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NewPATRIARCHIES: A TURBULENCE OF SOURCE AND SUBJECT

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

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Director: Matt King, Chair, Sculpture + Extended Media

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ABSTRACT

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By Stephen Blake Fuller, MFA

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2015

Major Director: Matt King, Chair of Sculpture and Extended Media

Experiencing a turbulence of source and subject in the variable inversions and supports of one source to another--the wreck of the *U-352*, Carpeaux's *Ugolino and his Sons*, a movie poster for J.A. Bayona's *The Impossible*, and Cassiopeia mythology--these four sources as sons, in sacrifice to and surviving by way of "daddy" documentation, are here refigured to reenact and critique the patriarchally recreational, monumental, cinematic, and mythological infrastructures supporting the sources of this work and thereby serving to critique the newer patriarchies to which these sources and their subjectifications here seek to cross consumptively dead end. Following three public installations, and in service to a final publication, this text hereby functions as the syntactically masturbatory mythologizing of this work.

KAPITÄN.

The notion of murder often brings to mind the notion of sea and sailors; a wave surging radially from an undersea megathrust earthquake; a surge into 14 countries bordering the Indian ocean.

It is December 26, 2004 and the flood is a flood of 100 foot waves. The death toll at 230,000.

Spine and brothered cock in marble, carved grouping of cannibal daddy and sons, travels from Rome to Paris, gaining suckling sculptor and Prix de Rome recipient, Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux, in his last year, a second-class medal, international notoriety, and the favour of the Imperial family. Another wave surges out circa 1860 and a master is born.

Napoleonic privilege winner, drama on century-long coattails of 18th Century German cultural myth, carved and polished marble, a formal image of historied execution and immured erasure, three subsequent generations of males, Italian Naval Commander Count Ugolino Della Gherardesca with sons and grandsons, naturally end up, by way of sprawling whitewashed provenance, in New York City.

Success in The Metropolitan Museum of Art's 2014 retrospective, The Passions of Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux, and a 19th Century success by way of its appeal to a popular and complex cultural myth, this marble, sadomasochistic in its polish of patriarchal annihilation, furthermore conceals the abjection of sons impotently offering themselves for the consumption and thereby regained potency of the father, a subject sadomasochistic in itself. And, in its dramatic displacement of this subject, this filth, this execution undead, erotically proposes something *new* but no different from the old, self-consumptively inverting in

and out of itself, always pleurably turbulent in its figuring of an impossibly new subject starving on plinth--a new patriarchy.

A patriarchy particularly new, mythologically envious enough to flood kingdoms, deific in its counter-positioning to Cassiopeia, and credited just as much with fecundity as it is with abuse. This fecundity, so virile, posturing as one embarrassingly gendered as any other, naturally confuses everything with itself.

Any opposition, declaratively new but knowing this "new" to fundamentally be that of patriarchal motive, agrees to the confusion as means to an end, and the fecundity, facing this alternative to itself, anything anti-patriarchal, any other gendered structure, any other creative system, structured after what it strives to replace, active in some turnover, makes patriarchy of this conflicted opposition and of this turbulence

The new figure, confused but empowered, takes up this patriarchal order, from the grave of one shitty daddy into the porous soles of itself. By way of wrestling to be actor in any turnover at all, the opposition, the matriarch, the queen, the cocksucker, becomes a new daddy, regardless of form, genitally regardless, and thereby becomes forever as responsibly abusive as the old.

Imagine Cassiopeia. Proud matriarch Queen Cassiopeia, who, bragging of her daughter, excites a jealous sea and thereby sacrifices her daughter Andromeda in an effort to unflood her kingdom. The cross consumption, the power, the pride, the identity as actor, reveals itself as everything upsetting to the order and just as well everything of its competitive other.

Threatening a patriarch of the sea, blue baffled in its capacity to feel this threat, she becomes a patriarch herself, post-genital, a contender and figure of power obligated to invert in and out of her offspring, abusive

in the name of nationality, and, thereby ultimately taking the place of her offspring as any patriarch figuratively must. Her daughter, roped up for vanity, having slipped from her chains intertidal, this queen, postured as some new patriarch by this *new* logic, ends enthroned in the stars, inverting around a pole, turning with the skies, turning with the tides, as a monument to patriarchal inversion, against and with the sea, as a captain constellated

NO EWAN.

Launching from port in Flensburg, Germany in 1941, thirty-two year old Kapitanleutnant Hellmut Rathke sets his new vessel, 500 exceptionally dark tons of war, the U-352, with a naval compliment of 46 on board, on a three week course to the waters off the coast of North Carolina.

Arriving May 2nd, failing to sink a single vessel for the week spent in these waters, and crash diving several times to elude patrol planes, Rathke, spotting a coast guard cutter and desperate for consequence, fires a torpedo. At the site of this torpedo misfired, the cutter drops a constellation of depth charges and, witnessing a bubbling oil slick, drops one final round. The vessel is dead.

Angled and emerging, up from an Atlantic horizon, against a rain of fire, the U-352, premature in its compromise, spits 33 boys, with lungs and life vests, from its conning tower. Tumbling wet and precise, buoyant under discipline continued and severe, readied to live captive and lip-locked, these sons of Germany witness the final descent of a setting yet to be settled.

Sons concealed and exhausted at the expense of one daddy drowning another, old and new interdependent, a daddy present with or without a boat, this vessel, active or drowned, figures a rise and fall, a turgidity and drain contingent upon the displacement and absorption of sweat and sea water. Full and resting, a war grave: monumental to the sadomasochism of its tour and function, a monument to violence incomplete, a container, and thereby a cinematic prism, much like any aquarium composed. This set, seated in sand, becomes accessible strictly by membranes and glass, silicone and aluminum, virile and imaginatively threatened skill sets, mildewed neoprene and fin rot, sea hunters directing anchored and dragline drawings in space, rental chemicotheologies in conflict.

To this composition requiring one goes pro and gets wet to tell tall tales, captains and divers refigure this rise and fall, continue this descent to make fetish of a grave, to make fetish of audacity, to make fetish of the muscles mustered to orchestrate defeat and turnover, to relive the swell and sink, but also always to return, to invert and ascend again, drying off and thereby memorializing the dissatisfaction of an open and crumbling grave uncaptured.

Again, imagine *Cassiopeia*, *Cassiopeia Andromeda*, hemisessile photosynthetic jellyfish, an animal still and inverse, a behaviorally inverted invertebrate, is a hungry hydrostatic pump. Prey and toxicity in the turbulence of a pulsing bell, this jelly lies on its back. It knows its place. It knows its mythological namesake. Disintegrating to die, shrinking to starve, defensive and mucosal, its livelihood and nematocystic kiss function as turbulently as that which has and always will be constellative by design.

Amazon solipsists tumbling clockwise, heroic GoPro crotched melodramatists, the divers, models, movers, and jelly, of variable perspectives, figure failed matriarchy, figure the adoption of patriarchal structures, figure monuments to this confusion, and, setting these documents and themselves peripheral to but of the

cinematic, divisible but interdependent, one devouring the other, these constellators and sons, all irresponsibly tool the scene and its behind--structures, not of, but *as* the patriarch. A subject dead or displaced, around and to which Captain Daddy, before he himself expires, as pain or pleasure to offspring or brothered others, is and always will be strictly a model, the patriarch survives no more than as the Hocquenghemian ogre and the daddy as no more than slave to this corpse.

UNDRESSSTORMSTRESS.

The cassiopeia nematocyst, defensive and predatory, means little to man skin except for where his skin bag runs thinner than the rest. There there may be a sting, a rash, a mounting irritation on eyelids, lips, and glans, for this nematocystic discharge is and always has been consumptive and erotic. When I tell him to lay their bells on his belly, to constellate their arms in the form of their namesake constellation, to take me and let me take them, to irritate their membranes, to agitate his and sting mine, hesitant and swell, my discharge inspires theirs, nematocystic mucous, pools of their cells stunning and consuming mine, to dry up anyways, to dry on his belly, to dead end pleasure, salt crystals in a rag.

It is 2012 and J.A. Bayona has released *The Impossible*. Whitewashed tsunami drama based on the true survival story of Maria Belon and her family in the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami--one family's incredible tale, based on a true story; separated by disaster, driven by hope. As promotional material for this movie, one of three available movie posters for the film present a composition momentous: a father, Ewan McGregor, having been separated from his sons by the deluge, the weight of water, the violence of water having thrown him and his family apart, finally finds them, his sons, behind the wave of disaster, before a setting sun. Buttressing directorial success for Bayona and Academy Award, Golden Globe, and a Screen

Actors Guild Award nomination, this poster is here an inkjet monument to the sadomasochism of survival, cinematic sadomasochism in print, restaging the traumatic to restage and reinstate the pleasurable necessity of imaging survival. Mommy on the shoulders of a boy playing daddy for some days, the horror and glamour of muddy sea, filmic mommy waterlogged, images all, all reinflicting and whitewashing this disaster as tothead trauma, privileging tourism and stylizing terror; all printed thresholds of new patriarchal allure.

Maria says if something happens to anyone watching the movie, if emotions are felt when you see anything, something you hear, and its not something you've been through, yet you feel it, then its because of something inside you. If you get emotional with a big wave coming and struggling for life and you've never been there, it is because you recognize that in some way you already have. You have been there sometime, sometime in the wake of a wave, or you will be, and this is what life is about--one wave after another wave and you struggling to go on. Maria gives a beautiful metaphor. If you survive you can tell the story; you can go on. If you don't, then that is it. Thanks, Maria.

Maria lets us know that this is for those that survived and for those that didn't, but we know it is ours too. We know the necessity of this retelling is doubtful, therapeutic and self-flattering at the expense of violent reenactment. Wetness evincing pornography, the shifted subjectivity is the subject. Maria is a New Patriarch.

This cliché of social necessity, by way of its appeal, proves necessity unnecessary, proves the restaging to be, in its appeal to strapped, rigged, and gaffered empathies, a story and cinematic violence, a flood of lens, light, and sensor, a hydrated bed, an effort of fecundity, an effort to transfix the transfixable, to perpetuate the image of grief and drowning, to take ticket purchasers to a threshold of feeling, to poke fertile eyes, to

breed the image, to bring distributable monuments to tensions so appealing, so terrifyingly pleasurable, so as to posture as alternative, as new.

Imagine late 18th century German aesthetic movements. Think of a storm, a rupture of rationalism, an adolescent effort, sturm und drang, extremity from constraint, post-enlightenment, particular subjectivity from the failures of universality, a failed universe, a cultural myth buttressing Ugolino and sons, and you'll find that where we are at, this image fetish, this white boy boner for representation and constellators with cameras, the lens, stricture of light, focused and filed, photoactive rationale, a cable as constellation, all proving themselves as patriarchal orifice, faced with the edit, now form little more than the refiguring of this same storm.

All are competitively present, stagnant, exhausted, and easy, all new and nothing new, restaging and edits lock the lens in a tower, one composition always consuming another, as an opening derivative, self-consumptive, and starving-- a glassy mucosal audacity outside but of the brutal.

The glare of lost perspective and the edit, making fetish of image fetisization, a damaged context, assumably new, assumably irresponsible, again performs some externality performatively meaningless to the skins of man and again reminds us the editor is a good boy, but mostly makes for a better father. We put the lens cap back on. The wave recedes and the storm dissipates.

NewPATRIARCHIES

The printed subject is murder. The forced serif, pubescent text layout, capillary cinema, the melodrama of print, paper pressed and responsibly bound, the still, an inkjet syntax, all side effects of this: a premeditation.

On May 9 1942, the German submarine, U-352, facing depth charges, was sunk miles off the coast of North Carolina. Now, as of 2015,, forms outfitted with lights and cameras have been transported to the site of this wreck and submerged down networks of buoys and rigging to rest within the gaping conning tower of this war grave. Documenting this action, these structures were shortly thereafter salvaged, hoisted up and away from the wreck containing the water and images they took on. Reworked and reinforced as frames of their documentary images, these structures were inverted to discharge their seawater out onto male models for a second event, a restaging of J.A. Bayona's tsunami drama movie poster. This secondhand wave, a post-productive puddle, nematocystic and seminal additives, was then recollected. These same structures reinstalled for a third time were inverted to revert and angled as if relogged in the conning tower. Restaging and reframing the composition documented from first installations this time in a wave pool, this dioramic monument to the sadomasochism of this work, an exclusive representation and proof, was again finally documented, these documents rmbded in the work and in this text, and in return, this text embedded in the work, hemming a myth.

In preparing a captain and technical divers, in super-soaking sissies, in studying oceanic hydrophysics, in aquarium maintenance, in rigging and hardware, in fluorescence and credit, there is naturally immense and inevitable friction. In shipwrecks, marbles, movie posters, and myth, sources as sons in sacrifice to and surviving by way of "daddy" documentation, here represented to figure full-scale reenactments and guiltily

pleasurable critiques of patriarchally recreational, monumental, cinematic, and mythological infrastructures supporting these sources, there is again this friction, and a turbulence of source and subject in the variable inversions and supports of each literal source to the other-- new self-consumptive patriarchal agreements negotiating with the unnecessarily assumed machismo of the skill sets required to buttress and, by their conflation, literally illustrate *this* new patriarchy.

Finally imagine cultural myth. Imagine the virile image. Imagine New Patriarchies as storm and stress--as cultural myth. Imagine an image only as good as the sum of those peripheral to or sourcing it, a libidinal image economy. Imagine an image valued strictly according to its fecundity. Imagine the myth of imaging systems, virility within which floats myth and mythologist, a mythologist to turbulence, a new patriarch. Imagine this text as objectification of this myth. Imagine the myth of an effort impossibly inspired to possibly fetishize sources of guilty pleasure, the myth of critique by way of reenactment, the myth of patriarchal reform, the myth of appropriate appeal, the myth of cleanliness and turbulence, the myth of criticism, this myth as cinematic sadomasochistic monument, and the myth of sources and subjectivity.

Imagine you're alone.