," Siratori's biopolitical cut-ups give expression not only to a dystopia in which megacorporations turn genetic research against populations, but to a singularly millennial fear — the fear of neoliberal global economic enterprises with the political power to alter the human genomic code. Indeed, in April 2015, during the composition of this essay, Siratori's dystopian science fiction became a reality when Chinese researchers Junjiu Huang and Canquan Zhou used the CRISPR/Cas 9 system to edit the genes of a human embryo — an act of genetic engineering that physically alters the DNA in a genomic sequence.

In a *Bookmunch* interview, Siratori implies that this difference between twentieth and twenty-first-century cut-ups pivots on divergent forms of resistance to biopower. Aggressively interrogating Siratori's claims to innovation, Peter Wild asks: "You talk about 'new writing' — aren't you just dressing up what the modernists did at the start of the twentieth century, a method Burroughs did something to update but which in essence is 'stream of consciousness', albeit stream of consciousness infiltrated by technology and html code etc?" (n.pag.). In response, Siratori distinguishes struggles against repressive power regimes and engagements with biopolitical governmentality, that is, distinguishes classical revolutionary struggle and contemporary forms of counter globalization, particularly those concerned with GMOs and biopiracy. He states: "I advocate a hypermodern literature to pop culture — it means the invasion to the gene code — and to update our abolition world code — because the characteristic of 20th century style 'hardweb' is a struggle. However my language cell is streaming the genomewearable struggle as 21st century style hardweb" (ibid.).¹⁷⁰ In the context of twenty-first-century activism and genetics, Siratori's puzzling statement gestures toward a distinction not

only between confrontations with modern monolithic structures (e.g., the state, capitalism, the church) and contemporary fragmented, decentralized, global powers, but between two bodies (“hardwebs”): bodies that are managed by nineteenth-century biopolitical practices (marriages, vaccinations, statistical data on birth and death) and geneticized bodies, emerging from the complex play of cellular molecules vulnerable to patenting, screening for defects, cloning, and modification for targeted biopolitical results.

I would like to suggest that “the 21st century style hardweb” points to a “body without organs.” In *On An(archy) and Schizoanalysis* (1990) — an early postanarchist attempt to think “ethical anarchy” (18) — Perez alludes to “the body without organs” as a “hyperreal genetic-code”: it is “a hieroglyphic or *a-signifying* ‘text’ — a desiring sign which gives rise through its gestures to alternative forms of expression” (43).¹⁷¹ In *Blood Electric*, this body without organs finds expression in the phraselet “internal organ consciousness.” Suggesting that organs *have minds of their own*, this image complex hearkens back to the “autonomy of affect” mobilized in Burroughs’ Nova trilogy; it intimates the motivated varying configurations of the body’s internal anatomy. Indeed, iterated more than one hundred times throughout the novel, the phraselet’s form reinforces this possibility. Circulating through the text, occupying different, constantly fluctuating sites and relations to other phraselets and verbal combinations, the phraselet “internal organ consciousness” exhibits a textual order that evokes a body defined not by its contents, but by flows, velocities, and transformations.

Schizography represents Siratori’s effort to relinquish “internal organ consciousness,” that is, to give expression to the deterritorialization of the body without organs through “genome language” and “chromosome syntax.” “Hyperreal genetic-code,” his micromontages’ gradual,

accretive accumulations, spontaneous linkages, volatile deviations, and unpredictable mutations engineer forms under a black flag, figuring forth a countermove to a “gene war” in which neoliberal corporations can archive and manipulate genetic information. In effect, *Blood Electric* is a response to the threat of CRISPR/Cas 9. The narrative’s apparent transcription of code symbolizes an endeavor to anarchically encipher the raw data of the genome — the “blueprint” of biological life.

II. “JAPANOISE”

Siratori’s electronic “noise” music suggests that his anti-realist, schizographic texts are better listened to than read. His 2013 album, *Gillsbreathing Byte Tragedy*, is — like *Mimicrymimesis and Enlightenmen* (2012) and *Ponkotsu Head* (2015) — a sixty-minute torrent of digital sound samples. Without harmonies, melodies, or beats: the album begins with a cluster of synth notes, then quickly builds into a series of distortions and successive, overlapping note cascades, mechanical noises, and vivid sonic designs. Occasionally, Siratori samples fragmented human voices, too processed to be intelligible. Although he has never described his artistic process, he likely constructs specific parameters for a digital sampler program on his computer that cycles through sound files saved to his hard drive, replicating and arranging the data into rhythmic patterns, and from there he simply presses “return”: the program sequences the audio files according to his specifications, and he freely modulates the program’s auditory output. In *Gillsbreathing*, this orchestral approach resembles DNA sequencing. The audio files are analogous to guanine, adenine, thymine, and cytosine, and Siratori arranges them into compositions through processes homologous to ordering a genome’s nucleotides.

The parallel between Siratori's "japanoise" and literary project accentuates *Blood Electric's* auditory properties, rather than its meaning. Commenting on the novel's diction, Michael Schlitz notes that "Siratori makes excessive use of hyperbolic language, more specifically language with strong (Freudian or violent) connotations" (n.pag.).¹⁷² Its languagescapes exhibit correspondingly abrasive and tumultuous aural traits. In the chapter "nail/eye," for example, Siratori's genomic textures consolidate around alliterative constellations and cacophonous combinations:

Control external::suck=blood chromosome of sin-tainted slit love fecundates our
digital vampire vex/the ossified memory>Gelid ejaculation jolt of the hyperreal
quantum masses of flesh of the crucified memory loss of the artificial sun of
ToKAGE>Schizographic exoskeleton chaos soul-machine detonator:://the
suspected life of the ADAM Doll that was loaded and was accelerated to spectre=/
(178)

Formulations such as "control external::suck," "sin-tainted slit love fecundates," and "gelid ejaculation jolt" do not only reiterate a pattern of sexual and aggressive "connotatons"; the heavy k, t, and j sounds synthesize a clashing, strident string of noises that complement the passage's insinuations of vampirism, torture, and rape. These dissonant sounds invite comparisons to *Gillsbreathing*: their alliterative patterning gives aural coherence to a syntactically and semantically opaque text, but the accumulative effect of their combination creates a grating, uncomfortable, discordant soundscape where words seem to grind, screech, and rattle together, suggesting clunky laboratory equipment, machines pushed to their limits, and war. *Blood Electric* employs these hard, sharp fricative and plosive sounds with such consistency that

Siratori seems to have selected them not simply for their “connotations” but for their sonic effect. This is not to say that Siratori only uses specific sounds, but that *Blood Electric* (and Siratori’s other works) exhibit an acoustic style that privileges sounds more difficult for the vocal apparatus to articulate than an “h” or “m.” The narrative gives shape to a torrent of sound bytes. If such japanoise resembles a sequence of GATC, *Gillsbreathing*’s and *Blood Electric*’s homology does not only reiterate the latter’s molecular organization; it raises the novel to the status of a musical composition sequencing literary microsounds.

Sustained for several pages, these verbal pixel sequences produce a rhythm that Oscar Strik describes as “a hypnotizing process, where the atmosphere created by the word gradually builds up and becomes the main force contained in the text” (n.pag.). Proposing that a computer wrote *Blood Electric*, Strik observes that Siratori’s sentencings follows a programmable set of grammatical rules: it organizes phraselets (or, for Strik, “phrases”) from words and then combines those phraselets into “chunks” through microcuts (or “connectors”) (n.pag.).¹⁷³ According to Strik’s algorithm, the “phrases” in the sequence “gelid ejaculation jolt of the hyperreal quantum masses of flesh of the crucified memory loss of the artificial sun of ToKAGE” would be “gelid ejaculation jolt,” “the hyperreal quantum masses of flesh,” “the crucified memory loss,” and “the artificial sun of ToKAGE,” all of which are joined in a “chunk” by the connector “of.” While Siratori’s alliterations produce acoustic patterns, this genitive structure introduces a predictable, albeit uneven and irregular pulsation into Siratori’s literary soundscape: the connector “of,” in this “grammar,” functions like a microcut, separating and joining one phraselet with another, adding a rhythmic click or glitch between each verbal chirplet. The rhythm of the “chunk” does not belong to the phraselet’s sonic attributes, but to the

caesura produced by the microcut. It is comparable to the rhythm of static, white noise — a sequence of serially uncorrelated random variables — that produces a post-digital music from crackling, crashing, and the hum of audio equipment pushed to the point of failure.

Rhythmically “chunking” phraselets, Siratori’s syntactic formations effectively *serialize* shifting, self-replicating acoustic information. In “Coda,” using punctuation marks (“::”) rather than the conjunctive “of,” one of the series is constructed thus: “ultrasonic orgasm scream erodes my cadaver::it becomes quantum::it becomes legion::it becomes the speed of the heart of the machine of an angel spasm” (66). Here, the double colon intimates relations of transformation, rather than equivalence. Recalling Abhor’s performative discolorations, achieved through connections to various cautionary signs, “cadaver” is placed in a signifying chain that plugs and changes into “quantum,” then “legion,” then “the speed at the heart of the machine of an angel spasm.” (The “chunk” itself suggests serialized couplings. “Of” discovers each phraselet’s meaning by joining the nouns, rather than giving expression to pre-existing meaning.) Stretched across the expanse of *Blood Electric*, these serializations transform its languagescape not only into a “glitch” literature,¹⁷⁴ but into a series of amalgamations and disintegrations, one sound/image complex mutating into the next, forming a “cloud” or sound mass that foregrounds literary texture, timbre, and dynamics over narrative conventions such as character and plot.

The structure of serialization challenges Reza Negarestani’s assumption that *Blood Electric* constitutes a “techno-vortical” text (n.pag.). While Negarestani’s figure of the vortex could be based on Siratori’s relentless insistence, which recurrently circles back to phraselets previously deployed, it may also have been extrapolated from *Blood Electric*’s word-for-word repetition of the “first” chapter (“Abolition”) in the place of the “last,” implying (as the back

matter indicates) “a devastating loop of language.” In its second form, the chapter jumps off the page, running over the margin and spilling off the edge, suggesting not only that the novel has curved in a tremendous circle, but that it will continue to loop in such circles *in perpetua*. While Negarestani’s figure suggests that this circle never connects, that is, never refers back to itself but instead ceaselessly redefines and rediscovers its own extension, Siratori’s serializations foreground the geometrical figure of an obsessive pointillism, rather than a simple spiral. Pixilated, miniaturized, genetic, the serialized phraselets acquire form not through a linear stroke that unifies them, but through the application and grouping of audio-verbal particles that spontaneously organize into noise, polyrhythms, and “twisted imagery” through their repetition, accumulation, and consolidation.

Electronic musician and sound designer Richard Devine indicates that such serializations facilitate the serendipitous discoveries that he calls “the analogue voodoo effect” (Devine n.pag.). Discussing his work with modular synthesizers on his 2013 album, *RISP*, he characterizes the varying arrangement of patches in terms similar to the cut-up method: “Some things will happen but you don’t understand why. You’re like, ‘Oh, well. Theoretically that shouldn’t be working, but it’s working somehow and it’s outputting something bizarre and interesting” (Future n.pag.). *RISP*, he states, was composed by these aleatory discoveries: “I would [. . .] just patch up some stuff and come up with something that would happen randomly” (n.pag.). He continues: “I love the whole idea of generating a patch. Like this little electrical floating organism that’s existing in this realm just for a split second and then when you pull the patch cables out it’s lost forever” (n.pag.). Applied to *Blood Electric*, Devine’s comments suggest that Siratori’s aim is not to make beautiful sounds or to produce coherent images; it is to discover

cacophonies and “twisted imagery” through coupling one phraselet with another. “Gelid ejaculation jolt” or “the speed of the heart of the machine of an angel spasm” are “little electrical floating organism[s]” that flicker for an instant, then evaporate into other formations. Hyperreal, these images, rhythms, and sounds are not present as images, rhythms, or sounds; they are simulations that emerge from the coincidence of small, discrete linguistic dots placed in a linear series.

Discovering these rhythms, sounds, and images through “patching” phraselets qualifies Siratori’s serializations as “a-signifying art.” For Perez, “a-signifying” or “an(archic) art” does not refer to a blueprint or universal principle that anchors the work in meaning, but operates through processes of exploration, finding meaning and organization in the traversal of frontiers (79). Alluding to the spontaneous and random emergence of “little electric floating organism[s],” Perez argues that such art “does not react to a Structure, it does not refer back to an authority, it is the flow of desire, like the free molecular flow without the invariance of the DNA code” (ibid.). However, *Blood Electric*’s pointillism differs from Perez’s definition. Examining Artaud’s (and Bukowski’s) writings, Perez praises these authors for writing according to *lines* rather than *points*: “The entirety of their writings are composed of plateaus, thousands of plateaus, lines of intensities, and unlike mainline literary writing they are not orgasmic; that is, they do not employ endings, but rather processes, lines of intensities, more intense than any orgasm, more intense than any climax. Life is implicit in lines, whereas death is implicit in points, in the orgasm” (88).¹⁷⁵

Counter to Perez’s characterization of “a-signifying” or “an(archic) art,” *Blood Electric*’s cut-up micromontages propose an anarchist literature composed by “points” to the degree that it

synthesizes small, discrete literary wavelets into larger, complex formations of sound, rhythm, and image. This is not to say that Siratori's micromontages are not linear. That *Blood Electric's* pointillism coalesces around serializations indicates that it enacts "the flow of desire, like the free molecular flow without the invariance of the DNA code," but these linear formations are posterior to the phraselet's serially uncorrelated random variables. If such "points" are "death," they are not opposed to "life"; instead, they compose an integral part of life, as though at the genetic level, antedating the organism as such. In Perez's terms, the point of *Gillsbreathing* and *Blood Electric* is, then, extraneous to the binary that opposes life and death; it belongs to an order prior to that mutually exclusive binary relation.

"A-signifying," *Blood Electric's* serializations constitute a Levinasean *saying* rather than a *said*. For Levinas, saying "signifies prior to essence, prior to identification" (45). Otherwise than being, it composes "articulation and signifyingness antecedent to ontology" (46). If Kropotkin's sympathetic identification risked the ossification of the beaten child's desire in a "said" — a language that fixes the child in the ontic and ontological limits of the subject — "saying" exposes the subject to the neighbor without mutilating its otherness. Levinas writes: "Antecedent to the verbal signs it conjugates, to the linguistic systems and the semantic glimmerings, a foreword preceding language, it is the proximity of the one to the other, the commitment of an approach, the one for the other, the very signifyingness of signification" (5). If *Blood Electric* is an "a-signifying text," Levinas' concept of "saying" indicates that the failure to signify expresses an encounter with the "unsayable." Torrential, modular, interminable, Siratori's "a-signifying" texts are not simply anarchic micromontages; they are the proximity of the other. The *sound* and *rhythm* of the phraselet, prior to any fixation in meaning, locates the text at the

threshold of proximity where the other contacts the subject from the hither side of midnight. In other words, saying encounters the unsayable. Siratori's "genome language" and "chromosome syntax" prolong the instant of incarnation before the subject "comes back" to itself and loses the other in the same. While Negarestani distances Siratori's texts from "the hegemonic Voice (call it the voice of pharaoh, father, author, God)" (n.pag.), *Blood Electric*'s emphasis on sonic and rhythmic languagescapes suggests that its voice is the voice of the other: the assignation that calls the subject forward.

Blood Electric's pointillist sonic stream evokes Levinasean anarchy. Embodying the saying prior to the said, it points to the locus older than the most ancient. In other words, its pointillism points to the space prior to the subject, before its image or representation clicks into place. *Gillsbreathing* registers a similar effect: its minimalist, sonally limited range of expression suggests a prologue to a musical composition that never arrives. (Indeed, other electronic musicians such as Ebola and Otto Von Schirach design similar soundscapes, e.g., Ebola's "Velcro Scrotum" and Von Schirach's "Ear Ointment.") However, these tracks tend to be short — 0:31 for the former, 1:02 for the latter — and serve as introductions to or transitions between more dynamic, beat-driven compositions.¹⁷⁶ Only slightly varying its dynamics and emotional range, the prolongation of *Gillsbreathing*'s noise suggests that the music marks the beginning before the beginning, prior to any origins or introduction. In *Blood Electric*, Siratori registers such anarchy in the second paragraph of the first chapter when he identifies "the miracle in the annihilation just before::spasm internal//the emotional machine that gene=TV distorted::LOAD//the genome state" (5).

Acephalous, a-signifying, anarchic, the form of Siratori's "new Japanese cyberpunk

classic” hearkens to ethical conditions more commensurable with “the politics of postmodern anarchism” than realist science fictions. Whereas a representational cyberpunk novel such as *Neuromancer* follows the figure of the “circle” that Perez identifies with referentiality and oppression, so that Gibson’s language makes present a preexisting world, even if only in his imagination, *Blood Electric*’s granular syntheses — its experimental, aleatory groupings of phraselets into patterns and forms — does not simply call attention to the locus anterior to the subject; its saying, its prolongation of the opening of this aperture, is the constitution of the space in which the subject emerges from the place of the other. For *Blood Electric*, such “saying” is not simply the “music” of the other, the “pure sound” in which the “I” is exposed and vulnerable to the neighbor; it is the rhythmic pulsation of the microcut assembling phraselets and chunking micromontages through a series of glitches, clicks, and verbal grainlets. If such saying constitutes the “dark light” that highlights the ethical event of responsibility for-the-other, Siratori’s “japanoise” might push the cut-up to the height of anarchist aesthetics. In *Blood Electric*, the “pure sound” in which (to refer back to Gerald Bruns) “poetry and the ethical come near one another” is not *verbe* but *the silence of the cut itself*.

Formulated in the context of Siratori’s “hyperreal genetic-code,” the silence of the microcut points toward a biopolitical relation to the neighbor. While Levinas’ notion of anarchy stakes out a locus prior to nucleotides and deoxyribonucleic acid, *Blood Electric*’s micromontages do not only demonstrate that such anarchy is registered by the microcut’s “pure sound”; insofar as the text’s unfolding resembles cellular evolution in fast-forward, they give expression to the place of the other at the molecular level. Siratori’s schizography suggests that my genome — my unique genetic fingerprint, the molecular story of where I got the color of my

eyes and hair —always already testify to the one for whom I am responsible. Indeed, it suggests that the body without organs is the place of the other. The body's infinite malleability would be the “analogue voodoo effect” of the aleatory, pointillist processes that engineer “little floating electrical organisms.”

Perhaps the “analogue voodoo effect” is what Siratori calls “genedub.” While “gene-” denotes the term's relationship to genetics, “-dub” suggests a relationship to musical recording technologies. Andrew Wenaus identifies “genedub” with the studio remixing technology responsible for dub reggae (37-38). However, Wenaus' characterization overlooks the genetic property of such “remixing.” Not only does “genedub” include the word “gene”; the colloquial word “dubbing” is an abbreviated form for *doubling*, copying a pre-recorded track, and such a practice is homologous to the processes of DNA replication and cloning. In this genetic context, “genedub” suggests not only the division and replication of the body without organs, but of the “music” of the other, the silence of the microcut that ceaselessly “remixes” that body, maintaining its relation to the non-originary origin, anarchy. Perhaps this anarchic body is what Siratori calls “acidHUMAN” — a term that suggests a posthumanist subjectivity that is the effect of distortions, filters, and reverb applied to genetic serializations.

In an interview, Siratori identifies this process with *Blood Electric*: “So my novel is presenting the aspect of the genetic hardweb clearly — the nerve cells that run through our gene dub — is the strategic object that our body codes erode the world” (Marshall, n.pag.). If “genetic hardweb” refers to the molecular soft machine, that is, the body as the effect of genetic data, then Siratori's statement reinforces the claim above: “genedub” is the application for the posthuman body that *Blood Electric* embodies through its granular syntheses and micromontages.

III. “[ICE NEBULA FAECAL BLACK]”

In the context of Siratori’s “genedub,” *Blood Electric*’s embodiment of saying does not simply point to a relation to the neighbor in its absence; it suggests an anarchist position on genetic biopower that does not “infect” the body without organs, that is, does not genetically organize the body in order to legitimate hierarchy and centralized authority. Rather than hierarchizing the body’s genetic identity, “genedub” suggests DNA sequences that refer to a soft spot in the genome’s “deep structure.”

Perez argues that biologist Jacques Monod’s characterization of DNA redoubles the “fascist” structure of the body infected with organs. In his 1970 essay, *Chance and Necessity*, Monod argues that DNA is “the fundamental biological invariant” (104). For him, this “invariant” engenders all biological diversity. Framing biological life’s variability as the “noise” of evolutionary chance, that is, the principles of random adaptation and change, Monod establishes an opposition between “noise” and “music” that subordinates the former to the latter:

[. . .] the same source of fortuitous perturbations, of ‘noise,’ which in a nonliving (i.e., nonreplicating) system would lead little by little to the disintegration of all structure, is the progenitor of evolution in the biosphere and accounts for the unrestricted liberty of creation, thanks to the replicative structure of DNA: that registry of chance, that tone-deaf conservatory where the noise is preserved along with the music. (116-7)

In these terms, the “noise” is not the “music”; evolutionary processes of adaptation and change are not “*a property of living beings*” (116). Instead, all variation, all noise, filter through the

music's organizing mechanisms, which invariably encode noise into predictable patterns.

Perez contends that Monod's conceptualization of the play between "chance" and "necessity" institutes a hierarchical relation at the basis of biological life that subordinates the biological diversity's aleatory elements to genetic code's invariability: "The seemingly free molecular flows are anything but free; they belong to the hier(archy) in which the despotic DNA determines the outcome" (73). Comparing Monod's "invariance theory" to Noam Chomsky's "universal generative grammar," Perez argues that "what you have here is a despotic Structure which determines the direction and flow of all the elements in its regime" (75). While Chomsky's deep structure linguistics "territorializes the flow of words" and dictates sentences' syntactic order, Monod's "invariance theory" "territorializes genetic flows" and guarantees the replication of the same biological order, regardless of aleatory "perturbations" or radical disruptions (76). For Perez, such deep invariability implies that "DNA's despotic nature will determine the outcome of everything; and most clearly, there will be no disorder, but only hier(archical) organization" (ibid.). In terms of Monod's opposition between "noise" and "music," Perez's critique suggests not only that noise is subordinate to music, but that noise cannot "be" music; the two must remain separate, complementary but distinct, so that *Gillsbreathing's* and *Blood Electric's* japonoise proves incomprehensible as a viable living form. For Monod, in other words, saying cannot suffice in itself; it is validated and valued through its relation to the said that guarantees its "truth."

Insofar as Siratori's micromontages assemble grammatical forms without reference to standard generative rules, the association between Chomsky's deep structures and Monod's invariance theory suggests that *Blood Electric's* syntactic serializations express an alternative

form of genetic sequencing. While I argued in the previous section that Siratori's literary "japanoise" is implicitly modeled after the techniques of genetic engineering and genomic research through a structural homology with musical orchestration, particularly microsound and granular synthesis, I would here indicate that Siratori's most salient phraselets themselves point toward biotechnological practices that extend Perez's postanarchist critique of Monod's invariance theory.

Associating Siratori's cut-up method and this alternative genetic discourse, the phraselet "hunting for the grotesque" appears in more than fifty different permutations throughout *Blood Electric* (and even more throughout the ADAM series).¹⁷⁷ The phraselet occurs in structurally privileged places throughout *Blood Electric*. For example, "Code" — the book's second largest chapter and, based on its title, possibly its epilogue — ends with the formulation "searching for the grotesque skulls of Sato Corporation napalm victims in Sarcophagus City of the pink ash planet EVOL//"¹⁷⁸ (80). Then, at the end of "the colony" and "hardcore," the lines repeat in mutated form.¹⁷⁸ (Although I critique the book's cover below, I would note here that the phraselet also appears on the back cover's "blurb": "hunting for the grotesque skulls of Sato Corporation napalm victims." There, outside and inside the book, the phraselet identifies the book's center and periphery. While designed to be among the book's first words that would be read, it also reaches to the far side of the book's back end — positioned among the last words that would be revealed when the book ends and the back cover closes.) Thus, the phraselet is not only remarkable for its frequency; it marks extremities: ultimate chapters, final lines, and termini that simultaneously locate origins.

The phraselet "hunting for the grotesque" joins Devine's "analogue voodoo effect" and

genetic engineering practices. Among its multiple iterations, it often implies *examination*, *scrutiny*, and *search*. For example, in the permutations “hunting for the grotesque line of crash” (94), “hunting for the grotesque that decodes drugs and erodes the body channel of the psychosexual drone” (126), and “hunting for the grotesque program of the ecstasy that respirens sickly period/” (196), the phraselet is associated with the discovery of spatialization (“line of crash”), creation and destruction (“decodes” and “erodes”), and systemization (“program”). It suggests that Siratori’s “relentless prose” and “hyperreal genetic-code” are “hunting” not only for novel patches and rhythms, but also for “twisted imagery” — surreal, monstrous, incongruous forms — through the cut-up process. Further, the phrases “grotesque mental evolution of self” and “grotesque gene manipulation” (217; 219) directly identify the “grotesque” with genetics and evolutionary mutation. The association implies that Siratori’s “twisted” images are genetic aberrations: chimerical freaks generated through the serendipitous process of juxtaposing dismembered fragments and splicing them with other forms, rather than realist images limited to the imagination of a thinking, autotelic subject.

Searching out distorted and bizarre forms, “hunting for the grotesque” equates the cut-up method with genetic engineering and genomic research. As a phraselet, it constantly alters its “line of crash.” Cut, severed from its previous textual relationship, it splices with other phraselets in order to produce a new image, a new collection of sounds, a new grammatical formation. Its formal behavior embodies “forms fighting to coalesce” (*Blood Electric* 25). Infinitely passive, this terrain in *Blood Electric* that spatializes such formal struggle affords an alternative to the predetermined regimes posited by Chomsky’s syntactic deep structures. Some forms fail; they produce excess nonsense or fall to pieces on the spot. Others snap into clarity; suddenly, in a

certain combination, they cohere and offer a literary form, however small and odd, for future applications. Characterizing Siratori's literary experiments, California-based artist GX Jupiter-Larsen states that "what Kenji Siratori achieves with his polywaves of interlocking paraphrasing, is the opportunity to raise to the ground antiquated rhetoric, and give world literature the perfect [sic] blank foundation in which to bring about a whole new phraseology" (n.pag.). Counter to this Dadaesque fantasy, however, "hunting for the grotesque" implies that Siratori's experiments aim not to pioneer "a whole new phraseology," but to engineer fantastic, misshapen, unnatural forms *in order to discover them*. His cut-up method's *modus operandi* is not destruction for its own sake; it hunts, seeks out and chases down the monstrous, surreal, and inexplicable by combining limited informational bits in diverse manners.

"[ice nebula faecal black]" embodies one of these grotesque forms. Occurring more than one hundred times, the phraselet is not only central to Siratori's book; it is absent from the other ADAM novels and unique to *Blood Electric*. Abstract as an image, "[ice nebula faecal black]" activates a series of associations throughout the narrative. More than fifty times, "ice" evokes the image of the sky: "sky is ice::the sky of glacial fire" (68); "ice entropic desire device of the sky" (135); "the ice-ROM nightmare of the sky" (159); "the ice of the sky noise" (161); "crucified memory of an ice sky" (178); "gene war of the ice sky" (196). "Faecal" correlates with blood, particularly "faecal blood-clot" — an image iterated more than fifteen times: "faecal blood-clot mechanism" (98); "my faecal blood-clot in the ice of the sky" (101); "<the chromosome=port clotted with faecal blood" (131). While the color "black" often appears — particularly in conjunction with "black embryos" — its place in "[ice nebula faecal black]" seems to modify "faecal," suggesting excrement mixed with dried coagulated blood. Collectively, these

associations (and this incremental, accumulative formation) evoke the image of an interstellar cloud, composed not only of dust and gasses but dark, frozen particles, visible only when passing before illuminated cosmic bodies. Indeed, gravitating around these intratextual associations, the phraselet performs a nebular formations' diffuse clustering. It suggests a loose collection of raw material, an opaque mass, visible to the degree that it is invisible, constantly rotating, and ultimately producing other astral objects, such as planets, stars, comets, asteroids.

Harkening back to Siratori's japoise, the nebular development of "[ice nebula faecal black]" suggests a sound cloud that Roads titles "nebulae." Contrasting with the "cumulus" sound cloud ("well-defined cauliflower-shaped cottony clouds") or "cirrus" ("isolated sheets that develop in filaments or particles"), Roads indicates that *nebulae* are 'swirling clouds of cosmic raw material': "pulled by immense gravitational fields or blown by cosmic shockwaves, nebulae form in great variety: dark or glowing, amorphous or ring-shaped, constantly evolving in morphology" (16). That "[ice nebula faecal black]" recurs throughout *Blood Electric*, often appearing on every page for great spans, even multiple times within individual paragraphs, reinforces Roads' metaphor: the phraselet's insistence produces constantly changing levels of intensity, frequency, density, and speed. If micromontage resembles genetic sequencing, the metaphor of the "nebulae" implies that "[ice nebula faecal black]" symbolizes genetic code in its rawest form; it figures forth an amorphous mass of information that acquires contour and pattern in the course of the narrative's processes and manipulations, though "shape" is contingent, ephemeral, and never more than noisy, conflicting, inchoate, disconnected data. Its shimmering haziness attests to the fact that a fully sequenced human genome is an a-signifying text: a hieroglyph that becomes meaningful only in the dangerous, ethically questionable processes of

interpretation.

While “hunting for the grotesque” implies engineering genetic forms, the cloudiness of “[ice nebula faecal black]” implies the force of an interruption that breaks apart. Bracketed, the phraselet’s squared parentheses form an integral element in its constitution, suggesting an interpolation of additional material or indicating an error. Rather than connecting with other phraselets, this unique figure displaces text. Indeed, unlike other phraselets, which sometimes interrupt and sometimes click into place with contiguous fragments, “[ice nebula faecal black]” never fits; it always disrupts coherence and continuity. For example, in the sequence “interference from human genome spectre ruins the [ice nebula faecal black] relation of suspicion” (69), the phraselet disrupts the continuity — ruins the relation — of “ruins the relation,” dividing “the” from “relation” and interjecting additional noise into the formation. Siratori seems to haphazardly introduce this phraselet into his text. It is as though he uses his computer’s Ctrl+V function to unsystematically distribute it throughout a preexisting document. In this way, “[ice nebula faecal black]” does not only represent a “human” element in *Blood Electric*, where Siratori introduces an alteration into his post-digally processed prose¹⁷⁹; its aleatory status and implied identity as an error, interruption, or glitch in the system suggests that *it is a figure for the cut itself*.

Burroughs and Acker did not take the cut-up this far. In effect, since “[ice nebula faecal black]” embodies the nebulosity of anarchy, it can be compared to traditional Japanese haiku’s *kireji*: it is a word (or cluster of words) that punctuates a relation between two rhetorical figures, joining the otherwise unrelated pair by marking their separation. It is not a literary representation of a cut, but a “severing letter“ — a “cutting word.” Thus, even if Robinson’s assumption that

Siratori's cut-ups are digitally generated by ones and zeros proves fallacious, *Blood Electric's* language nevertheless does incorporate the (micro)cut into its fibers. *It radically modifies the semantic and grammatical functions of English language words.* In *Blood Electric's* sonic "nebula," the verbal microcut "[ice nebula faecal black]" registers a click, pip, or pulsar that rhythmically crackles amid the micromontage's other processes and lineations. A "dark nebula," it is the "dark light" that obscurely flickers at the approach of the neighbor.

Counter to Monod's invariance theory, Siratori's "[ice nebula faecal black]" proposes the primacy of the aleatory in DNA structure. While its function expresses the restriction enzyme that cuts a DNA strand and conditions its reattachment to other strands, the "cutting word" itself expresses a nomic principle at the heart of DNA. It is *a variable invariant*. The phraselet calls attention to an aleatory element inscribed in the building blocks of biological life, putting into abeyance the possibility of affirming any universally shared genetic traits or immutable genomic principle. Framed by "[ice nebula faecal black]," "chance" and "necessity" are not equal but complementary powers; they are homologous structures, suggesting not only the necessity of the aleatory in the system of evolutionary development, but also that "necessity" is only one possibility. The bracketed phraselet's "rule" is essentially that the rules must be invented ad hoc and in situ. Adding to Perez's criticism of Monod, *Blood Electric* implies that DNA does not determine every outcome; instead, it is retroactively determined by the outcome that its expression validates. In other words, "[ice nebula faecal black]" implies that anarchy belongs to every sequence of GATC; rather than a blueprint for biological life, DNA constitutes raw data that remains to be organized and designed in accordance with the anarchic assignation where dark light flashes.

“<<nemuri ga mienai>>” embodies this singularity that emerges from the nomic play of *Blood Electric*’s “hyperreal genetic-code.” Appearing in the “last” chapter’s (“Pork”) first paragraph (215), this phraselet is absolutely one of a kind; neither it nor its individual elements appear in the text. (Indeed, while Siratori integrates a few Japanese words into his book — ToKAGE (“lizard”), okama (“gay”), omanko (“vagina”), omotya (“toy”), and ROKUDENASI (“not satisfying”) — “<<nemuri ga mienai>>” is one of only two Japanese phrases in the book. The other is “ore wa genki desu” [“I am well”].) Placed between two chevrons that resemble guillemets, the punctuation intimates that the phrase may be reported speech, through in *Blood Electric*’s iconoclastic punctuation double chevrons generally single out a particularly successful verbal formation or sonic assemblage. Translated “sleep cannot be seen” or “I cannot foresee that my sleepness is coming”,¹⁸⁰ the enigmatic phrase evokes *Blood Electric*’s cut-up micromontages’s asubjectivity: the subject’s invisibility or disappearance in consciousness’ interstices, perhaps in which the “eyes” are rendered sightless or blocked by a mucous discharge (colloquially known as “sleep”). While “hunting for the grotesque” figures forth Siratori’s cut-up method’s *process* and “[ice nebula faecal black]” registers its *aleatory* element, this acephalousness in “<<nemuri ga mienai>>” calls attention to the production not only of “grotesque” figures but of *anomalies*. Unrepeated, the phraselet hearkens back to the idea that *Blood Electric* is “pointillist” rather than “circular”; every event, every “voodoo analogue effect” happens only once. If “hunting for the grotesque” and “[ice nebula faecal black]” represent Siratori’s literary genetic engineering, then “<<nemuri ga mienai>>” is among its genetic creations.

Siratori’s schizographic “genedub” is more complex and diverse than these three

phraselets can demonstrate. However, if their departure from Chomsky's "universal generative grammar" offers an analogy, they suffice to show that *Blood Electric* does not simply contest Monod's representation of biological life with a variable invariable; it refuses to separate the "blueprint" of biological life from the aberration. In other words, from the perspective of genetics, *Blood Electric* does not register music in the organization of "noise"; *the noise is the music*. Siratori's strange, serialized, micromontaged sentencings is not simply the expression of "anarchic desire," as Perez's critique of Monod suggests; it is an effort to recode the representation of DNA and genomic sequences. For Siratori, evolutionary adaptation and change are "propert[ies] of living beings." In an interview, he affirms this idea: "[. . .] my writing extension is 'life=noise.' It functions as the genetic sea of the deconstructive meaning" (Siratori "An Interview" n.pag.).

However, *Blood Electric*'s micromontages suggest that genetics does not only mark the place that gives unity to life; it marks the place of pain, separation, and death. In the context of the body without organs and "internal organ consciousness," the incorporation of such death figures forth an "internal organ revolution" (146) — a "multiple revolution" and "the multiple breakdown of genetic engineering" (123). Linked with anarchy, such a revolution implies not only a deterritorialization, but that the "soft spot" connecting and disconnecting the subject to and from the other is hardwired into each individual's genetic fingerprint. Every gene, every strand of DNA, is entwined with an anarchy that shatters it. The genome is a night-glory.

IV. "NDRO"¹⁸¹

Critical responses to *Blood Electric* tend to neglect this dark side. Rather than focusing on

its asubjective “hyperreal gene-code,” they frame Siratori’s text in terms of the narrative premise suggested by the blurb on the book’s back cover, which states that *Blood Electric* “vividly evok[es] the coming to consciousness of an artificial intelligence.” While the synopsis reads “evoking,” indicating that the language *resembles* the programmed self-awareness of a sentient technology but does not attempt to objectively represent or objectify such a consciousness, *Blood Electric*’s readers tend to accept the recommended narrative frame as a fact.¹⁸²

Wild’s reduction of Siratori’s schizography to modernist “stream of consciousness” writing intimates this tendency to the degree that it limits *Blood Electric* to an effectively realist representation of an individual subject. Michael Schlitz, for example, confines the narrative to a single, central mind: “The theme of the awaking artificial intelligence demands us to be replaced in the mind of what is awakened, including the noise of growing, learning, forgetting and remembering, in short, acquiring a self-referentially evolving self” (n.pag.).¹⁸³ Reproducing the misprison *and* registering his skepticism toward the frame, Matthew Flaming reluctantly reinforces Schlitz’s interpretation: “[. . .] *Blood Electric* is a story about the first awakening of an artificial intelligence. Or at least, this is what the back cover of the book tells me and I’ll have to take their [sic] word for it: because the first uncomfortable admission I have to make here is that *I didn’t understand this book. At all*” (n.pag.). Flaming’s hesitation offers powerful testimony to the synopsis’ influence: even when readers cannot believe its suggestions about *Blood Electric*, they are still compelled to accept them, and to accept them in a manner that bypasses and persists within their incredulity.

In “The Twilight of Information Illiteracy: Kenji Siratori’s Asemic Cyberpunk” — the only scholarly article on Siratori’s work to date — Wenaus constructs his hypothesis around this

assumption. While his analysis initially resists literalizing the metaphor of “the coming to consciousness of an artificial intelligence,” his conclusion succumbs to the synopsis.¹⁸⁴ Arguing that *Blood Electric* technologizes the human brain, he develops his claim through an analogy that extends the assumption that the book objectifies the consciousness of an artificial intelligence:

Siratori’s novel, however, *is* “the coming to consciousness of an artificial intelligence” and thus emphasizes the extension. The novel, in this sense, is an extension of an artificial intelligence’s nervous system; by establishing this kind of proxy, I think Siratori elucidates his project via analogy. Here we have the brain or consciousness as an extension of technology or an artificial intelligence.

(45 [*emphasis added*])

His hypothesis hinges on this ontological guarantee. To the degree that Siratori’s writing is “asemic,” its objectively represented technologized consciousness confronts its audience with their technological illiteracy: for Wenaus, the reader’s inability to read the text analogously reflects their ignorance of digital technology, ranging from digital programming to such technology’s constitutive effects on their subjectivity.¹⁸⁵ For Wenaus, then, the “code” of *Blood Electric* belongs to *source code*, which sequences the instructions for a computer program, rather than genetic code.

If I may take a slight detour, I would like to suggest that this misprision is produced by *Blood Electric*’s cover. The press releases, for example, dramatically frame the book. Stephen Barber, author of *Tokyo Vertigo*, states: “Contemporary Japan is exploding in slow motion, and Kenji Siratori arranges the blood- and semen-encrusted debris with the finesse of a berserk Issey Miyake. Rendering English-language cyberpunk instantly redundant with his relentless,

murderous prose-drive, Siratori transmits his authentic, category-A hallucinogenic product direct to the reader's cerebellum. A virulently warped amalgam of *Tetsuo* and cut-up era William Burroughs."¹⁸⁶ Jack Hunter, author of *Eros in Hell*, echoes Barber's enthusiasm: "*Blood Electric* is the black reverb of soft machine seppuku, a molten unspooling of sheet metal entrails and crucified memory banks into the howling void of violence. It is a cyborg crash nightmare of the new flesh, a final dispatch from mutant Hell where the embryo hunts in secret." The two blurbs cohere with a consistency that lends authority to the commentators. Situating Burroughs' metaphor for the human body in the context of Japanese Samurai suicide practices, Hunter's reference to "soft machine seppuku" reinforces Barber's reference to "cut-up era Burroughs." Likewise, Hunter's vividly phrased "a cyborg crash nightmare" amplifies Barber's reference to *Tetsuo*, a film that could perhaps be described in those very terms.¹⁸⁷ The two press releases' coincidence and consistency do not only suggest that Barber and Hunter have read *Blood Electric* and developed informed interpretations of it, but validate the premise that the narrative evokes an AI's "coming to consciousness."

Yet the two press releases risk a conflict of interest, since Creation Books published both Barber and Hunter. Indeed, Jack Hunter is a pseudonym for James Williamson (a.k.a., James Havoc), Creation Books' owner. According to Creation Books' website, the publishing house — "a free publishing platform for non-mainstream authors and subject matter" and "one of the UK's longest-established independent book imprints" — deactivated in February 2012 (n.pag.). However, this deactivation coincides with the January 2012 appearance of a website titled *Creation Books Fraud* — a website launched to call attention to Williamson's "criminal fraud enterprise" (n.pag.) The website features testimonials from former Creation Books authors

accusing Williamson of failure to pay contractually-owed royalties. The coincidence of the website with Creation Books' deactivation suggests that the publishing house's retirement is a response to the public accusation. Though no formal charges have been brought against Williamson (and the website may well be a publicity stunt), the online presence of the accusation renders suspect Williamson's ethical practices as a publisher.¹⁸⁸

Coupled with his incestuous relation to the imprint, Williamson's/Creation Books' possible response to *Creation Books Fraud* calls into question the veracity of Williamson's/Hunter's press release on *Blood Electric*'s back cover. Like virtually all other comments on Siratori's work, Williamson's/Hunter's press release does not demonstrate that he read *Blood Electric*, though he does integrate some of Siratori's repetitive word choices ("reverb," "void," "embryo") and a phraselet ("crucified memory"). The implication is not simply that neither Barber nor Williamson/Hunter may deserve the authority produced by their coincident press releases; it is that the press releases — one written by Creation Books' owner, the other by one of its clients — may have been primarily designed for commercial purposes. They are fabricated to market the book, not explicate it.

The front cover design would be complicit in this conspiracy as well. The image of three identical human fetuses, approximately nine to ten weeks old, on the cover's upper right quadrant, tends to validate the premise of "the coming to consciousness of an artificial intelligence" as well as Hunter's reference to "the embryo [that] hunts in secret." Moreover, three thumbnail images — an androgynous face, lifted in pain or ecstasy; a human brain with the letters "OD" superimposed over it; and a humanoid figure, satyresque, silhouetted against a fire-orange background — tends to find confirmation in Hunter's reference to "mutant Hell" and

Barber's imagery of "blood- and semen-encrusted debris" and Siratori's "category-A hallucinogenic product [transmitted] direct to his reader's cerebellum." Designed by Tears Corporation, a DBA [Doing Business As] of Creation Books, the cover seems to be based more on *Blood Electric's* press releases than the book itself. The coincidence of information suggests that Tears Corporation (Creation Books) did not primarily design the cover in order to frame Siratori's work and provide footholds in its slick surfaces; it composed the front cover in a manner that would insidiously add believability and credibility to the press releases and book blurb by creating thematic patterns through iterations that redouble their claims in seemingly multiple and disparate registers. In effect, these patterns elevate the narrative frame to the utmost, making *Blood Electric* a kind of cybernetic stream-of-consciousness novel regardless of the narrative's orientations and textures.

If the front and back cover merit a measure of doubt, Flaming's hesitation suggests that it is because Siratori's language does not provide the ground to accept their truth. If I have too elaborately examined the conspiratorial composition of *Blood Electric's* front and back cover, it has not been to discredit their hermeneutic usefulness; it has only been to show that the framework always already is an interpretation, prior to any facticity. Designed to market the novel, the purpose of the cover's artwork, synopsis, and press releases may not be to deceive, but their purpose cannot be to explicate Siratori's work either. Their faithfulness is oriented toward the book's commercial success, not toward respectful, carefully developed, fully formed literary analysis and interpretation. My little mock conspiracy theory has suggested that Williamson/Hunter masterminded this ruse, but this is not to support his clients' allegations of his suspect business practices; it is to establish a symbol that stands for the spuriousness of the

cover's claims. To accept the framework that aligns *Blood Electric* with "the coming to consciousness of an artificial intelligence" is to accept an assumption about the book that was orchestrated to serve a disingenuous rhetorical strategy, not a fact concretely grounded in the text.

Insofar as readers understand the book to be about "the coming to consciousness of an artificial intelligence," they mistake a metaphor extraneous to the book for the book itself, thereby reading not the book but the figure for it. In this way, rather than *Blood Electric*, the discourse tends to examine the press releases printed on *Blood Electric*'s back cover. Indeed, though written under the sign of Siratori's "new Japanese cyberpunk classic," the discourse in fact examines James Williamson's writing: his press release, but also the writing, prosaic and graphic, that his ownership of Creation Books/Tears Corporation empowers him to solicit, approve, and manipulate.¹⁸⁹

Literature and reality blur. In effect, Tears Corporation's cover design models Sato Corp's "gene war"; it territorializes *Blood Electric*, configuring its contents (or "organs") in a particular arrangement that places its "genetic" compositions in the service of the economic enterprise's marketing strategies.

If *Blood Electric* is not a stream-of-consciousness novel, then Wenaus' conclusion that the narrative confronts readers with their own technological and digital illiteracy proves difficult to sustain, since the text's acephalousness delegitimizes the assumption that *Blood Electric* ontically is "an extension of an artificial intelligence's nervous system" and, by "proxy," a technologized "brain or consciousness." In a 3:AM interview, Siratori describes his novel as an extension of the human body: "I believe that the novel becomes a cultural trigger — but this

requires the digital narrative of nerve cells that had the creature intensity — simultaneously we must perceive the instant when the novel is networking as a part of the human body emulator” (Marshall n.pag.). For Wenaus, this “human body emulator” refers to “the human body and the brain” (37). The “*point* behind Siratori’s excesses” is that the code programming digital technologies that interface with the human central nervous system should be determined by its users, rather than a literate overclass (45). However, if I am reading *Blood Electric* correctly, then the “human body emulator” refers to *genetic code*, “the digital narrative of nerve cells,” and it is not “the human body or the brain,” but the nucleotide sequences, anterior to the human organism, that constitute its biological building blocks. “Emulator” reiterates this anarchic location prior to the individual incarnate subject: it marks the human body’s hyperreality, reiterating that the “I” is only this amalgam of GATC.

Inscribing *Blood Electric* in the realist cyberpunk mode of “the coming to consciousness of an artificial intelligence” neglects this hyperreality. Rather than a subjective consciousness interfacing with technology, *Blood Electric*’s “excess” — its “hyperreal genetic-code” or micromontage — gives expression to the processes of cellular division and replication prior to the subject’s incarnation. If Tears Corporation’s cover art effectively territorializes the novel, then foregrounding *Blood Electric*’s acephalousness — its “genome language” and “chromosome syntax” — over its spurious relation to realism and interior monologue rehabilitates the text’s flows, lines of flight, and intensities. Insofar as the text figures forth the body without organs, *Blood Electric* registers that the “soft machine,” susceptible to invasion and vulnerable to death, is “produced from a radiating synthesis of combinatory models in a hyperspace without atmosphere.” Hyperreal, it does not refer back to itself; it is discovered in the struggle to

organize the data through random organization and accelerations.

Compared to Call's analysis of Gibson's and Sterling's science fictions, Siratori's "new Japanese cyberpunk classic" achieves "a deconstruction of Enlightenment subjectivity" impossible for realist representational strategies. Its "hyperreal genetic-code" does not only accentuate the anarchic locus antedating the self of self-consciousness and the interiority of interior monologue; it radically destabilizes the ground of the autarkic subject, indicating that the "subject" is an effect of genetic configurations, rather than a fluidity that can "switch" between one body and another in cyberspace. In *Neuromancer*, while Case is a subject free from the compulsion to have only one identity that is bound to the body, his self-consciousness remains even when he perceives from Molly's perspective. Subtract the fact that they are named, *Blood Electric*'s acephalous characters obliterate all vestiges of "Enlightenment subjectivity." Siratori's schizography portrays them as perpetual genetic mutations, accidents, anomalies. Points ceaselessly dividing and replicating, cutting apart and repeating, and intermittently transmogrifying into strange, temporary forms as the points come together, coalesce, and disintegrate into new patterns, *Blood Electric*'s cut-ups point to a perpetually evolving dimension of genetic activity. There, DNA does not blueprint biological life; genes make and unmake organic forms, and their "blueprints" are effects of unpredictable interactions, retroactively inferred.

That *Blood Electric* expresses these genetic processes, rather than a "stream of consciousness" anchored by a single, central subjectivity, calls attention to the parallel between Stein's *Patriarchal Poetry* and Siratori's narrative. No evidence exists that Stein or Siratori physically applied the cut-up method to produce their texts, yet both engineer textures based on

fragmented syntactic units, repetition and permutation, and grammatical forms that defy standard English rules. Further, both use the processes of fragmentation and permutation to *discover* literary forms — rhythms, images, structures — rather than to represent them. Indeed, while *Shift Linguals* implicitly acknowledges Siratori's innovations to Burroughs' and Acker's experiments, Robinson's historical account of the cut-up's development overlooks both Stein and Siratori's debt to her Dadaesque experiments with insistence, permutation, and breaking-the-noun. I draw this parallel not simply to further justify Stein's placement in the cut-up's history, but to identify the intersection between *Patriarchal Poetry's* *nommic* play and *Blood Electric's* genomic textures. More than Burroughs' or Acker's literary experiments, Siratori takes up Stein's *nommic* approach, applying it to millennial subject matter unavailable to her: scientific breakthroughs in genetics as well as the threat of neoliberal powers that can afford unrestricted access to those discoveries' disciplinary applications.

Furthermore, this change in emphasis — from the individual to the other — alters the narrative's implied response to neoliberal globalization. Since for Wenaus *Blood Electric* emphasizes the individual's digital literacy, his argument advocates every individual's involvement in digital technology, rather than their passive consumption of it: "That so many of us respond to code in a way similar to how we respond to Siratori's writing — that of illiterate bafflement — reveals that this kind of readership in the 21st century needs to move beyond hyperconsumerism towards a kind of intense participation, if not hyperparticipation, with both the arts and digital technology" (45).¹⁹⁰ Applied to genetics, Wenaus' "hyperparticipation" might involve increased "genetic literacy," such as that sponsored by the Genetic Literacy Project.¹⁹¹ In Siratori's dystopian, biowar-ravaged world, it might involve expropriating and socializing

genetic data, patented genetically engineered organisms, and biotechnology from global corporations. Considering the possibility that *Blood Electric* represents Siratori, *the individual*, recoding genetic code *for himself*, “hyperparticipation” might even advocate public access to biotechnology. Rather than relying on corporations, individuals could edit their own genome or clone themselves.

However, that *Blood Electric*’s schizographic mutations of the body without organs call attention to the other encoded in the genomic sequence suggests that “hyperparticipation” excludes the assignation from the neighbor. Rather than increased genetic literacy, Siratori’s micromontages point toward a responsibility to genetic information — a commitment prior to all commitments to protect genetic data from hierarchical applications. In the context of Sato Corp’s “gene war,” it should be obvious that such responsibility involves constructing biopolitical organizations that apply biotechnology and genetic research in order to encourage biodiversity, cultivate ecologically safe and sustainable agricultural practices, and manage the population’s health and longevity. What *Blood Electric*’s acephalous schizography emphasizes is that these biopolitics must come from the other. I cannot surmise what this anarchist biopolitics would involve, but suffice to say that it would first and foremost listen to the environment, the body, and the long, repetitive, a-signifying story in every genome.

In these terms, Siratori’s “new Japanese cyberpunk classic” conflates the counterglobalization movement’s “radical politics for the new millennium” with “a politics of postmodern anarchism.” Challenging global capitalism’s abuses of genetic information, it restores those strands of GATC to the anarchy anterior to the subject, and obsessively records and shelters their deterritorialized development.

V. “ACIDHUMANISM”

Toward the end of *“Society Must Be Defended,”* Michel Foucault identifies nineteenth-century anarchism — the anarchism of Bakunin, Kropotkin, and de Cleyre — with “biological racism.” Ranking the “most racist forms of socialism,” he places anarchism in third place: “The most racist forms of socialism were [. . .] Blanquism, of course, and then the Commune, and then anarchism — much more so than social democracy, much more so than the Second International, and much more so than Marxism itself” (262). For Foucault, “biological racism” designates biopolitical practices of classification that group populations according to “subspecies known, precisely, as races” (255). Further, as a form of biopower that exercises the right to “make live and to let die,” biological racism eliminates political adversaries in order to maintain the health and purity of particular populations classified according to “race” (ibid.).

Foucault’s example of biological racism is the Nazi state. For him, the Nazi regime’s eugenic program represents a tightly regulated arrangement of disciplinary power and biopower that endeavored not only to manage the population’s biological life, policing its population’s birth and mortality rates by eliminating the races associated with weakness and disease; it aimed at “controlling the random element inherent in biological processes” (259). Further, while “the destruction of other races” was a Nazi objective, Foucault argues that the state’s systemic efforts to create a master race primarily focused on subjecting its own population to “the absolute and universal threat of death” (ibid.). In other words, to establish the Aryan race’s superiority, the Nazi state eliminated even its own population’s eugenic “risks,” so that the population that remained would be a race that had “mastered” biology through its triumph over death itself (259-

60). That anarchism is the third most racist form of socialism pivots on this confrontation with death itself: for Foucault, anarchism is “racist” to the degree that “it is a matter of coming to terms with the thought of a one-to-one encounter with the adversary, and with the need to fight him physically, to risk one’s own life and to try to kill him” (262). This exercise distinguishes anarchism from “Marxism itself.” While Marxism’s dialectical materialism postulated that capitalism would collapse under the weight of its own economic practices, Foucault indicates that anarchism relies on hand-to-hand combat — the intimacy of the murder of the ruling class that would be the anarchist’s responsibility.

In the context of this study, the chance of anarchism’s “biological racism” raises questions about de Cleyre’s night-glory. *Feeding on its own death, is the figure of the night-glory effectively a figure for a “master race”?*

The question is equally disturbing for cut-up literature. If the cut-up incorporates aleatory and processual principles, Foucault’s analysis of biopower and the eugenic state implies a parallel between shared practices of fragmentation and arrangement; containment of random and accidental elements; and creative acts that master destruction by adapting its lethal effects. In a nutshell, Foucault’s elaboration of biopower implies that the cut-up technique’s respect for the other’s primacy and responsibility toward the neighbor support the fascist state, not anarchy. Substitution, rather than responding to the assignation of the other that stakes the subject’s life in the neighbor’s place, tests the subject’s mettle, proving its rightful place in the state populated by the sacrifices’ survivors.

Contrary to Foucault’s charge, however, the identification of Siratori’s “new Japanese cyberpunk classic” with the politics of the counterglobalization movement does not simply

articulate “a radical politics for the new millennium”; its “hyperreal genetic-code” proposes a *postanarchist biopolitics* located outside nineteenth-century models of evolutionary biology. Engineering the freakish, deviant, and anomalous, *Blood Electric*’s “hunting of the grotesque” processes demonstrate that its biopolitical practices depart from eugenic programs for racial purity. “<<nemuri ga mienai>>,” while accentuating the production of anarchy, indicates that such “grotesquery” comes from the place of the other. Evoking both the subject’s disappearance and the noise of the insomniac machinery that susurrates in the space of its absence, that traumatized granule of pain gives expression to the voice of the other that speaks in the deterritorialized body without organs. Rather than the management of genetic data in order to facilitate genetic progress toward a “superior,” “pure” race, these phraselets suggest a biopolitical “analogue voodoo effect.” In other words, neutralizing the hierarchical relation between “superior” and “inferior,” and suggesting the biological corruption inherent in any eugenic project, *Blood Electric*’s aleatory and processual approach to the management of “noise” figure forth the biopower of a deterritorialized, horizontal, nomic play of genetic division, replication, and mutation. Though far from prioritizing genetic information’s homogenization, it does not aim to corrupt genetic code either; its anarchic genetic practices manage genomic data in order to protect its movement. In the context of neoliberal capitalism, this unleashed biodiversity points not to the elimination of genetic traits that threaten the subject, but the cultivation of genetic expressions that answer to the call of the other, that is, blueprint bodies built for anarchy.

Embracing serially uncorrelated random variable sequences in order to generate anarchic biodiversity, Siratori’s cut-ups do not aim at “controlling the random element inherent in biological processes.” Since the cut-up’s post-digital “japanoise” materializes from the rhythms

of glitches and errors occurring in torrents of information, Siratori does not control these random variables; they freely interact and spontaneously produce unpredictable effects. Though the cut-up technique does incorporate aleatory elements, the linkages discovered in the phraselet “[ice nebula faecal black]” attest that *Blood Electric* consolidates around *the control noise exercises on it*, rather than *its manipulation of* those aleatory variables. The implication is that Siratori’s micromontages are the effect of aleatory processes to which the work is exposed through the cut-up method, and the processes of data curation and design come after the fact. Hence, rather than managing the “random element inherent in biological processes,” *Blood Electric*’s cut-up deterritorialize those random elements themselves. It does not grant those elements the right to freedom, but remains in a removed state that (to hearken back to Stein’s postanarchism) lets genetic processes “be” and “try.”

“AcidHUMANism” is the effect of this biopolitically charged molecular deterritorialization. Counter to the carefully curated and biopolitically disciplined eugenic subject, the form of Siratori’s micromontages refer not only to the deterritorialiation of the body without organs, but to an *organization of genetic sequencing* that reflects such configurations. Siratori’s plan to “update our abolition world code” intimates such a (re)organization: a genetic code sequence that, if *Blood Electric* is the measure, would produce “noise” not only from which biodiversity would flourish, but from which may transpire “internal organ revolution.” What Siratori calls “the genomewearable struggle as 21st century style hardweb” further conceptualizes this “update.” “Genomewearable struggle,” here, implies a Nessus tunic that constructs the “21st century style hardweb,” that is, the incarnate subject, by deterritorializing its genetic information, extricating it from hierarchical and centralized patterns of organization. The “acidHUMAN” is

the subject incarnated by such “genomewearable struggle”: it is the “internal organ consciousness” not simply referring to the affective production of the subject, but to the analogue voodoo effect applied to genetic information. It does not posit a blueprint like Monod’s invariance theory, but a sleepless, kaleidoscopic pointillism that gives place to the spontaneous emergence of a subject sufficiently flexible to answer the call, “anarchise perself!”

It is in the context of this deterritorialized, genomewearable, body without organs that *Blood Electric* hazards a response to the question that closes Foucault’s “*Society Must Be Defended*.” “How can one both make a biopower function and exercise the rights of war, the rights of murder, and the function of death,” he asks, “without becoming racist?” (263). Foucault’s concluding question assumes that every biopower — every practice designed to “make live and let die” — presupposes a racism that rationalizes the elimination of one life at the expense of another. In these terms, racism accompanies revolutionary “struggle”: “the one-to-one encounter with the adversary,” that is, the life-and-death contention between the anarchist and his enemies, nurtures a racism that justifies the “need to fight him [the enemy] physically, to risk one’s life and to try to kill him” (262).

Blood Electric, before “Abolition,” prior to the beginning of the narrative, opens with an expression of potentially racist biopower. Announced in large, bold letters, centered in white, empty space, it reads:

WARNING

THIS MACHINE

KILLS

The phrase's ambiguity prohibits its reduction to a simple expression of the "sovereign right to kill." Placed before the narrative's beginning, the phrase's position raises the question of its author. Was it written by Sinatori, or Williamson, or is it diegetic, communicating a warning from Sato Corp, or a rebel mutant? Disconnected from the narrative, the referent for "machine" remains permanently unclear as well. Does it refer to a mechanism *in* the story, outside the book in the world, or to the book itself? Further, what does the machine "kill"? — a difficult question in the absence of a direct object. (Indeed, does "kill" even mean *to deprive of biological life*? Depending on its direct object, it could mean *to cancel, delete, or discard* ["this machine kills the story"]; *spend or consume* ["this machine kills time"]; *to overwhelm with a strong impression* ["this machine kills me"]; or [to use some hip hop and electronica parlance] *to succeed completely* ["this machine kills it"]). Nevertheless, these brief observations suffice to show that the warning comes from the place of the other, suggesting an act of murder that does not comfortably fit with Foucault's notion of racism in face-to-face homicide.

Comparable to Devine's modular hardware, "WARNING THIS MACHINE KILLS" embodies a syntactic device designed to be plugged into other devices. Though it indicates a "function of death," the absence of a direct object strains efforts to reduce the epigraph to the characterization of a face-to-face confrontation. This hyperconnectivity does not only allude to the cut-up's aleatory juxtapositions and processual discoveries; it underscores a principle of *friendship*. In this context, "WARNING THIS MACHINE KILLS" evokes an interminably running machine that links to endless series of other direct objects, other machines that it changes and that change it. Thus, its "function of death" is a connection, not destruction. Rather than murder that deprives of biological life, an encounter with death conditions the warning that fosters semantic engagement

through relationships and combinations commensurate with evolutionary biology in which inhere random factors and temporal processes. Such a confluence of the genetic and the biological reiterates the figure for the “acidHUMAN.” However, while *Blood Electric*’s form identified this anarchic subject with genetic deterritorialization, the formal mechanism of the warning prefacing the book suggests that the molecular configuration of the body without organs occurs through connections to other machines, other “genomewearable struggle[s]” and updated “abolition world code.”

Grounded in friendship, the possibility that “this machine kills [itself]” sketches a suicide that intimates responsibility for the other, rather than self-preserving racist biopower. In *Genedub* (2006) and *Hack_* (2011) — published not by Creation Books but by Hypermodern and Minerva respectively — Siratori uses a similar inaugural and epigraphic technique, so I will assume that he formulated the cautionary word and that it reflexively characterizes *Blood Electric* as a work.¹⁹² That *Blood Electric* runs off the page in the second iteration of “Abolition,” effectively abolishing the book by leaving the narrative unfinished and breaking its material form, reinforces this assumption: outside the narrative, the demonstrative pronoun “this” seems to refer to *Blood Electric*, and rather than the sovereign act of taking one’s own life, its “function of death” points to an interruption of genetic code. The book’s cut-up form doubles this suggestion: “THIS MACHINE KILLS” means that the book makes and unmakes *as a literary technique*, its destructive acts simultaneously constitute creative acts. However, since *Blood Electric*’s “hyperreal genetic-code” is acephalous, this biotechnological interruption cannot constitute a self-reflexive act that would bring the book back to itself, master of the totality of life, including death; that autonomous subject does not yet exist, and if it did, its life is not its own to take. The device’s

noise, the interminability of its noise, suggests that the book's "suicide" leaves behind the other untargeted by the sacrifice, unharmed; for-the-other, its "function of death" is the ordeal of substitution. It is exposure to death, but rather than a demonstration of the subject's superiority, the exposure affirms contact with and vulnerability toward the other.

If *Blood Electric* embodies saying, Siratori's torrential, genetic, microsonic cut-ups indefinitely prolong exposure to death. Cutting and splicing various textual strains, the cut-up's confrontation with death constantly registers the proximity of the neighbor; it measures the passivity, vulnerability, and susceptibility of the incarnate subject. The encounter with death is persecution: it is the charge that commits the subject to responsibility for the life of the other, but it is also the accusation that the subject has always already taken the neighbor's life. The confrontation, then, does not affirm the sovereignty of the subject or its "right to kill"; instead, it affirms that no such right exists except in the order of the state, and that the subject's exercise of murder obliges it to serve the neighbor — to begin the work of repayment without end.

What this suggests is that biopower without racism is an anarchist biopower. In an interview, Siratori acknowledges the substitution that exercises the "function of death" but does not rely on the racist biopolitical practices troubling for classical anarchism. When asked "are you telling a story in *Blood Electric*, or is telling a story outmoded?," he replies: "I go across the digital narrative in the human body — *Blood Electric* is such software that captures 'the digital narrative in the human body' and is archive that connects my digital narrative to your digital narrative" (Wild n.pag.). While Siratori's reply reiterates that *Blood Electric* gives expression to genomic code — that "digital narrative" about my genetic history — it further suggests that this narrative is *a shared narrative, passed from the other to the one, connecting one to the other.*

Thus, if the warning “THIS MACHINE KILLS” refers to *Blood Electric*, the book’s encoded sequences symbolize the genetic information shared by all organisms. This symbol does not romanticize a feeling of unity, but affirms a biopower whose principles of embodiment, affect, and affinity form an unbreakable relation to the other and anarchy.

This connection is the “tunnel” that joins the anarchist to her “fellow.” For de Cleyre, the tunnel designates the asymmetrical and irreciprocal relation of the neighbor to the subject. It marks the advent of anarchist freedom: the point where the subject is repelled from the neighbor’s “self-gate,” affirming their intimate connection in the shattering of the bond. For Levinas, this repulsion is death. Persecution, guilt, expiation, it is the anarchic accusation that I am responsible for the other’s death precisely because I could not be with her in that instant of extreme passivity and solitude. If there is an operational biopower that “exercise[s] the rights of war, the rights of murder, and the function of death, without becoming racist,” *Blood Electric*’s schizographic expression of the geneticized body without organs places its beginning in this painful accusation.

“WARNING THIS MACHINE KILLS” biotechnologizes de Cleyre’s image of the night-glory. The book, jumping the page and continuing to transcribe code, without end, redoubles the emblematic image of the cut-up germinating out of its own severance. However, that code re-imagines the morning-glory as a strand of DNA. The cut is the restriction enzyme, and the “white trumpet blossoms dashed with purple” are a sequence of nucleotides, scintillate clusters, multiplying in the dark.

NOTES

PREFACE (“CUTTING TO THE QUICK”)

¹Elsewhere, offering a generalization about Siratori’s readership, Wenaus states: “Immediately noticeable to the reader of Siratori’s work is the futility of approaching such writing via traditional modes of close reading” (30).

²This grouping of Vaneigem and post-left anarchists is not fortuitous. In Chapter 4, I argue that the impetus for post-left anarchy comes from Vaneigem’s critique of hierarchy and alienation in his Mai 68 treatise, *Traité de savoir-vivre à ill-usage des jeunes générations* (translated under the title *The Revolution of Everyday Life*).

³Acker denies that she writes for an ideal audience, excluding herself and her friends: “I don’t imagine an ideal reader,” she says. “I write for myself and maybe my friends” (“A Conversation” 20). Even if it is only a fiction, a myth, the image of small, localized, tightly knit communities of readers activated by her reply suggests that Acker’s work is not designed for the global market. Her statement hints at a ragtag tribe gathered around a campfire at the end of the world, exchanging stolen, torqued stories to stay alive.

⁴Deleuze and Guattari compare such “minor” language to “what blacks in America today are able to do with the English language” (17). The idea of a new language built in the shell of the old will become increasingly relevant in Chapter 6 (on Kenji Siratori’s *Blood Electric*), since Siratori is a Japanese artist working in English.

⁵For Cascone, the “failure” of the post-digital aesthetic would be epitomized by German electronic group Oval’s seminal albums, which integrate the rhythmic clicks produced when deliberately scratched compact discs are played.

CHAPTER 1 (“MIDNIGHT”)

⁶While Engel, Fischer, Parsons, and Spies were hung on November 11, 1887, Lingg committed suicide the day before in prison. The party responsible for the bomb that incited the 1886 Haymarket massacre was never apprehended. On her call to the anarchist cause, de Cleyre wrote:

[. . .] the specific occasion which ripened tendencies [for my acceptance to anarchism] to definition was the affair of 1886-7, when five innocent men were hanged in Chicago for the act of one guilty who remains unknown. Till then I believed in the essential justice of the American law and trial by jury. After that I never could. (“Making of” 156)

⁷Such works might include Thomas Pynchon’s *The Crying of Lot 49* (which makes repeated references to “Porky Pig and the Anarchist,” that is, the 1936 Tex Avery cartoon, *The Blow Out*), Angela Carter’s work (which, as her essay “The Sadian Woman” suggests, shares affinities with

Emma Goldman's anarchy-feminism), or the Crimethinc. collective's fictions, such as *Evasion*.

⁸See, for example, William S. Burroughs's interview in *The Third Mind*: "[. . .] of course, when you think of it, "The Waste Land" was the first great cut-up collage, and Tristan Tzara had done a bit along the same lines. Dos Passos used the same idea in "The Camera Eye" sequences in U.S.A." (3). See also Robinson's "Literary Precedents" in *Shift Linguals*, p. 5.

⁹A history of the cut-up that includes the Jewish *melitzah* remains to be written. I omit it here only because its relation to a "cut" is unclear. To compensate for this omission, I open each chapter in the following study with this technique, albeit secularized.

¹⁰In the *Manifesto*'s conclusion, Tzara indicates that the "weapon" that will produce this "great negative work of destruction" is "DADAIST DISGUST" with virtually every aspect of the bourgeois European lifestyle.

Every product of disgust capable of becoming a negation of the family is *dada*; the whole being protesting in its destructive force with clenched fists: **DADA**; knowledge of all the means rejected up to this point by the timid sex of easy compromise and sociability: *DADA*; abolition of logic, dance of all those impotent to create: *DADA*; of all hierarchy and social equation installed for the preservation of values by our valets: *DADA*; each and every object, feelings and obscurities; apparitions and the precise shock of parallel lines, can be means for the combat: *DADA*; abolition of memory; **DADA**; abolition of archaeology: *DADA*; abolition of the prophets: **DADA**; abolition of the future: *DADA*; an absolute indisputable belief in each god immediate product of spontaneity: **DADA**; elegant and unprejudicial leap from one harmony to the other sphere; trajectory of a word tossed like a sonorous cry of phonograph record; respecting all individualities in their momentary madness: serious, fearful, timid, ardent, vigorous, determined, enthusiastic, stripping its chapel of every useless awkward accessory; spitting out like a luminous waterfall any unpleasant or amorous thought, or coddling it — with the lively satisfaction of knowing that it doesn't matter — with the same intensity in the bush of his soul, free of insects for the aristocrats, and gilded with archangels' bodies. Freedom: **DADA DADA DADA**, shrieking of contracted colors, intertwining of contraries and of all contradictions, grotesqueries, nonsequiturs: LIFE. (156-7)

In his 1922 *Lecture on Dada*, Tzara further develops this statement:

The beginnings of Dada were not the beginnings of an art, but of a disgust. Disgust with the magnificence of philosophers who for 3000 years have been explaining everything to us (what for?), disgust with the pretensions of these artists-God's-representatives on earth, disgust with passion and with real pathological wickedness where it is not worth the bother; disgust with the false form of domination and restriction *en masse* that accentuates rather than appeases

man's instinct of domination, disgust with all the catalogued categories, with the false prophets who are nothing but a front for the interests of money, pride, disease, disgust with the lieutenants of a mercantile art made to order according to a few infantile laws, disgust with the divorce of good and evil, the beautiful and the ugly (for why is it more estimable to be red rather than green, to the left rather than to the right, to be large or small?). Disgust finally with the Jesuitical dialectic which can explain everything and fill people's minds with oblique and obtuse ideas without any physiological basis or ethnic roots, all this by means of blinding artifice and ignoble charlatans promises. (250-1)

¹¹Credit is often given to Tzara's gimmick. In *The Third Mind*, Gerard-Georges Lemaire makes the connection (14) as does Burroughs (29). In his post-script to *Minutes to Go*, Gregory Corso alludes to Tzara's "How to Make a Dadaist Poem" when he says "Tzara did it [the cut-up] all before" (63).

¹²See Hugh Ball, *Dada Manifesto* (1916). Perhaps partially providing theoretical justification for this sound poetry, Ball makes a similar claim about the prefabricated nature of creative language: "I don't want words that other people have invented. All the words are other people's inventions. I want my own stuff, my own rhythm, and vowels and consonants too, matching the rhythm and all my own. If this pulsation is seven yards long, I want words for it that are seven yards long. Mr Sschulz's words are only two and a half centimeters long" (n.pag.)

Burroughs, in *The Third Mind*, offers an even more definitive statement: "All writing is in fact cut-ups. A collage of words read heard overheard. What else? Use of scissors renders the process explicit and subject to extension and variation" (32).

In *The Third Mind*, see also p. 34: "The poets are supposed to liberate the words — not to chain them in phrases. Who told poets they're supposed to think? Poets are meant to sing and to make words sing. Poets have no words 'of their own.' Writers don't own their words. Since when do words belong to anybody. 'Your very own words,' indeed! And who are you?"

¹³In his 1924 *First Manifesto of Surrealism*, Andre Breton echoes Tzara's sentiment: "Man proposes and disposes. It falls to him alone to belong to himself completely, that is to maintain the host of his desires, daily more formidable, in a state of anarchy" (18).

¹⁴In *The Third Mind*, Lemaire traces this practice back to the Dada group in Paris (21-2).

¹⁵I owe this idea about English language learners to Juliana Spahr's *Everybody's Autonomy* (2001), which I engage with in greater detail in Chapter 2.

¹⁶Timothy S. Murphy, in *Wising Up the Marks*, the other major study of Burroughs' later cut-up experiments, deserves credit for going beyond Lydenburg's "negative poetics." While he acknowledges that "the cut-up method challenges the hegemony of [the concept of] Law and offers a method for abolishing it," he also correctly points out that Burroughs' use of the technique aims to release the future ("If you cut into the present, the future leaks out," Burroughs said in an interview) (106; 105). Murphy further indicates that, for Burroughs, a cut applied to

the word “will reveal the hidden motives of the text and its author” (105). However, his conclusion only pursues the former leakage, which he characterizes as a negative movement. He deduces that both the cut-up method in general and the *Nova* trilogy “bring the future into the present and in so doing break — if only for a moment, in a certain place, and for a small group of readers — the habits, language, and history that bind the readers to its self-destructive past” (139). In chapter 3, I argue that this “break” is not “the most compelling measure of success of the *Nova* trilogy and the cut-up method in general” (ibid.). Further, in chapter 4, I demonstrate that Burroughs’ peculiar claim about “hidden motives” is concretely realized in Kathy Acker’s plagiarisms.

¹⁷This structural prohibition is an *opening* in power itself, inhering in the conditions of its operation. Insofar as the cut-up, like the night-glory, creates according to its self-destructive impulses, that opening is symbolized by death. The idea of the cut-up, if it can even be considered as such, is the very impossibility of ideology insofar as ideology would be the very systematization or freezing of an idea.

¹⁸Anarchism is a rich discursive field. The “anarcho-” prefix seems to find applications in virtually every political position. Furthermore, the fact that it remains largely un-institutionalized and un-codified intensifies its vibrancy. Since anarchism does not enjoy a place in the university, few endeavor to reduce its classifications. As a result, precisely what agglomeration of power accurately characterizes anarchy varies from anarchist to anarchist. Ideological hybrids such as anarcho-capitalism and anarcho-primitivism that do not clearly accommodate recognized anarchist principia often are categorized with the established individualist and communist traditions.

It is trite to say that there are as many definitions of anarchism as there are anarchists, but that hackneyed expression gives a reminder that every anarchist is responsible for his or her own understanding of anarchism. The definition may vary from one situation to the next, and those variations may indicate that anarchism has no definition, yet that very absence is precisely what obliges every anarchist to account for what anarchism “is.” It is owed. Under the sign of anarchy, it could perhaps be no other way. To advance a definition that did not account for its own mutability would be a betrayal of anarchism *in its very definition*, and would reduce anarchism to another rigid form, a commodity, or a totalitarianism.

I have done my best to render definitions of anarchy and anarchism that are faithful to the anarchists central to my project — namely, Voltairine de Cleyre, Peter Kropotkin, Raoul Vaneigem, Lorenzo Kom’boa Ervin, and Saul Newman — and that demonstrate relevance to the practices of cut-up literature.

¹⁹In this way, the postanarchist project shares aims in common with post-left anarchy, which attempts to unburden anarchist praxis of its historically leftist baggage. In chapter 3, I extensively respond to this anarchist discourse and, despite their similar approaches, distinguish it from postanarchism.

²⁰Newman formulates the dialectical play between the political and the anti-political later in *The Politics of Postanarchism*:

Postanarchism affirms the *anti-political* moment of anarchism — it affirms its rejection of the state and its suspicion of political representation, and it endorses its fundamental ethical critique of political power in the name of an unconditional equal-liberty. At the same time, postanarchism also affirms the *political* moment within anarchism: that is, the sense in which it must nevertheless engage with the realities of power; the extent to which revolutionary projects are complicated by the way that the subject who is to be liberated is at the same time caught up in diffuse networks of power; and the extent to which we can no longer rely on a series of ontological foundations (such as human essence, social objectivity, and rational and scientific discourses) to provide us with a pure point of departure from which to critique the workings of power. (69)

²¹In a response to Henry Appleton (the etymology's "source"), published in *Liberty*, February 26, 1887, Benjamin Tucker elaborates the etymology of anarchy thus:

Anarchy does not mean simply opposed to the *archos*, or political leader. It means opposed to *arche*. Now, *arche*, in the first instance, means *beginning origin*. From this it comes to mean *a first principle, an element*; then *first place, supreme power, sovereignty, dominion, command, authority*; and finally *a sovereignty, an empire, a realm, a magistracy, a government office*. Etymologically, then, the word anarchy many have several meanings, among them, as Mr. Appleton says, *without guiding principle*, and to this use of the word I have never objected, always striving, on the contrary, to interpret in accordance with their definition the thought of those who so use it. But the word Anarchy as a philosophical term and the word Anarchist as the name of a philosophical sect were first appropriated in the sense of opposition to dominion, to authority, and are so held by right of occupancy, which fact makes any other philosophical use of them improper and confusing. (*Instead of a Book* 112)

²²Admittedly, this comparison is strained by the fact that the assignation from the other interrupts de Cleyre's interpellation by capitalist discourse. Following my earlier distinction between the separation effected by spectacularity (which dissolves social bonds through a ruse of social unity) and the separation symbolized by the cut (which unifies social relations by holding apart), I would argue that the voice that de Cleyre hears, that is, the voice that says "they ought to be hanged," is not the voice of the other that accuses her of violence. Instead, the voice that accuses the other of violence is the voice of capitalist ideology, which cannot by definition — at least by the definition of the spectacle — found a relation to or responsibility for the neighbor.

²³In "The Dawn-Light of Anarchy," de Cleyre anaphorically uses the phrase "little by little" to narrate how she learns the truth about the injustices of the Haymarket martyr's arrests and prosecution. The repetition of the phrase intensifies the narrative's obsessional affect.

²⁴It should be noted that Newman does mention these terms. On. P. 54, he states that the

encounter with the other “produces something akin to an obsession, a disequilibrium or delirium” and that anarchy “leads to a kind of ‘persecution’ or radical self-questioning, an interrogation of one’s own self-contained sovereignty.” Likewise, on P. 55, he quotes Levinas: “The unconditionality of being hostage is not the limit case of solidarity, but the condition for all solidarity.” However, these are the only instances in which Newman writes these terms. The effect is that the specificity of Levinas’ conceptual language does not find traction in Newman’s application of “an-archy” to anarchism.

On p. 160, when Newman is referring back to Chapter 2 of *The Politics of Postanarchism*, he reflects: “In an earlier chapter, I explored Levinas’s anarchic account of ethics as a way of understanding ethical subjectivation: here the subject is held ‘hostage’ by the encounter with the Other, an encounter that destabilise his or her sovereign identity.” It’s a curious sentence. As my own reading of Newman’s second chapter shows, he does not explore that encounter *in those terms*. Moreover, the sentence demonstrates that Newman understands Levinas’s concept of hostage. Why, then, does he refrain from integrating the concept into his argument in a substantive, responsible, and critically engaged manner? I attempt to answer this question in chapter 1.

²⁵Newman does not actually quote *Otherwise Than Being*. His references come from the selection from *Otherwise* included in Blackwell’s *Levinas Reader*.

²⁶In *From Bakunin to Lacan* (2001), Newman shows this same reliance on liberal language. See, for example, his retention of the privileged term “democratic” in the very place that he contests ontology: “Anarchist morality must be freed [. . .] from its foundations in human essence in order to become a truly democratic morality, which would no longer be closed off to different struggles” (165). See also his desire to open anarchism to “a plurality of identities” and to establish “a democratic pluralism of identity” (rather than “a democratic pluralism based on identity”) (166; 174).

²⁷For these terms, I am grateful to Paul Routledge’s article, “Toward a relational ethics of struggle: Embodiment, affinity, and affect.” See *Contemporary Anarchist Studies*.

²⁸The idea that character in cut-up literature expresses the one-for-the-other contrasts with Lydenburg’s interpretation of the same effect in Burroughs’ *Nova* trilogy. For her, grounding her interpretation in her claims about intertextuality, the cut-up produces character and narrator as depersonalized multiplicities:

Ultimately an ‘apparatus’ of discourse, character and narrator are only proper names around which various associations cluster, and those associations or expresses may migrate like parasites, from one host to another. Even the ‘I’ of the reader is thus depersonalized and multiplied, and his individuality [. . .] comes to resemble the impersonal plurality it encounters in the cut-up text. The lyricism of person-to-person communication is replaced by a vibrating network of connections, juxtapositions, and intersections. (50)

²⁹Indeed, in the cut-up works of William S. Burroughs, Kathy Acker, and Kenji Siratori, which I analyze at length below, there is no lack for hostility, hostages, or parasitical hosts.

³⁰See, for example, Burroughs' interracial, same-sex episodes; Kathy Acker's explicit illustrations of genitalia in *Blood and Guts in High School*; or Kenji Siratori's recent pornographic cut-ups, such as *Cruel Akihabara Erogoro Mutants* and *Santemuterueru*.

³¹Bruns includes this quotation: “[In the experience of the work of art, we enter into] a mode of being to which applies neither the form of consciousness, since the I is there stripped of its prerogative to assume, its power, nor the form of unconsciousness, since the whole situation and its articulations are, in a dark light, *present*” (188).

³²Levinas' analysis of rhythm, where he introduces the idea of “dark light,” corroborates this inference. Right before the sentence quoted in Bruns' analysis, Levinas states:

[The syllables of a verse] *impose themselves on us without our assuming* them. [. . .] They're entry into us is one with our entry into them. Rhythm represents a unique situation where we cannot speak of consent, assumption, initiative or freedom, because the subject is caught up and carried away by it. The subject is a part of its own representation. It is so not even despite itself, for in rhythm there is no longer a oneself, but rather a sort of passage from oneself to anonymity. This is the captivation or incantation of poetry and music. (*Collected Philosophical Papers* 4)

³³In *Otherwise Than Being*, Levinas invokes this metaphor in his efforts to describe incarnation. “Responsibility prior to any free commitment, the oneself outside of all the tropes of essence, would be responsibility for the freedom of the others. The irremissibly guilt with regard to the neighbor is like a Nessus tunic my skin would be” (109).

CHAPTER 2 (“BUBBLES”)

³⁴In *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation*, the phrase “capable of a common well-being” is Green's paraphrase of the Greek phrase for “equals,” *isoi kai homoioi*.

³⁵Green describes a natural progression from families and/or tribes to larger, inter-familial consolidations, which must negotiate certain exchanges and duties and evolve into the state form. See *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation*, p. 156.

³⁶Advocating for greater and wider visibility of disenfranchised groups, Mills concludes “The Political Economy of Personhood” thus: “The ongoing struggle for equally socially-recognized personhood, for the redefinition of the human, needs to be appropriately centrally located in our social and political theory. We need to formally acknowledge the political economy of personhood — and its deprivation of the majority of humanity of this status” (n.pag.).

³⁷“Anarchism” was published in *Free Society*, 13 October, 1901, while “The Eleventh of November, 1887” was delivered in Chicago on 11 November, 1901. Thank you to Sharon Presley and Crispin Sartwell’s collection *Exquisite Rebel* for these dates.

³⁸In the paragraph below the aforementioned passage, de Cleyre refers to her “fellow” as her “neighbor”: “And if you some day, — if sitting at your work-bench, you see a vision of surpassing glory, some picture of that golden time when there shall be no prisons on the earth, nor hunger, nor houselessness, nor accusation, nor judgement, and hearts open as printed leaves, and candid as fearlessness, if then you look across at your lowbrowed neighbor, who sweats and smells and curses at his toil, — remember that you do not know his depth neither do you know his height. He too might dream if the yoke of custom and law and dogma were broken from him. Even now you know not what blind, bound, motionless chrysalis is working to prepare its winged thing” (114-5).

³⁹The bastard’s speech indicates that he is other. His audience cannot “look at [him]” and they recoil in disgust from his touch, even after he indicates that they who support the system that criminalizes him commit the true offense. Indeed, he resembles an other, his mother, whose eyes, hands, voice, and blood recall his own. Even though society would turn him against her, he obsessively perseveres in his love for this (m)other. His very forsakenness bonds him to her (“*This is my sin* , — I was born to her! / *This is my crime*, — that I reverence deep!”).

⁴⁰The closing lines of “Bastard Born”:

“PEACE — BE STILL!” Still, — could I but hear!
Softly, — I listen. — O, fierce heart, cease!
Softly, — I breathe not, — low, — in my ear, —
Mother, Mother, — I heard you! — PEACE!

⁴¹As Newman and others have pointed out, the Patriot Act has familiarized many with this paradox. In the United States, after 9/11, the state accepted responsibility for securing individual rights against terrorism. However, its assurances were only a liberal alibi. In the name of the preservation of civil liberties possessed by few, American compliance with the act — which authorized intensified domestic security, augmented surveillance procedures, tightened immigration enforcement and border security, and expanded the definition of “terrorism” — further attenuated domestic privacy, due legal process, mobility, and political accountability, effectively acceding to government wiring-tapping and telecommunication interception, police harassment, indefinite detainment without trial, and torture. From an anarchist perspective, what the Patriot Act demonstrated was not merely that for the state individuals must protect their liberties by consenting to their own domination; it sacrifices freedom’s formal conditions in the name of their very possibility. See *The Politics of Postanarchism*, p. 29-30.

⁴²The entire quotation, without omissions, reads: “Man completely realizes his individual freedom as well as his personality only through the individuals who surround him, and thanks

only to the labor and collective power of society. Without society he would surely remain the most stupid and the most miserable among all the other ferocious beasts. . . . Society, far from decreasing his freedom, on the contrary creates the individual freedom of all human beings.”

⁴³In *Politics and the Other Scene*, Balibar’s allegiance to state forms (“the autonomy of politics”) is more legible. Elaborating a consequence of the *unconditionality* of equaliberty, he writes: “The deepest interpretation of this situation [of mutually reinforcing liberty and equality], it is not so much a question of removing an oppressive external power as of *suppressing that which separates the people from itself* (from its own autonomy)” (3). In this way, while Balibar’s affinities remain with a Marxist project, his application of equaliberty is closer to liberalism than anarchism, since “oppressive external power” does not pose an insurmountable obstacle to the autonomy of “the people.”

⁴⁴Rather than *Marxism, Freedom, and the State*, the key Bakunin text that Newman examines is from an equally significant text — a large fragment from Bakunin’s unfinished *The Knouto-Germanic Empire and the Social Revolution* — frequently titled “Man, Society, and Freedom” While the text is contained in Sam Dolgoff’s *Bakunin on Anarchy*, Newman cites G. P. Maximoff’s *Political Philosophy of Mikhail Bakunin* — a peculiar book from 1953 composed by splicing and grafting fragments of Bakunin’s writings into a single work. The result is intriguing, but also unnecessarily disorderly and bedraggled since many of the selections belong to larger, coherent, available texts. Newman’s quote reads: “I am only free when all human beings surrounding me — men and women alike — are equally free. The freedom of others, far from limiting or negating my liberty, is on the contrary its necessary condition and confirmation. I become free in the true sense only by virtue of the liberty of others, so much so that the greater the number of free people surrounding me the deeper and greater and more extensive their liberty, the deeper and greater becomes my liberty” (Newman 20-21; *Political Philosophy* 267; *Bakunin on Anarchy* 237-8).

⁴⁵I think that Bakunin would agree with Balibar on this score. In *Equaliberty*, Balibar states that there is the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* “leaves the task of producing a politics of the rights of man entirely up to practice, to struggle, to class conflict — in particular, to the development of the conflict that was already at the origin of its formulation” (50). More clearly, in *Politics and the Other Scene*, he writes: “since the rights [of equaliberty] cannot be granted, they have to be won, and they can be won only collectively” (4).

⁴⁶Some sources (e.g. The Anarchist Library) date “Anarchist Morality” in 1897. My date is based on the text’s publication as a pamphlet by *Die Autonomie* in 1891. The English translation was serialized in English anarchist newspaper *Freedom* in 1892. For more information, see *Emma Goldman: Made for America, 1890-1901*.

⁴⁷In *Ethics*, Kropotkin confirms this definition. Paraphrasing Proudhon, he writes: “*We cannot love everybody*, but we must respect each man’s personal dignity. We cannot demand the love of others, but we unquestionably have a right to demand respect for our personality. It is impossible to build a new society on mutual love, but it can and should build on the demand of mutual

respect” (270).

⁴⁸Elsewhere, contradicting Kropotkin’s claims about the origins of morality, Bakunin writes: “Respect for the freedom of someone else constitutes the highest duty of men. The only virtue is to love this freedom and serve it. This is the basis of all morality, and there is no other basis” (*Political Philosophy* 156).

⁴⁹Indeed, drawing on Schopenhauer in *Ethics*, Kropotkin argues that sympathy is not possible without the twin relations between equality and solidarity:

[. . .] the fact that we are capable of feeling sympathy for others, to be affected by their joys and sorrows, and to live through both of these with other men, — this fact would be inexplicable if we did not possess a conscious or subconscious ability to identify ourselves with others. And no one could possess such an ability if he considered himself as apart from others and unequal to them, at least in his susceptibility to joys and sorrows, to good and evil, to friendliness and hostility. The impulse of a man who plunges into a river (even though unable to swim) in order to save another, or who exposes himself to bullets in order to pick up the wounded on the battle-field, cannot be explained in any other way than by the recognition of one’s equality with others. (244-5)

⁵⁰Later in *Anarchist Morality*, Kropotkin phrases this “golden rule” with a difference: “*Treat others as you would like them to treat you under similar circumstances*” (97).

⁵¹Avrich relates not only that Lum’s cooperation in Lingg’s suicide was dissembled by a popular story about Lingg’s girlfriend smuggling the explosive device into the prison — an alibi that suggests Lum’s complicity was a act of love — but that knowledge of his cooperation comes through his friend, de Cleyre. See *The Haymarket Tragedy*, p. 376-377. The phrase “seizing the Monster, Death, with a smile on his lips” is from de Cleyre’s commemorative essay, “Dyer D. Lum” (289).

⁵¹Smith indicates that a situation may excite sympathies in such a manner that the subject can undergo an altogether different ordeal than the other is experiencing. “We sometimes feel for another, a passion of which he himself seems to be altogether incapable; because, when we put ourselves in that case, that passion arises in our breast from the imagination, through it does not in his from that reality. We blush for the impudence and rudeness of another, though he himself seems to have no sense of the impropriety of his own behavior; because we cannot help feeling with what confusion we ourselves should be covered, had we behaved in so absurd a manner” (7).

⁵³Kropotkin reproduces this problem in *Mutual Aid* by constantly anthropomorphizing the animals and subjecting the “savages” to his ethnocentric biases.

⁵⁴Smith does not miss this step. “The question which we ask is, What has befallen you?” (7).

⁵⁵Indeed, I would suggest that Rousselle fails to think this hostage as well. His exclusive concern for the effects of Kropotkin's anarchist morality on the individual subject demonstrates an unwillingness to think from the place of the other.

⁵⁶I respond to this possibility in chapter 3.

⁵⁷In *Gramsci Is Dead*, Richard Day quibbles with the postanarchist constructions of subjectivity, but he also notes the shrewdness of Call's observation (165-6).

⁵⁸For example, see the passage in Jean-Paul Sartre's "Existentialism is a Humanism" that emphasizes the individual's responsibility for himself:

I can always choose, but I must know that if I do not choose, that is still a choice. This, although it may appear merely formal, is of great importance to the limit of fantasy and caprice. For, when I confront a real situation — for example, that I am a sexual being, able to have relations with a being of the other sex and able to have children — I am obliged to choose my attitude to it, and in every respect I bear the responsibility of the choice which, in committing myself, also commits the whole of humanity. Even if my choice is determined by no a priori value whatever, it can have nothing to do with caprice [. . .]. [M]an finds himself in an organized situation in which he is himself involved: his choice involves mankind in its entirety, and he cannot avoid choosing. Either he must remain single, or he must marry without having children, or he must marry and have children. In any case, and whichever he may choose, it is impossible for him, in respect of this situation, not to take complete responsibility. Doubtless he chooses without reference to any pre-established value, but it is unjust to tax him with caprice. Rather let us say that the moral choice is comparable to the construction of a work of art. (305)

⁵⁹See Newman's comments on the anti-political as "the *unconscious* of politics" (*The Politics of Postanarchism* 11).

⁶⁰In "The Making of an Anarchist," de Cleyre provides a different narrative about her experience in Trafalgar Square. There, her focus is more on the corporeal tortures suffered by the Spanish dissidents, but they funnel into an image of "scarred hands" that de Cleyre herself had touched:

Their nails were torn out, their heads compressed in metal caps, the most sensitive portions of the body twisted between guitar strings, their flesh burned with red hot irons; they had been fed on salt codfish after days of starvation, and refused water; Juan Olle, a boy nineteen years old, had gone mad; another had confessed to something he had never done and knew nothing of. This is no horrible imagination. *I who write have myself shaken some of those scarred hands.* Indiscriminately, four hundred people of all sorts of beliefs — Republicans, trade

unionists, Socialists, Free Masons, as well as Anarchists — had been cast into dungeons and tortured in the infamous “zero.” Is it a wonder that most of them came out Anarchists? (160-1, emphasis added)

⁶¹Contrary to Locke, for whom the hands were a synecdoche for the individual’s labor and property, Gana’s hands figure forth that which cannot be incorporated by knowledge, consciousness, or law. They are an otherness that obsesses precisely because they cannot be assimilated by thought.

⁶²See Avrigh, *The Haymarket Tragedy*, p. 393.

CHAPTER 3 (“EFFLORESCENCE”)

⁶³Crucial to this critique is these cut-up effects’s affect. Tedious, droning, aimless, “One Patriarchal Poetry. Two Patriarchal Poetry. Three Patriarchal Poetry” lulls the reader to sleep. If it does not lull her, it encourages her distraction. Her hands fidget, feet shuffle, legs crisscross — on the page, she stops paying attention to the poem and begins to notice, perhaps, the dimples in the surface of the paper, or the book’s musty odor when she riffles through it. This is one of Stein’s flourishes. The reader is seated in a magnificently constructed chiasmus. She is bored, but she is bored because *Patriarchal Poetry* is showing her that patriarchal poetry is boring. The deeper her boredom, the higher her excitement. The farther she drifts from the poem, the closer she comes to the critique’s truth. While it seems cold, mechanical, and anemic, *Patriarchal Poetry* does not regard patriarchal poetry with neutrality. It counts, it asserts a claim to universal language and truth, but the poem’s incessant, rudimentary calculations embody patriarchal poetry’s insipidness. The poem evinces for the reader the idea that, if there is nothing else wrong with it, patriarchal poetry is monotonous and dull.

⁶⁴“I double you you double me” problematically suggests either a symmetrical relation between the “I” and “you,” or as asymmetrical relation that subordinates “you” to “I.” I address these problems in the final section of this chapter.

⁶⁵This phrase alludes to “A Cyborg Manifesto” (“The cyborg would not recognize the Garden of Eden; it is not made of mud and cannot dream of returning to dust” (Haraway 151). But I am also thinking about Chessman’s approach to *Patriarchal Poetry* as a revised Biblical creation myth: “[. . .] Stein turns Genesis on its head. She reenters the ‘Garden,’ not of Eden [. . .], but of language itself [. . .]” (1989, 127). While she distances Stein’s writing from Judeo-Christian origin stories, Chessman still maintains a return to a site of traumatic separation, whereas the “cyborg” suggests no homecoming is possible since the poem admits neither expulsion nor origination.

⁶⁶Its ties — stutters, echoes, false starts — ironically suggest that the patriarchal subject’s pretensions to knowledge expose that the world is that which eludes it.

⁶⁷I mean “nomic play” to refer to Peter Suber’s Nomic, “a game in which changing rules is a move. The Initial Set of rules does little more than regulate the rule-changing process.” See legacy.earlham.edu/~peters/nomic.htm.

⁶⁸The “look” of composition and the “emphasis” of insistence join the onto-epistemology of these two rhetorical practices. While the artist’s perspective on the “thing” alters its identity, effectively superseding its previous identity with “something else,” the emphasis of insistence changes the “thing” included in any iteration. The former concept is ocular, the latter vocal. However, both practices would be secondary to processes of temporalization. As I noted earlier, Stein acknowledges that “everything is not the same as the time when of the composition and the time in the composition is different.” In other words, every “look,” every “emphasis,” even if an exact replica of prior emphases or looks, would always be marked by temporal difference. Stein’s poetics, and thus her anarchism, has this Heraclitean character. “You can’t step into the same river twice.”

⁶⁹The spirit of Ziarek’s reading resonates throughout the scholarly writings on this passage of *Patriarchal Poetry*. Reading the poem as Stein’s revision of the Judeo-Christian creation myth in Genesis, Chessman believes the poem’s opening passage points both to God’s claim to ontological priority and the claim’s subversion (128-9). Likewise, in *Ghostlier Demarcations*, Davidson reads the passage in relation to a presymbolic “place” that gives place to place. He writes: “Here the terms for temporal priority and spatial proximity (‘before’) merge with terms for being (‘to be,’ ‘to be for’), creating a sentence whose grammatical structure embodies the difficulty of establishing a ‘place’ for presence” (51). Not insignificantly, he goes on to link this notion of the presymbolic place to the nearby line (“there was never a mistake in addition”): “‘There was never a mistake in addition,’ Stein concludes, and in a world in which existence is based on having gained priority (having been here before), things will always add up to the same thing. In “Patriarchal Poetry,” the sum of all equations is patriarchy” (ibid.).

⁷⁰While I have Chessman in mind here, I am also referring to Ford’s analysis of this passage. She writes: “[. . .] these are not just random words being set free, but echoes of the static literature — ‘let there be’ from the Bible and ‘to be [or not] to be’ from *Hamlet*. Even isolated words, like ‘spell’ and ‘tell’ (and possibly ‘call’) appear to concern literature in their reference to verbal communication” (98).

⁷¹While I am punning on the hip hop parlance of “to bite” — to steal another’s style for oneself — I am also alluding to Cixous’ description of feminine writing, quoted by Lisa Ruddick in *Reading Gertrude Stein*. Though Ruddick rejects the idea that Stein’s rhetorical styles would be “feminine,” she still identifies *The Making of Americans* and *Tender Buttons* with Cixous’s urge that woman “explode [her place ‘within’] male discourse, overturn it, grab it, make it hers, take it in, take it into her woman’s [sic] mouth, bite its tongue with her woman’s teeth, make up her own tongue and get inside of it” (qtd. in Ruddick 89).

⁷²Ford makes this claim. She describes the passage as “a shouting match between [woman] and the dominant culture” (113).

⁷³I have taken this subtitle from *Lusitania: A Journal of Reflection and Oceanography* (vol. 6), published as *Vulvamorphia*. “Where borders are crossed, objects merge, voices and identities are not entirely recognizable, it is the sea of *what-is-it?-ness*, that is the realm of the vulvamorph” (Avillez 1994, 160).

⁷⁴See Chessman, 131; Ford, 114; and Cole, 95.

⁷⁵“Jim” refers to the character in Mark Twain’s *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* — a text that I examine in Chapter 4. Jim declares “signs is *signs*” in the dénouement, when he is (unbelievably) gloating about his good fortune. See p. 280.

⁷⁶The passage can be read as an act of cutting up, that is, *sexual intercourse*, so that “wet inside and pink outside” introduces a “deviant” female sexuality. Critics disagree about its sexual politics, but they carefully note that the poem’s refusal of a heterosexual relation to the phallus does not reduce its erotics to homosexuality. Chessman meticulously demarcates those politics. Playfully conceding that “this passage ‘nearly’ describes a lesbian erotics,” she suggests that the sexual excitement of its imagery is produced not by any woman’s relation to the phallus but by her autoaffection (131). It would describe contact between two female bodies, except the relation involves only a single woman touching herself, albeit in the absence of man. Merrill Cole, while assuming that the passage refers to a lesbian encounter, also recognizes that the relation cannot ultimately be identified as “lesbian.” For him, because Stein refuses to name, “the passage does not coalesce into a positive lesbian identity” (95). Instead, it produces that eroticism through “enactment” (ibid.). *What is crucial, however, is that Stein’s erotics preserve the question*. Whether “wet inside and pink outside” alludes to lascivious contact between one or two women, what matters is that the allusion never ossifies into fact. The erotics of “wet inside and pink outside” can be masturbatory or lesbian, but the undecidability that holds those possibilities in suspense will never be abolished. It will only ever testify to one fact: in *Patriarchal Poetry*, neither heterosexuality, homosexuality, nor autoaffection will ever fully encompass the plenitude of the work’s erotics. Every sexuality belongs to that erotics’ circle to the extent that each encloses within itself the question of its identity.

The implication is that, in *Patriarchal Poetry*, Stein’s feminist politics are queer. They are not queer because they are lesbian; they are queer precisely because they are irreducible to heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, and asexuality. Rather than advancing queerness as a sexual ontological mode, they save the question at the center of queerness and refuse to settle for that reservation. If the passage above “enacts” an eroticism, it is not a lesbian erotics; it is an erotics of the question, of uncertainty and infinite responsibility, which points to the strangeness and unrepresentability of the female body. If it alludes to a relation, it alludes to one in which both the relation of the one to one and the one to the other becomes irrevocably ambiguous: a relation that neither counts nor can be counted, in which no singularity can be identified, and ones and twos do not add up.

⁷⁷Stein does not explicitly develop her claims about identity and recognition in relation to gender. However, “What are Master-pieces” loosely associates these two ideas. Two paragraphs before

this one, Stein comically (but significantly) asks: “What is the use of being a boy if you are going to grow up to be a man” (153). Her question, coupled with her earlier remark (“Once when one has said what one says it is not true or too true. That is what is the trouble with time. That is what makes what women say truer than what men say.”) suggests that Stein’s late lecture (“What are Master-pieces”) should be read precisely as it has been read in this analysis: as a challenge to the idea of masterpieces that doubles as a challenge to the idea of gender.

⁷⁸“Near,” it is also “medium.” Accentuating the other references to writing instruments, “medium” can refer to the physical material on which data is recorded with pen and ink. However, like to formulation “wet inside and pink outside” — which collapses the inside/outside binary — “medium” also refers to an *intermediate* or *middle* state. For Stein, this intermediate state does not merely mean that women are beyond representation; the interruption, the other in woman, ipseity, places every woman on a queer trajectory guided by the infinite, differential movement of writing. For the vulvamorph, it suggests that neither the female sex organ nor the composition are an *introitus*. Instead, each is a *vestibulum*. Rather than cavities, apertures, or holes, they are intervals between an entrance and exit: a *euporia*.

⁷⁹Portions of *Patriarchal Poetry* appear to be written in what Cixous calls “white ink.” In “The Laugh of the Medusa,” this metaphor refers to a feminine form of writing extraneous to the phallogocentric symbolic order. While phallogocentricism, concomitant with “patriarchal poetry,” silences and dissembles the voice of woman in literature, “white ink” designates a scripture proper to the other in woman. Playing with the idea of the *mother* as other, Cixous compares “white ink” to “mother’s milk,” that is, to a female bodily fluid, unique to her and unproduceable within patriarchal discourse (881). “White ink,” then, designates an invisible writing, stifled within phallogocentric discourse. But, quite like Stein’s vulval imagery, it is also an embodied writing, writing of the female body, stimulated by woman’s passions, desires, and the polymorphous maps of her lived, physical, concrete pleasures. Diverging from patriarchal poetry’s hackneyed conventions, “white ink” formulates a rhetoric effectively undetected in the history of letters. It is from the place of the (m)other: writing traumatized by its repression, but also a testament to survival in the margins from which it never ceases to murmur.

⁸⁰Verter provides Greek transliterations. For Aeschylus, the phrase “is not ashamed to act in anarchist opposition to the rulers of the city” is *oud’ aischunomai echous’ apiston tend’ anarchian polei*. For Sophocles, “there is no evil worse than anarchy” is *anarchias de meizon ouk estin kakon*. While Verter recognizes that “anarchy” is earlier used to designate periods in Athens’ history when no Archon (magistrate) had been elected to manage the city’s affairs, he indicates that Antigone’s identification is the “first active political (or antipolitical) usage of the term anarchy” (68).

⁸¹This move consistently characterizes post-left anarchy. I engage with it in Chapter 3.

⁸²Perhaps, for this reason, right after Stein’s pencil scrawls the words “Patriarchal Poetry makes it a master piece like this,” it continues scratching out a series of permutations off the word “piece”:

Patriarchal poetry at peace.
 Patriarchal poetry a piece.
 Patriarchal poetry in peace.
 Patriarchal poetry in pieces.
 Patriarchal poetry as peace to return to Patriarchal poetry at peace.
 Patriarchal poetry or peace to return to Patriarchal poetry or pieces of
 Patriarchal Poetry. (281)

While Ulla E. Dydo suggests that this permutation implies that “patriarchal poetry, along with other hierarchical systems, [is] dead and [needs] to be laid to rest” (n.pag.), I would like to close in saying that it refers to patriarchal poetry’s impossible relation to the other. “A piece” might suggest sexual objectification, so that the violence patriarchal poetry exercised against women boomerangs back to it, but in the context of substitution, it also implies that patriarchal poetry is a singularity only insofar as it has been elected by the neuter. Evoking the image of a shattered patriarchal poetry, “Patriarchal poetry in pieces” reinforces the idea that such the effect of being a “piece” — the cost of singularity — requires a destabilization that generates fragmentation. If this context, if “Patriarchal poetry at peace” means that it has been “laid to rest,” in the ground, the mausoleum that contains it is the infinite, encompassing expanse of its own interiority. In this sense, contained by *Patriarchal Poetry*, patriarchal poetry is “in peace” — accosted on all sides by death, and shot through with it, dissolving it into midnight.

⁸³“We are the birds of the coming storm — the prophets of the revolution” (August Spies. See Avrich, *The Haymarket Tragedy*, 126). Spies’ words are the epigraph to Voltairine de Cleyre’s poem, “The Hurricane” (See *Selected Works of Voltairine de Cleyre*, 34-5). “Daughter of the wind” is the etymological meaning of *anemone*, another flower name that appears in *Patriarchal Poetry*: “never to do to do it as if it were an anemone as an anemone an anemone to be an anemone to be to be certain to let to let it to let it alone” (286). Although I have argued that Stein associates flowers with hegemonic rhetorical practices, I have always been intrigued by this one flower for its association with freedom (“let it alone”) and its effective homophony with “enemy.” Antigone becomes an “anemone” through her substitution for the adversary.

CHAPTER 4 (“MYOCLONUS”)

⁸⁴In an interview, Burroughs acknowledges this connection: “The Nova Mob is using the conflict in an attempt to blow up the planet, because when you get right down to it, what are American and Russia really arguing about? The Soviet Union and United States will eventually consist of interchangeable social parts and neither nation is morally ‘right’” (Lotringer 80). Nevertheless, critical analyses of the Nova Conflict in Burroughs’ trilogy seldom reckon the historical context of the Cold War. For example, while her chapter on the trilogy is titled “A Mythology for the Space Age,” Jennie Skerl’s examination never mentions the conflict between the US and USSR after the Second World War. Instead, she focuses on science fiction motifs of time and space travel. She further flattens the trilogy’s historical relations by interpreting the Nova Conspiracy

as “a metaphor for the human condition” (Skerl 69-70).

⁸⁵In *The Job*, when asked if this characterization of nova defined politics as such, Burroughs said “yes,” further stating that modern nations require conflicts with other nations in order to maintain hegemony: “If you didn’t have the factor of hostility, if there were no conflicts of interest and politicians couldn’t create conflicts, the lines would break down. And they wouldn’t have a nation to rule” (69).

⁸⁶In an interview, Burroughs describes the Grey Room in terms that resemble the spectacle’s production of images that take the place of lived experience. “I see [the gray room] as very much like the photographic dark room where the reality photographs are actually produced. [. . .] What has happened is that the underground and also the Nova police have made a breakthrough past the guards and gotten into the darkroom where the films are processed, where they’re in a position to expose negatives and prevent events from occurring” (Lotringer 70; See also Odier 20). The “reuse of preexisting artistic elements in a new ensemble” is the SI’s definition of *détournement*. See *Situationist International Anthology*, “Détournement as Negation and Prelude” (67). For examples of the recurrent phrases (“break through in the Grey Room“ et. al.), see *The Soft Machine* (151-2).

⁸⁷As I suggested in Chapter 1, Burroughs’ dystopian vision anticipates Debord’s definition of the spectacle as “a social relationship between people that is mediated by images” (12). Later, Debord adds: “Understood on its own terms, the spectacle proclaims the predominance of appearances and asserts that all human life, which is to say all social life, is mere appearance” (14).

⁸⁸Anarchy is often associated with Burroughs’s Word Hoard. Referring to Burroughs’s satire in *Naked Lunch*, Ihab Hassan writes: “The central motive of Burroughs is, of course, anarchic [. . .]. Ostensibly, his desperate wish is for a whole or free man” (60). Examining a non-satirical passage from *Naked Lunch*, David Lodge observes: “There is a note of celebration here, a hilarious anarchism which relishes the mindless destruction it describes; and it extends to the most successfully drawn characters in the book, the brutal surgeon Benway and the inspired practical joker A.J.” (79).

⁸⁹See also *The Job* (46).

⁹⁰Bey expresses an affinity with Bob Black’s “type-3” anarchism. In his “Theses on Anarchism After Post-Modernism,” Black characterizes type-3 anarchism as “meta-typical (‘names name me not’). The Type 3 anarchist categorically rejects categorization. His ‘existence precedes his essence’ (Sartre). [. . .] The Type-3 anarchist takes more out of anarchism than anarchism takes out of her. And he tries to take more out of life than life takes out of him” (n.pag.).

⁹¹These “affectations” are catalogued in Landstrieher’s “From Politics to Life.”

⁹²The identity of Hassan i Sabbah is not self-evident, though his affiliations are closer to the

struggles of the Nova Police than the Nova Mob's conspiracies. In *Wising Up the Marks*, Timothy S. Murphy offers a detailed analysis of the character, and he infers from a Nova Criminal's comments in *The Ticket That Exploded* that Sabbah is "a legitimate leader of the partisans, and that he commands real and deadly assassins" (116). While "*Nothing is True — Everything is Permitted*" are attributed to "*Last Words Hassan I Sabbah*," "Last Words" is also the *Nova Express*'s opening chapter's title, a monological vignette spoken by Sabbah, which I examine below (in section III).

⁹³This reading reiterates N. Katherine Hayle's commentary in "Voices Out of Bodies, Bodies Out of Voices." Her attention lasts only for one sentence, but it correctly identifies the sex skin with the disintegration of the bodies boundaries. She writes: "Body boundaries are often literally disintegrated — for example, by the Sex Skin, an organism that surrounds its victims with a second skin that gives them intense sexual pleasure while dissolving and ingesting them" (89-90). To my knowledge, she is the only scholar who has commented on this trope.

⁹⁴Linking the image to the Platonic allegory about love, Skerl has argued that "the primary form of control is a sexuality in which the Other Half is a yearning for another body to assuage the feeling of separation caused by dualism" (60).

⁹⁵Cary Nelson associates the "Other Half" with the body: "Taut with desire and frustration, each single body is really an illusion constructed over an amphibious-hermaphroditic form. [. . .] Our minds and bodies are ignorant vessels of the primal word bisected into time" (123-4). Further, likening the "Other Half" to the discourses and practices that construct our world, Hayles links it to Derrida and Foucault: "It is a truism in contemporary theory that discursive formations can have material effects in the physical world. Without having read Foucault and Derrida, Burroughs came to similar conclusions a decade earlier, imagining the word as the body's 'Other Half'" (87). See also Murphy (*Wising* 126) and Russell (79-80).

⁹⁶In *The Ticket That Exploded*, an anonymous Rewriter worker explains: "Your sound track consists of your body sounds and sub-vocal speech. Sub-vocal speech *is* the word organism the 'Other Half.' spliced in with your body sounds. You are convinced by association that your body sounds will stop and so it happens. Death is the final separation of the sound and image tracks" (160).

⁹⁷Lev Chernyi is McQuinn's pseudonym. In "An Introduction to Critical Theory," McQuinn refers to ideology as "positive theory," that which "always expresses a defense (whether implicitly or explicitly) of our social alienation."

⁹⁸According to Rewrite, the corporeal experience of this substitution is further evidenced by the experience of subject's during sense deprivation experiments: "One of the most common 'hallucinations' of subjects during sense withdrawal is the feeling of another body sprawled through the subject's body at an angle . . . yes quite at an angle it is the 'Other Half'" (*TX* 49; see also 82-83).

⁹⁹In *The Job*, Burroughs vividly evokes these compulsory obligations in the “reactive commands [. . .] implicit in the layout and juxtaposition of [advertisements, editorials, newspapers stories]” (35). His evocation consists in a protracted series of contradictory imperatives that replicate the messages of consumer capitalism. For example: “Stop. Go. Wait here. Go there. Come in. Stay out. Be a man. Be a woman. Be white. Be black. Live. Die. Be your real self. Be somebody else. Be a human animal. Be a superman. Yes. No. Rebel. Submit. RIGHT. WRONG” (ibid.). Looking forward to my analysis of “The Mayan Caper” below, I would also note that Burroughs intends this catalogue of commands to illustrate his claim that “the modern ceremonial calendar is almost as predictable as the Mayan” (ibid.).

¹⁰⁰In *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, Vaneigem characterizes alienation in terms that gloss Burroughs’ *Sex Skin*. He asks: “what is ‘natural’ about the fact that I stop being myself a hundred times a day and slip into the skin of people whose concerns and importance I have really not the slightest desire to know about?” (127). Then, he adds: “The roles we play in everyday life [. . .] soak into the individual, preventing him from being what he really is and what he really wants to be. They are nuclei of alienation embedded in the flesh of direct experience” (ibid.).

¹⁰¹Echoing Tzara’s “Idon’tgiveadamnism,” Vaneigem writes: “Nothing gives me the right to speak in the name of other people. I am my own delegate. Yet at the same time I can’t help thinking that my life is not of concern to me alone, but that I serve the interests of thousands of other people by living the way I live, and by struggling to live more intensely and more freely my friends and I are one, and we know it. Each of us is acting for each other by acting for himself” (245).

¹⁰²Vaneigem defines the role in different ways, but one is: “The role is the self-caricature which we carry about with us everywhere, and which brings us everywhere face to face with an absence. An absence, though, which is structured, dressed up, prettified” (137). In Thesis 60, Debord writes: “Media stars are spectacular representations of living human beings, distilling the essence of the spectacle’s banality into images of possible roles. Stardom is a diversification in the semblance of life — the object of an identification with mere appearance which is intended to compensate for the crumbling of directly experienced diversifications of productive activity” (38). Then, in Thesis 61, he adds: “The individual who in the service of the spectacle is placed in stardom’s spotlight is in fact the opposite of an individual, and as clearly the enemy of the individual in himself as of the individual in others” (39). Similarly, anticipating Burroughs, he writes: “The timeless moment of the role may be compared to the cinematic image, or rather to one of its elements, to one frame, to one image in a series of images of minimally varying predetermined attitudes whose reproduction constitutes a shot” (134).

¹⁰³Skerl writes: “‘The Mayan Caper’ is the single most significant section of *The Soft Machine* because of its central placement in the text, because it is the longest sustained narrative, and because it give the most straightforward exposition of how a control system works and how it can be dismantled” (55).

¹⁰⁴When asked about such a “transfer operation,” Burroughs points out that the left and right side

of a person's body are not isomorphic. He continues: "So, you could take two people, split one person down the middle and put that half over onto another person and make new people that way. There's no particularly symbolism. It's just a possibility that I imagine in the course of time might be in the reach of medical science" (Odie 108).

¹⁰⁵Apomorphine is a drug featured prominently in *Naked Lunch* and the Nova trilogy. Burroughs credits it with helping cure his heroin addiction.

¹⁰⁶Jean Meslier famously expressed the desire that "all the great men in the world and all the nobility could be hanged, and strangled with the guts of the priests" (see *Testament*, chapter 2)

¹⁰⁷At this moment of climatic violence, the narrator discloses that the priests and temple guards are only extensions of the illusion of the control system: "You see the priests were nothing but word and image, an old film rolling on and on with dead actors" (*SM* 93). They are not controllers of the virus (ideology), but its symptoms.

¹⁰⁸Skerl's commentary on "The Mayan Caper" is essentially a summary that emphasizes the "word-and-image system that orders time, space, and human behavior (54-55). She notes that the chapter is unique to *The Soft Machine* since it features "a rebel, striking out at the controllers," rather than a "passive observer" (57).

¹⁰⁹"Apomorphine combats parasite invasion" (NE 39).

¹¹⁰Hayles also connects Mr. Taylor's distinction and the Sex Skin. However, rather than examining the significance of this distinction for substitution, she infers from the connection that tape splices risk "becoming the phenomena it was meant to counteract" (90).

¹¹¹Landstreicher locates post-left anarchy in Stirner's egoist tradition: "The project of taking back our lives is fundamentally egoist" ("Barbaric" 20).

¹¹²Skerl's identification of Burroughs' Cut-Up trilogy with a project of emancipation for the autonomous, self-conscious, autarkic subject enjoys an extensive history. Referring to Burroughs's appropriation of Scientology's E-meter, Watters observes: "It was by extending this concept of deconditioning that Burroughs envisaged using cut-ups and repetition to decondition people from the 'word.' The aim being to unencumber the mind: to allow the individual to see clearly without preconditioned reactions [. . .]" (287). "[. . .] Burroughs' cut-ups attempt to expose the cracks within the Symbolic Order, in the hope that through those cracks, the liberated subject may emerge" (Tietchen 120). "[. . .] continuing the attempt to unveil the mechanisms of state regulation that he had begun in *Naked Lunch*, Burroughs began to formulate techniques of resistance and deconditioning with the hope of freeing the subject from external control" (Russell 59).

Further, Lydenberg claims that the "dismemberment and fragmentation" produced by Burroughs's cut-up technique provides "liberation from control, a freedom from predetermined patterns" (78). Murphy takes one step further: "In revealing the constitutive contradiction of the

Law [. . .], the cut-up method challenges the hegemony of that Law and offers a method for abolishing it" (*Wising* 106).

¹¹³In the same passage from *Nova Express*, Sabbah's and Gysin's names are juxtaposed: "And the words of Hassan i Sabbah are also cancel. Cross all your skies see the silent writing of Brion Gysin Hassan i Sabbah: drew September 17, 1899 over New York" (4-5). The significance of the date could not be more obscure to me.

¹¹⁴Burroughs often codes silence in positive terms. "I don't think of silence as being a device of terror at all. In fact, quite the contrary. Silence of only frightening to people who are compulsively verbalizing. [. . .] In fact it can't get too quiet for me" (Odiar 23-4). Elsewhere, he calls it "the most desirable state" (Lotringer 65).

¹¹⁵Others note Burroughs' use of punctuation to document his cuts. See Lydenberg (91-2); Grimstad (90); and Robinson (46).

¹¹⁶While "Substitute Flesh" does not thematize reader reception, it clearly concerns affect. Throughout the passage, Burroughs appeals to the senses: "the smell of KY and rectal mucus" (olfactory), "slow waves of orgasm" (tactile), and various visual images, including "tentative copulations of light," "limestone flesh over silver pools," "cock flipped out and up." Moreover, he pays meticulous attention to feeling at the somatic level. Flows traverse the body: "rectums merging," "prostates quivering," "pulsing human skin," vibrating focus flesh"; "first spurts he could feel the process together." Though Burroughs acknowledges psychic life ("thoughts and memories of melting ice"), the overwhelming emphasis in this routine is on sensation and the secret life of the body: its reactions, contrary to the subject's will, that respond involuntarily to stimuli. Nelson and Oxenhandler also relate affect to Burroughs's literary experiments.

¹¹⁷While the "mind" of "mind jolt" locates the cut in the wrong place, the "jolt" of "mind jolt" is also reductive. In the above passage from "Substitute Flesh," affect produces various effects: oscillations ("shifting back and forth"), undulations ("slow waves"), and judders ("quivering," "pulsing," "vibrating"). Here, the cut produces vacillations, ripples, and vibrations. Nausea, exhilaration, vertigo. It travels across my epidermis, tumbles and clenches in my sphincter, aches in my teeth, and introduces this affect into the *conscious* experience of the juxtaposition of the visual and olfactory images.

¹¹⁸Géfin's reflection on the reader "attempting semantically to integrate the cutup" is a *non sequitur* since, at the level of the cut, there is no meaning *per se*, only *feeling*. In the 1960s, David Lodge and Theodore Solotaroff criticized Burroughs's cut-up routines for failing to be sufficiently meaningful. For Lodge, next to predecessors such as Eliot and Joyce, Burroughs's "juxtapositions" did not "create any significant new meaning" (80). Solotaroff identifies the cut-ups with "banality" and states that "what is gained in language is lost in content" (88). However, both critics seem to have missed the point ("everything is a mess"). The trilogy, based on the principle of the cut-up method, is not concerned with meaning, consciousness, ideology, or spectacle; *it antedates those forms*. What "Substitute Flesh" demonstrates is that, contrary to

Solotaroff and Lodge, the trilogy cannot accurately be described as banal or derivative of earlier collage writers. I believe that this my argument demonstrates that the cut-ups do introduce new meaning (e.g., Burroughs' prefiguration of "post-anarchy anarchism"). However, the "new" that I would emphasize is not meaning, but the aleatory factor of the cut, unacknowledged in Joyce's and Eliot's ultra cerebral works, which is affect.

¹¹⁹In "Rub Out the Word," Tony Tanner reinforces this point: "If life is a prerecording, then the one way of introducing a disturbing or fouling factor is to record that prerecording and then play it back, for that playback is the one thing that cannot be allowed for on the prerecording" (110). Taking a closer looks at Burroughs's tape experiments, Hayle clarifies the emancipatory project: "The intrusion of the random element [. . .] aims to free the reader not only from personal obsessions but from the culturally constructed envelope of surrounds sounds and words" (88).

¹²⁰Bradley's out-of-body experience recalls the "Polar distance" from which the narrator in "The Mayan Caper" saw himself during his "transfer operation." While Bradley is receiving an operation to remove parasites, the chapter's "amusement park" frame links this operation to substitution. It evokes as a operation in which "the applicant is photographed in all stages of erection, orgasm, defecation, urinating, eating — the pictures are cut down the divide line of the body and fitted to prospective partners — the photos are vibrated and welded together in orgone accumulators" (68-9). Thus, while the story details a surgery to remove Venusian parasites, it portrays these details through images of a transfer operation that puts the subject in the place of the other.

¹²¹The doctor removing the parasites states this much. The closing sentences of the chapter are his words: "My God what a mess — The difficulty is with the two halves — other parasites will invade sooner or later — First it's symbiosis, then parasitism — The old symbiosis con — Sew him up nurse" (*TX* 85).

¹²²Etymologically, "lemur" means "ghost" or "specter." Burroughs plays on this meaning in his 1991 novella, *Ghost of Chance*, which is set in Madagascar and intersperses the story with non-fictional accounts of the endangered species.

¹²³Unbeknownst to himself, Landstreicher's rhetoric registers a doubleness in the subject that vexes his claims about self-ownership. When he writes "rather than starting from the world as it is, one may choose to start from the will to grasp her life as his own," the confusion in pronouns is designed to reflect his ostensibly egalitarian attitude toward gender: he does not privilege one over the other, but gives both masculine and feminine pronouns equal play. While such gender equality would be admirable, the effect simultaneously plays in another register. If "her life as his own" is read as a man's power seizing a woman's life as his own, not only does it evoke in the very gesture of post-left gender equality the specter of patriarchal domination; it suggests that the (gender) subject is always double — other, queer, alien. In Landstreicher's formulation, the subject is male. However, rather than being immanent to himself, that which he claims as his own is in fact the life of a woman, which he expropriates. Pointing to a problem in gender dynamics, Landstreicher's rhetorical tic also occasions a site where the subject cannot be thought

apart from the other who post-left anarchists would exclude.

¹²⁴For McQuinn, the practice of self-theory constitutes an anarchist response to the effects of ideological interpellation. In “Post-Left Anarchy,” he states that “post-left anarchists reject all ideologies in favor of the individual and communal construction of self-theory” (10). He indicates that “individual self-theory” is “theory in which the integral individual-in-context (in all her or his relationships, with all her or his history, desires, and projects, etc.) is always the subjective center of perception, understanding and action” (ibid.). “Communal self-theory” gestures toward Stirner’s “union of egoists”; it is “based on the group as subject, but always with an underlying awareness of the individuals (and their own self-theories) which make up the group or organization” (ibid.).

¹²⁵A cut-up of this sentence appears in *Nova Express*, spoken by El Hombre Invisible, “Meester William”: “These colorless sheets are what flesh is made from — becomes flesh when it has color and writing — That is Word And Image write the message that is you on colorless sheets determine all flesh” (25).

CHAPTER 5 (“CHATOYANCE”)

¹²⁶In American letters, I would identify these questions with African American literary works written after the Emancipation Proclamation. See, for example, Booker T. Washington’s *Up From Slavery* (1901). While Washington’s whole narrative effectively tries to address the best use of freedom, albeit in less than revolutionary terms, I am thinking particularly about Chapter 1, immediately after a United States officer brings the plantation slaves word of their emancipation:

For some minutes there was great rejoicing, and thanksgiving, and wild scenes of ecstasy. [. . .] The wild rejoicing on the part of the emancipated colored people lasted but for a brief period [. . .]. The great responsibility of being free, of having charge of themselves, of having to think and plan for themselves and their children, seemed to take possession of them. [. . .] In a few hours, the questions with which the Anglo-Saxon race had been grappling for centuries had been thrown upon these people to be solved. [. . .] Was it any wonder that within a few hours the wild rejoicing ceased and a feeling of deep gloom seemed to pervade the slave quarters? (549)

¹²⁷In *Raids on Human Consciousness: Writing, Anarchism, and Violence* (1998), Arthur Redding argues that *Empire* “might be read in part as an extended masochistic fantasy” (231) and that its imagery of disciplinary self-mutilation points to an “anarchy” that “fully disrespects the limits of the self” (242). Suggesting that such disrespect pushes Oedipal constructions of the subject to the point of failure, he concludes: “So discipline and anarchy persist in their wrongdoing, and this is a process we mislabel cynical, at our own peril” (ibid.). Further, Robert Lantham refers to the post-revolutionary setting that characterizes both “Alone” and “Pirate Night” — the second and

third sections of Acker's triptych — as “anarchic Paris” (51). Likewise, Michael Clune gives *Empire* an idiosyncratic anarcho-capitalist reading. Granting great weight to Thivai's claim that “piracy is the most anarchic form of private enterprise” (*Empire* 26), he argues that “the pirate is the revolutionary subject of an entirely economic social world, with the free market imagined as the open sea, the horizon of the possible” (487).

¹²⁸The phrase “no roses grow on sailors' graves” becomes a motif in this section (“The Beginning of Criminality/The Beginning of Morning”). In addition to being the penultimate sentence in this section, it permutes throughout, as though registering its iterations and new contexts, and formally figuring the sailor's mutable lifestyle. In its second appearance, it reads “no roses will grow on a sailor's grave” (117). Then, later, “no roses grow on a sailor's grave” (132). In the last instance, it repeats this phrase, but in a paragraph all to itself (140).

¹²⁹Here, writing before the fall of the Berlin Wall, Balagoon is contrasting anarchism's practices of inclusion and fluidity with communism. However, Balagoon's anti-colonial project also diverges from black nationalism and the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense of the 1960's New Left. Both Balagoon and Ervin were members of the Panther Party. Balagoon abandoned the movement due to dissatisfactions with the top-down organization and military-style chain of command (75-6).

¹³⁰*Empire* includes such “real get down anarchists.” In the novel, while the Algerian revolution is initiated by people of color in Paris, it is assisted by “Spanish sailors, longtime anarchists” — “black white and other” (77-8). While these anarchists initially engage in “general hooliganism and destruction,” they soon (to use Balagoon's language) “get down” and (to use Acker's) join “the Algerians, their brothers,” to support Mackandal's plan to destroy the white colonists (*ibid.*). This coincidence between *Empire* and Balagoon suggests not simply that the Algerian revolution has anarchist affinities. Acker's pirated novel effectively imagines Balagoon's theorizations of anti-imperialist anarchy. Balagoon lays it out and Acker plays it out. For both, such anarchy can only be promiscuous and compromised, wounded at its very origin, inflecting and modulating other anti-colonial programs without itself congealing into an autonomous identity.

¹³¹In the United States, Balagoon understands this affinity to bond all indigenous Americans (and Puerto Ricans) confined by U.S. imperialism: “The New Afrikan nation as well as the Native American nations are colonized within the present confines of the United States, as the Puerto Rican and Mexicano nations are colonized within as well as outside the present confines of the United States” (72).

¹³²Abhor states: “That part of our being (mentality, feeling, physicality) which is free of all control let's call our “unconscious.” Since it's free of control, it's our only defense against institutionalized meaning, institutionalized language, control, fixation, judgment, prison” (134). She adds: “[the unconscious'] primary language must be taboo, all that is forbidden. Thus, an attack on the institutions of prison via language would demand the use of a language or languages which aren't acceptable, which are forbidden. Language, on one level, constitutes a set

of codes and social and historical agreements. Nonsense per se doesn't break down the codes; speaking precisely that which the codes forbid breaks the codes" (ibid.).

¹³³Abhor's rape begins while her father speaks with her mother on the telephone: "After he put the receiver down on the table, he put his cock up me. There was no more blood than in a period. Part of me wanted him and part of me wanted to kill him" (*Empire* 12).

¹³⁴Abhor is raped by a photographer for whom she is modeling. Not insignificantly, earlier in the novel, after she is raped by her father, Abhor describes herself as "almost white" (13). The description tenuously links the Parisian and her (step)father.

¹³⁵See *Neuromancer*, p. 238-243.

¹³⁶In *Neuromancer*, Ashpool threatens to take Molly's life as well as his own: "perhaps I'll take you with me tonight, down to hell . . ." (239). In *Empire*, Acker tweaks Ashpool's comment to refer to Hades and Persephone: "Because he cared for me, just like Hades for Proserpine, he was going to take me with him" (69).

¹³⁷I would read the simstim switch as a symbol of substitution. It is a one-way "broadcast" that allows Case to see and feel what Molly sees and feels. It is described with the erotic language of "jacking in."

¹³⁸It could also refer to Ashpool's implied murder of his daughter's clone (3Jane), whose corpse Molly discovers after he passes out (242).

¹³⁹I am grateful for Naimou's article "'Death-in-Life': Conflation, Decolonization, and the Zombie in *Empire of the Senseless*" for identifying some of Acker's sources for the Algerian revolution. These sources include C.L.R. James' *The Black Jacobins* (1938), Gillo Pontecorvo's film *The Battle of Algiers* (1966), and Wade Davis' *The Serpent and the Rainbow* (1985).

¹⁴⁰For an insightful reading of Acker's cut-up for Baron Samedi, see Naimou (143-4).

¹⁴¹The sentences that follow ("And forced their unwilling servants to eat Jamaican 'dumbcane' whose leaves, as if they were actually tiny slivers of glass, irritating the larynx and causing local swelling, made breathing difficult and speaking impossible" [*Empire* 74]) are taken from a passage in *The Serpent and the Rainbow* that explains how to make the "poison" for zombification:

The hollow hairs on the surface of these plants [members of the stinging nettle family, *maman guepes* and *mashasha*] act as small hypodermic syringes and inject a chemical similar to formic acid, the compound responsible for the pain of ant bites. A third plant was *Dieffenbachia seguine*, the common 'dumbcane' of Jamaica. In its tissues are calcium oxalate needles that act like small pieces of glass. The English name derives from the nineteenth-century practices of forcing

recalcitrant slaves to eat the leaves; the needles, by irritating the larynx, cause local swelling, making breathing difficult and speaking impossible. (163)

See also *Passage of Darkness* (“Calmador is the common dumbcane of Jamaica. In its tissues are calcium oxalate needles that act like small pieces of glass. The English name derives from the nineteenth-century practice of forcing recalcitrant slaves to eat the leaves; the needles, by irritating the larynx, cause local swelling, making breathing difficult and speaking impossible”).

¹⁴²In fact, while he could be a ghost, Mackandal appears to Abhor throughout “Let the Algerians Take Over Paris.”

¹⁴³Sorenson claims that Acker’s confluences of Haitian and Algerian anti-colonial struggles make Mackandal “into a trope for transnational and transhistorical revolutionary resistance” by “resurrecting [him] among the Algerians” (187). However, such a claim on Acker’s “transcendental” project neglects *Empire*’s oblique attention to neocolonialism in the United States. Acker operates in what Fredric Jameson calls “the nostalgia mode.” That she sets *Empire* in both the historical past and future suggests not only that she cannot look at her present but that her confluences of the Haitian Revolution and the Algerian War, as well as their setting in Paris, provides her with the distance that allows her to write about black struggle “at home.” Further, the “transnational” and “tranhistorical” character of her post-colonial/neocolonial Algerian revolution reflects the possibility of the abolition of national/racial borders attractive to the anti-imperialist anarchism. In these terms, Mackandal would not be a figure for “New Afrikan people”: a black anarchist substituting himself for the other in anti-colonial struggle in America.

¹⁴⁴Focusing on patriarchy rather than white supremacy, Conte offers a similar observation: Acker “envisions the collapse of the patriarchal order into a state of liberating and enabling anarchy as a function of the book’s structure” (15).

¹⁴⁵Acker’s cut-ups reposition this abolition of whiteness in the context of patriarchy so that the Parisian’s suicide also figures forth the death of the father. At the end of “Daddy,” the penultimate section of “Let the Algerians Take Over Paris,” which concludes “Elegy for the World of the Fathers,” the Parisian’s corpse floats by under a bridge on the Seine. Abhor observes: “A boat was floating under the bridge. The body of an old man lay in the boat” (83). Then, in the section’s last sentence, she states: “In the boat my father I had never known was dead” (ibid.). (On the previous page, right after Thivai takes a panoramic look at the “black city,” Abhor identifies the Parisian as her father: “That old man was my real father: as soon as I said this I knew it was true” [82].) While Acker does not directly reproduce Twain’s language, this image seems pirated from the scene in which Huck and Jim encounter Huck’s father’s corpse in a frame-house surreally drifting down the Mississippi River. While Acker’s image recalls Twain’s, her narrative also reproduces Twain’s dramatic dissemblance and delay. In *Huckleberry Finn*, Huck does not see the dead body, and Jim does not disclose that it is Huck’s father. (“Doan’ look at his face — ,” Jim commands, “it’s too gashly” [50], and Huck complies with his instructions.) It is not until the final chapter’s penultimate paragraph that Jim reveals to his friend that body was Huck’s “Pa” (281). In *Empire*, that Abhor flees from the scene of the Parisian’s suicide

before confirming his demise and that the narrative belatedly reveals that he is Abhor's father both effectively purloin Twain's peculiar plotting device. Acker's cumbersome syntax ("in the boat my father I had never known was dead") formulates the reflection that Huck does not divulge in his narrative: *until this moment, I had never known that (in the floating house) my father was dead.*

¹⁴⁶In this passage, Acker is plagiarizing California governor Edmund G. Brown Jr.'s 1982 statement about the art of tattooing. While acknowledging the production of the "outcast," Brown's statement also emblemizes the co-optation of tattoos by bourgeois, suburban America. See "A Proclamation," Executive Department, State of California, The Queen Mary, Long Beach, Calif., Edmund G. Brown, Jr., Nov. 12, 1982.

Later in the novel, Thivai cites an "expert" ("doctor") to support the opposite case. In his narrative, tattoos do not create outsiders; outsiders are predisposed to them: "Between one-third and two-thirds of all prison inmates wear tattoos. Being tattooed shows a tendency for violence, property crime, and self-destruction or self-mutilation. There is a 'strong relationship between tattooing and the commission of violent, assaultive acts. This propensity toward violence in general may well be signaled by the violence these men have done to themselves in the form of tattooing.' — some doctor" (148).

¹⁴⁷This idea has belonged to the discourse on *Empire* since the beginning. Siegle, for example, when writing about tattoos as metaphors for writing, states: "Acker's novel is committed to this writing of the body in a way that critiques her earlier work" (75).

¹⁴⁸Addressed to white anarchists and radicals who would join the "black revolution," Ervin's critique of white skin privilege challenges radical claims about solidarity based exclusively on class warfare. Classical class-based analysis and strategy, he correctly observes, ignores privileges systemically conferred on white underclasses at the expense of super-exploited people of color — groups double exploited both at class and racial levels. For him, even when white anarchists oppose capitalism, the system of white skin privilege continues to communicate to them that they deserve whatever they have earned. In the United States, it discourages white anarchists from acknowledging that their socioeconomic advantages can be traced back to black slavery and the continued abuses, exploitations, and repression of black people.

¹⁴⁹While Ervin write "white race" in quotation marks in order to distinguish the popular sense of skin color from his understanding of whiteness as determined by privilege, the quotation marks also acknowledge whiteness' constructedness. For him, the category "white race" contrives a "super-nationality" that elides national difference (Welsh, German, Irish) and "inflate[s] the social importance of European ethnics" (14). Thus, while the category "white race" refers to systems of white privilege, white supremacist discourses dissemble that reference through a myth of whiteness as a racial identity.

¹⁵⁰*Race Traitor* includes several examples of white race treason. For example, Kingsley Clarke's "Running the Ball in Crown Point" tells the story about a white football player who quits the team in protest of the white coach's racist remarks, and then becomes targeted by his white

classmates (39-42). Lorenzo Komboa Ervin's "Behind the Walls of Prison" narrates his experience in a Terra Haute prison revolt in which "even whites who had been following the Klan line for many years rise up with the blacks against the prison officials," that is, against the warden whose one similarity was "whiteness" (66). That is, within the racial hierarchy of the prison, they abandon the one trait that positions them closer to the warden (whiteness) in order to contest his power (see 59-66). In "Manifesto of a Dead Daughter" Patricia Eakins writes about her own experience as a white woman who remains a member of a black Detroit community after her marriage to a black man dissolves (85-89).

¹⁵¹Earlier in the novel, Huck explicitly identifies informing on Jim with an act of race treason: "People would call me a low down abolitionist and despise me for keeping mum" (43). He adds: "But it makes no difference" (ibid.).

¹⁵²See Stuart Zane Charme, *Vulgarity and Authenticity: Dimensions of Otherness in the World of Jean-Paul Sartre*. Discussing Amié Césaire's coinage of the term "négritude," he explains:

Black identity needed to be grounded in a concrete consciousness of the situation of being a black. Negritude would constitute an ideology of resistance to the hegemonic claim of white cultural superiority. Césaire chose the term negritude as a way of redeeming the derogatory label *nègre*, which was mostly used to refer to African blacks, in contrast to the more assimilated Caribbean blacks who called themselves *noir*. (202)

¹⁵³Acker's revision of this sentence suggests that neither Huck nor Twain respect Jim's terror; for them, his belief in spirits and the reanimated dead are mere superstitions, comical effects of an uneducated underclass grotesquely fashioned by U.S. slavery.

¹⁵⁴Seshardi-Crooks characterizes Whiteness as the lack of a lack, that is, a wholeness from which nothing is missing:

[. . .] Whiteness, by attempting to signify that which is excluded from subject constitution, the more-than-symbolic aspect of the subject — the fact that he/she is not entirely determined by the symbolic or the imaginary — produces anxiety. There is a lack of a lack as it appears in that place that should have remained empty. It is a false door opening not onto a nowhere, but an all-too-concrete wall. This anxiety then produces the uncanny object of race, the arbitrary marks on the body, namely hair, skin, and bone. (38)

¹⁵⁵In Ervin's case, he does imagine black anarchist liberation being accomplished through cooperation with other disenfranchised groups, including women's and LGBT groups: "If [the black revolutionary] movement does become a social movement, it must ultimately unite its forces with similar movements like Gays, Women, radical workers, and others who are in revolt against the system" (7).

¹⁵⁶Beyond the sexual and gender inequalities that I identify in the following paragraph, the Algerian revolution's post-revolutionary period preserves other forms of hierarchy as well. After the revolution, Abhor states that multinational and bioelectronic corporate power remained intact (*Empire* 83). Further, as Jun-nan Chou notes, the CIA takes advantage of Paris' defenselessness to infiltrate and take control of the city (121; *Empire* 198-9).

¹⁵⁷While the sample opens a space in "White Heat" that lets Madonna speak in the place of the other, I would note a further affinity with Acker here. In the same way that Acker's plagiarisms gloss the texts from which she borrows, Madonna's sampling practice glosses the queer bond in *White Heat*. She interprets the film through citation and iteration.

¹⁵⁸In *Huckleberry Finn*, Huck does acknowledge the superfluity of Tom's ruses. He states: "Tom Sawyer had gone and took all that trouble and bother to set a free nigger free" (278).

¹⁵⁹I am tempted to postulate that this postanarchist symbol is the insignia of the Anarchist Black Cross (ABC).

CHAPTER 6 ("<<NEMURI GA MIENAI>>")

¹⁶⁰For a brief analysis of Gibson's "simstim switch," see Chapter 5.

¹⁶¹For a convincing and more extensive analysis of Acker's critique, see Victoria de Zwaan's essay, "Rethinking the Slipstream: Kathy Acker Reads *Neuromancer*," in *Science Fiction Studies* [24.3 (1997): 459-70].

¹⁶²There is at least one exception to this characterization. In an interview with MetalKings.com promoting his 2008 collaboration with Russian rock band Golden Age, Siratori gives straightforward answers to every question. He even makes an ironic joke about his literary output. When asked about the language barrier between him and Golden Age, Siratori replies: "Well, they can always check out my website and read all that I say in understandable English" (n.pag.). Added is the interpolation, "(laughs)" (ibid.). His persona in this interview is so uncharacteristic, it may well be bogus.

¹⁶³In its totality, the description reads:

Kenji Siratori (1975): a Japanese avant-garde artist who is currently bombarding the internet with wave upon wave of highly experimental, uncompromising, aggressive, intense prose. His is a writing style that not only breaks with all traditions, it severs all cords, and can only really be compared to the kind of experimental writing techniques employed by the Surrealists, William Burroughs, and Antonin Artaud. Embracing the image mayhem of the digital age, his relentless prose is nonsensical and extreme, avant-garde and confused, with precedence given to twisted imagery, pace and experimentation over linear

narrative and character development. (n.pag.)

¹⁶⁴I borrow this neologism from the opening paragraph of “Lecien” — an allusion to the Japanese textile corporation (and perhaps the Czech serial killer, Martin Lecián). Siratori writes: “body fluid meridian of cobalt rock death::suck=blood chromosome rapes VIRUS that replicates schizography of the head line” (139). Elsewhere, he refers to the “schizographic exoskeletal chaos soul-machine detonator::” (178).

¹⁶⁵While *Blood Electric*’s premise and character names recall Burroughs’ Nova mythology, Siratori also splices references to the Nova trilogy into his book. For example, he makes a passing reference to the Nova Police: “/misery of nova heat::/” (20). Elsewhere, activating *Naked Lunch*, he refers to “interzone” and “black meat” (48; 56). This minimalist incorporation of another writer’s material succinctly characterizes the microscopic scale of his cut-up enterprise.

¹⁶⁶From what I can determine, the “gene war” militarizes genetic information and engineering. It is not a conflict *over* genes, as though Sato Corp and ADAM would be battling for the rights to genetic material, but a conflict that deploys genetic diseases and aberrations in the place of traditional weapons. Rather than through exposition, Siratori hints at this possibility through the texture of his cut-up experiments:

Planetary CODA attack//mutant program of artificial assassination/murder of hybrid gene=TV::crucified memory losses of zero gravity clone boys of space nature=your war angel of the machine conducts artificial insemination::VTR war::her chromosome of crime fecundates [ice nebulae fecal black] copper blood//it fecundates a digital vamp//it is the crucified memory of figures in the future of the love reptiles::// machinative angels of cold-blooded disease animals//Gene war in Placenta World/ (65)

Such descriptions foreground the biopolitical. Blending references to genetics and warfare, “murder of hybrid gene,” “angel of the machine conduct[ing] artificial insemination,” and “chromosome of crime” suggest that Sato Corps’ strategy implements genetic material in order to mutate or destroy its enemies.

¹⁶⁷Indeed, these phraselets reoccur in all of the ADAM novels, that is, all the novels that concern “gene war,” including (*debug.*), *Gimmick.*, and *Headcode*. As far as I know, Siratori’s literary output worked exclusively in this mode until he began releasing his 2013 “graphic novels” — e.g., *Rabbit Engine*, *Pubic Poisoning Hair Propaganda*, *Gestaltzerfall* — which generate cut-ups from a new, more pornographic nomenclature.

¹⁶⁸This is a liberal paraphrase of Roads’ description: “Microsonic techniques dissolve the rigid bricks of music architecture — the notes — into a more fluid and supple medium. Sounds may coalesce, evaporate, or mutate into other sounds” (*vii*).

¹⁶⁹One might imagine that a “close reading” of Siratori’s texts would be more faithfully

represented in an infographic than an essay — a visualization of trends and anomalies that “designs” the text’s raw information.

¹⁷⁰When asked to define his terms, Siratori replies thus: “ ‘industrial human body emulator’ — it functions as a literary hacker in our genetic network . . . ‘genomewarable’ — the hyperlinking genetic information — the genetic engineering liquidity of hardweb . . . ‘the invasion of the gene code’ — so language cells in in gene dub are produced by the genetic ‘struggle=hardweb’” (Wild n.pag.).

¹⁷¹Following Deleuze, Perez connects the body without organs to Antonin Artaud, one of Siratori’s stated influences. While Siratori identifies his work with Artaud and Burroughs on his blog, he acknowledges Artaud’s influence in other places. In his *3:AM* interview, he states that “certainly Antonin Artaud exerted an important influence on my hardweb — Artaud produced PDA of a nerve cell — there is different vital possibility that was hypercontrolled by the language here because the creature intensity of hardweb is increased to our atrocious genedub” (Marshall n.pag.). In an interview with Robert Lort, he states: “The Japanese chaos makes my writing the gene-dub to the composition of Antonin Artaud and William Burroughs” (Lort 287).

¹⁷²Schlitz’s claim about Siratori’s diction is not quite earned. Though his essay does give an example of Siratori’s “excessive use of hyperbolic language,” he never actually examines instances of hyperbole — or “strong (Freudian or violent) connotations” — in it. Siratori’s texts are marked by word choices that both denote and imply sexual and violent actions, but I do not see evidence of hyperbole. Schlitz’s claim that Siratori uses hyperbole “excessively” is a bit of hyperbole itself.

¹⁷³Strick’s “set of grammatical rules” are as follows:

- (1) A, B, C, etc. are words;
- (2) I, II, III, etc. are connectors;
- (3) AB, CDE, FGHI, etc. are phrases;
- (4) do: write 1 phrase, write 1 connector | this is a chunk;
- (5) do: write N chunks;
- (6) do insert line break | this is a paragraph;
- (7) do: write N paragraphs;
- (8) add Y and Z; | Y and Z are words;
- (9) add YZ | YZ is a phrase.

¹⁷⁴For examples of glitch music, see Oval’s *Systemisch* (1994) and *Ovalprocess* (2000).

¹⁷⁵Perez also states: “The an(archist’s) desire is not circular, referential desire, but a linear desire” (65). “[. . .] an(archy) manifests itself at the linear level. [. . .] The circle, however, is a closed geometrical figure, and therefore a symbol (and sometimes even an instrument) of oppression and repression: of boundaries and limits, and of referentiality” (ibid.).

¹⁷⁶Siratori is a fan of Otto Von Schirach. On Amazon.com, he posted a review on July 29, 2006,

of Schirach's *Maxipad Detention* (2006) titled "Otto Von Schirach's digital vamp." His review, same as his others on Amazon (40 at the moment!), is written in the "genedub" style of the ADAM novels. It reads:

Otto Von Schirach's acidHUMANIX infectious disease archive of the biocapturism nerve cells to the body encoder of the ultra machinary tragedy-ROM creature system that was debugged the technojunkies' nightmare-script of a clone boy reptilian HUB. Maxipad Detention turns on the feeling replicant living body junk of Otto Von Schirach's digital vamp cold-blooded disease animals to the insanity medium of the hyperreal HIV scanners DNA channel of the corpse city ill-treatment. Otto Von Schirach's brain universe of the hybrid corpse mechanism gene-dub of a chemical anthropoid to the terror abolition world-codemaniacs that was processed the data mutant of the drug fetus of the trash sense guerrilla.

The review ends with a signature: "- Kenji Siratori, author of *Blood Electric*." This signature, coincidentally, was my introduction to Siratori's work.

¹⁷⁷I have documented more than 50 occurrences of this phraselet in *Blood Electric*. However, I estimate that its occurrences are closer to 100. Furthermore, Siratori recycles this phraselet in the other ADAM novels as well.

While a major phraselet, "hunting for the grotesque" is unique among the others due not only to its activation on the book's back cover, but also due to its sparser distribution. Unlike major phraselets such as "internal organ consciousness," "sickly period," and "cold-blooded disease animals," which occur with greater frequency and intensity, "hunting for the grotesque" has fewer page-after-page occurrences and multiple occurrences-per-page. This is not to say that it avoids areas of dense patterning. (The phraselet seems to have epicenters in "biocapture" [chapter 4] and "hardcore" [chapter 13], where the phraselets' occurrences proliferate and perhaps spread outward through the book.) I only mean that its repetitions involve a more economical distribution across the text. In this way, its closest kin would be the phraselet "cobalt rock death."

¹⁷⁸*Blood Electric*'s largest chapter is "MONKEY/gene-dub," which is 33 pages. "Coda" is 31. Most of the chapters, by comparison, are in the single digit range.

In "the colony," the closing lines read "searching for the grotesque skulls of Sato Corporation napalm victims::heresy/" (84). Finally, in "hardcore," they read: "searching for the grotesque skulls of Sato Corporation napalm victims::sin-tainted slit ectoplasm spot::anus sutured to silver deathshad rising of a sodom 666 virus" (120).

¹⁷⁹This idea is inspired by Strick's reading of Siratori's novella *vital_error*. In "Living Through Our Errors," he interprets the elision of the letter "l" from the phraselet "FUCKNAMLOAD" (to read "FUCKNAMOAD") as evidence of Siratori showing his hand, putting into question the possibility that his "digital cut-ups" are computer generated: "Did Siratori type the whole thing by hand after all? Did the writing program make a mistake — however unlikely — in generating the paragraphs, sentences, and words? Or did some author manually press the backspace button

just one time, thereby creating an error that calls the whole system into question?" (n.pag.).

¹⁸⁰Thank you to Mari Inami Porter for her translations of this difficult, poetic phrase. A Russian website translated it "sleep in either eye."

¹⁸¹This title is taken from a chapter title in *Blood Electric*. "NDRO" is the word "android" with the first and last two letters deleted.

¹⁸²Though he does not acknowledge the misprison perpetuated by other critics, Oscar Strik observes the precise meaning of "evocation." For him, the "coming to consciousness of an artificial intelligence" is an "effect," a "mark [left] on the idiom of reviewers," rather than a concrete element of narrative (n.pag.).

¹⁸³In "Living Through Our Errors," Strik mistakenly ascribes the passage to Michael Schlitz (n.pag). On the *Image [&] Narrative* webpage, Schlitz's article begins with the synopsis from *Blood Electric*'s back cover, but does not clearly demarcate where the synopsis ends and Schlitz's article begins. Strik, then, perhaps, believes that the paragraph beginning "Vividly evoking the coming to consciousness . . ." is Schlitz's introductory paragraph, wherein he introduces his audience to the book under examination. I would emphasize, however, that Strik's "error" only further complicates the questions of authorship surrounding that portion of *Blood Electric*'s synopsis.

To complicate matters further, Google Books includes a synopsis that omits the reference to "the coming to consciousness of an artificial intelligence" altogether. It reads: "A fatal collusion of drag embryos and DNA angels in Cadaver City ignites the circuitry of the ADAM Doll . . . dogs of zero waging gene war in Placenta World, chaos unleashed by the digital vampires of Sato Corporation, nano-junk virus pandemic. Blood Electric [sic] is a devastating loop of language from the Tokyo avant-grade, with stylistic experimentation akin to Artaud or Burroughs, but embracing the image mayhem of the internet / multimedia / digital age. Kenji Siratori comes from within the history of radical literature, but his youth, cultural context, and understanding of the futurity of digital technologies positions him as the herald of a new literary dawn." (http://books.google.com/books/about/Blood_Electric.html?id=PhEaAQAAIAAJ)

¹⁸⁴In other words, Wenaus registers the word "evokes": "Siratori's *Blood Electric* evokes 'the coming to consciousness of an artificial intelligence' via 'a devastating loop of language'" (29).

¹⁸⁵Wenaus concludes: "I think this is perhaps the *point* behind Siratori's excess; by enacting the cyberpunk aesthetic formally through cut-up asemic writing that evokes programming, he is revealing a systematic logic that asks readers to recognize that there is a code behind the interfaces of digital technology. That so many of us respond to code in a way similar to how we may respond to Siratori's writing — that of illiterate bafflement — reveals that this kind of readership in the 21st century needs to move beyond hyperconsumerism towards a kind of intense participation, if not hyperparticipation, with both the arts and digital technology" (45).

¹⁸⁶Siratori's adapts these press releases for himself. On officialkenjisiratori.blogspot.jp, Siratori

alters Barber's "relentless, murderous prose-drive" to read "relentless prose."

¹⁸⁷Other Siratori works include these narrative frames that control hermeneutic approaches to his cut-up experiments, but such olive branches are rare in his oeuvre. *Gimmick*: (2004) offers a brief synopsis, "Mutation-love in 2014," followed by a Siratoriesque writing sample; *Smart-d* (2004) reads "VISIONARY BIZARRE MACHINES!!!", also followed by a Siratoriesque writing sample; and *Human_Worms* (2004) reads "EXTREME BIO-CYBERPUNK HORROR," followed by a writing sample. While these three works belong to (what I call) the ADAM series, that is, a series that processes the same lexicon and deploys approximate experiments, and were published in 2004, they also share in common the same self-publishing company, iUniverse.

These synopses offer two suggestions. First, since all four books (including *Blood Electric*) are cut from the same fabric, the synoptic frames suggest that Siratori does not only understand each new book to be different, but he wants each book to be understood in a particular way. For Siratori, they do not seem to be a "semantically void literary space," as Wenaus argues, even if their expressive range is limited.

Second, since Siratori would have been responsible for the front and back covers of his iUniverse publications, I assume he wrote and authorized the frames. Perhaps, then, *Blood Electric*'s synopsis is Siratori's invention, not Williamson's.

¹⁸⁸Since 2013 (when I was researching Creation Books), the *Creation Books* website has changed, apparently in response to *Creation Books Fraud*. It now features "a brief business history of Creation Books" that attempts to use "certified corporate accounts, banking records, sales and distribution records, contractual documents, email records, and first-hand testimony" to exculpate Williamson's business practices. Additionally, it includes a lengthy interview with Williamson, in which he addresses the accusations of unpaid royalties.

¹⁸⁹Readers appropriate other bits of information from the press releases as well. For example, in "The Nude Brain: An Interview with Kenji Siratori," Richard Marshall associates Siratori's writing with both *Tetsuo* ("Your writing is extreme. [. . .] It reminds me of 'Tetsuo.'") as well as the 1995 Tokyo subway sarin attack ("Is your book a response to this [9/11, the Sarin gas attacks in Toyko, or conflict in Israel]?" (Though his observations are more systematic and productive than Marshall's, I would note that Wenaus also examines the relation to *Tetsuo* [32].)

Evidence exists that Siratori resists these associations. Just as he revised "murderous" and "drive" from Barber's "relentless, murderous prose-drive," he also effaces "sarin" from descriptions of himself. At the end of the blog *the questionnaire*, where Siratori includes information about his upcoming albums with dark industrial/ambient bands Nordvargr and Beyond Sensory Experience, he edits "With unparalleled stylistic terrorism fully embracing the image mayhem of the internet/multimedia/digital age, Kenji Siratori unleashes his first literary Sarin attack" to simply read "With unparalleled stylistic terrorism, he unleashes his literary attack."

Schlitz and Wenaus have both critiqued the press releases' "Japonism." While Schlitz faults Jack Hunter's blurb as "a typical example of flawed contemporary Japonism" (n.pag.), Wenaus states: "While Siratori is certainly Japanese by nationality, the emphasis on the Japaneseness expressed by so many of his reviewers in the evaluation of his work may prove a

litigious point of discussion” (31). Siratori’s revisions lend credibility to these critiques. Moreover, for my purposes, they suggest that a conspiracy exists at the level of *Blood Electric*’s commercial apparatuses that endeavor to significantly manage and manipulate how the narrative is framed, and that this conspiracy misrepresents Siratori’s literal aims.

¹⁹⁰Elsewhere in his essay, Wenaus calls such “hyperparticipation” by the name “creative consumption” (41). It is worth noting that Acker is a model for this approach. Her “plagiarized” cut-ups, since they produce literary works by critically engaging with texts that otherwise would be read without further reflection, can be said to “creatively consume” those sources.

¹⁹¹According to its online mission statement, the GLP aims to “disentangle science from ideology” and “promote public awareness of genetics, biotechnology, and science literacy.” From what I can tell, it is a response to the counterglobalization movement’s critiques of GMOs and the pharmaceutical industry.

¹⁹²In *Genedub*, the front matter reads: “BIZARRE FANTASY FOR 21ST CENTURY.” In *Hack_*: “OUT OF BINARY.”

All three books use the same front matter formatting. Appearing after the title page (recto) and colophon (verso), the epigraph-like phrase (recto) is followed by a blank verso page. The recto page facing this blank page is the first page of the novel. Unlike *Blood Electric*, *Genedub* and *Hack_* paginate the front matter. But, while *Blood Electric* omits explicit pagination, page numbers are implied: the book begins on page 5, indicating that the title was page 1, colophon page 2, notification page 3, and blank verso page 4. These formatting consistencies across three different publishers suggests that Siratori controls his typesetting and typesets according to aesthetic criteria.

Additionally, I would note that confusion muddles the claim that *Hack_* is *Blood Electric*’s sequel. In 2005, Creation Books published the sequel under the title *ACIDHuman Project*. Apparently, in 2011, Minerva reprinted *ACIDHuman* under the title *Hack_*. On Amazon.com, the product details page reads: “*Acidhuman Project* is the follow-up to Siratori’s unique cyberpunk classic *Blood Electric*, which was acclaimed by David Bowie, among others.” Similarly, *Hack_*’s product details page reads: “‘*Hack_*’ is the follow-up to Kenji Siratori’s unique cyberpunk classic *Blood Electric*, which was acclaimed by Dennis Cooper, David Bowie, among others. With original abstract paintings by Kenji Siratori.” The problem is that I have never been able to obtain a copy of *ACIDHuman Project*, probably due to its scarcity. Ideally, I would like to compare these two texts and confirm that they are “identical.”

Muddling matters further, *Mind Virus* (2008), published by Monstaar Media, uses a similar description on the back cover. (“*Mind Virus* is the follow-up to Siratori’s unique cyberpunk classic *Blood Electric*, which was acclaimed by David Bowie, among others.”).

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