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New York ----- THE AGE OF OIL
Duncan Smith

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To David Ebony and Peter Zabelskis
for their loyalty and support

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A version of *"Tell Me Why"* appeared in *Art & Text*, No. 20, February–April 1986.

An Interpretation of Elvis's Car-Giving

Elvis Aaron Presley's fantasy of physical contact with his mother, Gladys Love Smith, and his dead twin brother, Jesse Garon, forced him to keep these words muffled and secret inside himself. Their uncanny return took the shape of giving away Cadillacs.

Right away the letters in *Gladys* haunt *Graceland*: both names contain g's, l's, a's, and d's. Garon was privileged with a letter Elvis Aaron lacked, the crucial *g* that primordially differentiated Elvis's middle name Aaron from the dead twin Garon. This *g* would then return later in Elvis's life. His last girlfriend, Ginger Alden, had all the letters that Gladys and Graceland had in common.

Elvis's spontaneous gifts of car-giving sprang in part from the hypogrammatic possibilities of *Garon*. *G* and *c* are similar sounds, i.e. velar stops. (The *c/k* sound is voiceless while the *g* is voiced. The velum, the area near the tonsils, is raised so as to prevent air from entering the nasal cavity, occluding the oral cavity.) Now let us spell Garon's name: *Caron*. The *on* is a paronomasia with *own*. The buried figure in *Garon* now yields: *Car own*. Elvis wanted others to *own* a *car*. The lucky recipients of his generous car-giving could then say, "I own a car." *Garon* is the hypogram or buried signature underneath "*owning a car*."

Elvis's first car owes its existence to an account of his mother's. When Gladys Presley was working in a hospital in Memphis, she noticed a "fine lady" drive up to her place of employ in a Cadillac. This very hospital with its doctors and sophisticated medical technology could have relieved her of the death of Jesse Garon. When Elvis received a \$5,000 bonus from Colonel Parker (at the time the Colonel bought

Elvis from Sun Records), Elvis purchased a Cadillac. This was similar to the one his mother had related to him when that “fine lady” made her hospital visit, the same kind of hospital visit that could have saved Garon’s life. With the crucial gift of a Cadillac to his mother, the car, the *one car*, the *car* now *owned*, echoes the name Garon whose bereavement would last all the Presleys’ lives.

Furthermore *Cadillac* becomes a virtual rebus of events in Elvis’s life. Break the word up into its syllables and the following figures or words emerge: *cad*, *ill*, *lac*.

With *cad* one is first struck by the association with a cad, a bad boy, a jilter. The radical innocence of a dead infant perpetually stipulated that the *evils* of *Elvis* would prove him a *cad*, a bad boy. Elvis would henceforth be compared with Jesse, and an essential part of this doubling or specularization is that good is contrasted with bad, good contrasted with *Evils*. *Cad* rhymes with bad and gad. The Cadillac lets one gad about town, possibly letting one act like a cad, a bad boy. Elvis loved to gad about town in a Cadillac.

Ill in *Cadillac* can refract into a number of other words that all form an essential part of Elvis’s life: *I’ll*, *will*, or just *ill*. Furthermore the *lac* at the end of *Cadillac* can glide into *lack* or without the *l*, *ac(t)*. Bearing in mind the *cad*, *bad* and *gad* combinations and their possible rearrangement with *I’ll*, *will* or *ill* and *lack* or *act*, we obtain the following permutations: *cad will act*, *bad will act*, *gad will act*; *cad I’ll act*, *bad I’ll act*, *gad I’ll act*; *cad ill act*, *bad ill act*, *gad ill act*; *cad I’ll lack*, *bad I’ll lack*, *gad I’ll lack*; *cad will lack*, *bad will lack*; *gad will lack*, etc.

With *bad I’ll lack* the permutation implies that Elvis/evils will not be bad, but good. *Cad*, *bad*, *gad* all connote something negative, unpleasurable, immoral. Compared with what is good, with what is not evil, good or God can now substitute for *cad/bad/gad* by virtue of their common phonetic traits as well as their semantic contrariness. *Bad I’ll lack* thus justifies *good I’ll act*, *God I’ll act*, *good will act*, *God will act*. A Cadillac is a good, a gift of God’s, a gift of the good boy. Yet because *good* and *bad* oscillate so quickly and simultaneously here, *good*

will lack or *God will lack* throws the permutation again into the negative cad/bad/gad spectrum.

Cadillac ultimately signified for Elvis the *g* that Aaron lacked, the *g* in Garon, Graceland, Gladys, Ginger, guitar, etc. A *Gadillac* was a gift to his mother, a gift from a good God. Thereby the missing *g* in Aaron would be restored and *Gladys* would then be *glad* with a *lad* who had died, the lad who always already *dies* in *Glad-dys*. The *gla* at the beginning of *Gladys* ultimately is an echo of *car*, i.e. an anagrammatic cryptophor of *car* with its velar stop *c/g*, common vowel *a/a*, and liquid *l/r*: *gla/car*. *Gladys* will be *glad* over a *car*, the *car* she now *owns*, the *one car* supplementing her lack of *Garon* who also is a near anagram of *Gladys* (*Garon*), according to the substitutions mentioned above. The *car* was described as pink, baby pink, as pink as a reborn baby *Garon*, resurrected in the form of a *Cadillac*, for now she no longer lacks a *cad*, the son who jilted her of the joys of motherhood.

This *car* was made possible by Colonel Parker's deal with RCA, Elvis's new record company. *Car* and *RCA* are anagrams. The *car/Cadillac* was also the *RCA/Cadillac* that would be able to buy his mother gifts that filled the lack of *Garon*. *RCA one* or *RCA own* meant that Elvis was *one* of *RCA's* artists or was *won* (as homonym) by *RCA*, even *owned* by *RCA*. Now *owned* by *RCA*, or *owning* a *car*, a *Cadillac*, makes possible *Gladys's* demand to be relieved from the poverty that killed *Garon*, the "ill" *Garon*. *Garon's* tragic "illness," his being killed by it, is not forgotten everytime Elvis or *Gladys* uttered the *ill* in *Cadillac*, or nearly heard *kill* echo from its *c*: *K(ad)ill(ac)*. How could a *Cadillac* *kill* an *ill* baby when *Gladys* saw that "fine lady" drive to the hospital in one? Only the *lack* of a *Cadillac* would account for the lack of a healthy baby.

The *ill* in *Cadillac* made Elvis *ill* too, just as *Jesse Garon* had been *ill* before he died. *Ill* on *pills* that could *kill*—prescribed by Dr. *George N.*, a *Greek* who had the crucial *g-vowel-liquid* combination as *Gladys* and *Garon* did—brought Elvis closer to the time when his *will* would be written, closer to the *hills* in *Forest Hills Cemetery* to

which Cadillac hearses had taken his mother. Priscilla or their daughter *Lisa/Ilse* Marie were close to the husband and father who could not stop his illness of drug consumption that thwarted his exuberance, his *lives*, and eventually killed (*via* polypharmacopia) that vitality embedded in his name.

Memoirs of an Occupation

When I was very young I was fascinated with mollusks. These creatures are mostly of the sea, with the exception of land snails and slugs or the freshwater species. My locale, the Pacific Northwest, is advantageous for growth of the land snail or slug, since they thrive in zones of heavy rainfall.

On my walks home from grade school I would usually see hundreds of slugs along garden pathways. Leopard slugs, banana slugs or brown-orange ones abounded. One garden had steps of roughly-chiseled rock; through their crevices grew the grass, bracken and moss these slow moving things would eat. You frequently had to avoid them and step with agility over their slippery bodies. There were always times when you would slip and have the smeared remains of a slug down your thigh. During these hours after school I would stop and stare in admiration of their antennae and pulsating bodies, the slick, moist coats usually of green. Their curiously shaped bodies were non-legged, save for only one foot which was ponderously aligned to the ground. They never appeared equipped to jump, fly, hop or twirl like other animals. Their deliberation attracted me greatly. An exquisite sensitivity to the effects of touch and light made me think them too delicate and vulnerable to the cruelties of the outside world.

Their profusion is great in the moist forests of Oregon, despite all the kids who enjoyed snipping their eyes out or cutting their bodies in half or pouring the proverbial salt on their never-dry backs. I regarded them as exotic and originally from the sea, now that they had invaded these glens rich in plant life. Portland, often overcast, allowed them much rest from the immoderate blazing of the sun, something they would always hate. When rains ended and sun shone, orange slugs dried to black and their slimy trails turned irides-

cent. These trails revealed their painful road to doom: a dry, sun-baked sidewalk.

Slugs appeared more plentiful and less attractive than snails. Slugs were considered by everyone to be too numerous, and their relative ugliness didn't remedy the low opinion. Whereas snails captured one's interest more. They had shells, of varying size and color, and their flesh was not so startlingly hued as their shell-less counterparts.

One rainy day, in my many walks through a wooded neighborhood, I discovered a most beautiful snail. The shell had orange and yellow stripes against a brown and purple background. Its body was long and thick, not like the tiny white ones that possessed mediocre shells. It was so beautiful that I let it crawl over my fingers and hands as I walked home. I called the snail "Poky" after the horse in the *Gumby* TV cartoon and partly after its slow, imploring nature. I was heartily welcomed by my younger brother with the creature. We coined a song for the lovely pet which ran as follows:

Poky the snail
Poky the snail
You may see him laughin'
You may see him cryin'
But you know he's got
A gre-e-e-e-n mouth!

Right away we built a terrarium for him, a large glass jar wherein we placed some soil, moss, fern and grass. The top was sealed with a metal lid with holes for air to come through. Sometimes Poky would escape and be seen later crawling up the sides of our bedroom wall. One time when I let Poky crawl over my fingers—my sisters and older brother thought it disgusting, but Tim, the younger brother, even attempted Poky on his fingers—it backfired: the thing bit me. I knew then that snails have an unusual tongue lined with teeth called a radula. This facilitates the well-aimed strokes at leaves and flowers they're despised for. I never wanted to be bitten by a snail again in my life. Soon we lost Poky, but we could detect his slimy trails over the bedroom walls afterwards.

One question we asked about snails was, did they “go to the bathroom?” It remained mysterious until we saw tiny grey coils on the surfaces of the terrarium. The gender of snails seemed not to matter also. We were so childish at the time that that question didn’t concern us. I was to later find out that they are hermaphroditic and that they mutually need to inseminate each other. The result is that both animals bear the eggs. One summer evening I turned on the sprinkler in order to see as many of these nocturnally active creatures as possible. Armed with a flashlight, I discovered a pair cemented together in an excess of slime. I was initially horrified, but then reasoned they were fucking. I didn’t stay long because it was distasteful to look at for any length of time. The shock lingered on when I finally left the garden to go indoors to watch TV with my parents, ignorant of what I had just seen.

After Poky’s disappearance I was despondent. I thought I’d never be able to find a snail as beautiful as that. I had spent hours looking for a comparable snail, but to no avail. There were only slugs or the smaller snails with furry shells. Whole days were taken up with looking for a snail bearing a colorful shell. On these days I’d hum the “Poky the Snail” song, desperately searching for the perfect snail, a snail as good as Poky.

With Poky gone, I eventually resorted to a pet slug called “Flash.” (We called him “Flash” after the comic book superhero who can travel at speeds no slug could ever match.) His home was in an originally botanical terrarium. On the top of the clear plastic box was a small ventilation cap; twist an upper portion clockwise and vents appear. Flash’s long body would inch up to these holes at the very top. There he’d scrape his radula all night long. It sounded like a fainter version of chalk screeching across a blackboard. Did he want to escape or did he just like to suck on plastic? The terrarium which housed this slug was placed on a gigantic television set which Tim and I would watch. At times Flash could be heard through the din of commercials, his scraping cry for revenge, freedom, food, who knows what it wanted! One time I placed

my finger too close to the ventilation hole when Flash was scraping. He, like Poky before, bit it. I'm sure I sensed some perverse pleasure. Later on, I threw Flash out, simply because I cared not to clean out his cage, by this time very smelly and slimy.

Slugs were by no means my sole obsession. My childhood friends shared the interest. Tim, our friend Matt and I invented a realm called "Slugonia" populated by slug-inspired cartoon creatures. They didn't have any antennae or slime or radulas and they resembled humans in their weaker moments. These cartoon slugs were very self-indulgent, priding themselves on ravenous appetites or excessive TV watching. We drew comics about the central slug characters. Some of their names were Harvey (a trickster), Hobart (the dictator of Slugonia), Feedor (a TV addict), Garfo (a slug who has a sign on his back reading "Beat Me"), Cheerful (a compulsively happy slug) and Flash (again, a voracious cater, like my former pet, with a super-fast tongue). Matt was the most ingenious and prolific in creating fictional situations concerning these slugs. He also originated their image and invented most of the characters and their names. Tim and I contributed a great deal, either in our own ideas or just laughter over Matt's talks on the idea of Slugonia. Tim and I even made a Super-8 animation film about Slugonia. Matt and I went so far as to suggest a "Slug Patrol" to our Boy Scout Troop. The scoutmaster was charmed by the idea but had to refuse the title (he was a stupid man) since there were so many other names of animals that we could use besides that of "slug." We knew it was a poor reason, and besides, we were already resigned to his disapproval. Beforehand Matt had composed a flag with somersaulting or "flipping" slugs (our slugs could flip in mid-air). The flag's slugs were also wearing bandanas and hats, vestiges of our uniforms. We even invented a handshake which consisted of contact with either palm only to have squishing sounds meet the other person. Another one was contact but rapid drawing away—"Yeech!"—as if the palm were slimy.

Around this time (11 to 14 years of age, I cannot recall specifically) I had bought the most comprehensive book on the subject, Pilsbury's "*Land Mollusca of North America North of Mexico*". (The actual title might be longer.) The book was a four-volume monograph solely on land snails and slugs. When it arrived I noticed the pages were uncut, and after plying them apart with a large kitchen knife, I was able to marvel at the hundreds of illustrations of my favorite animal. Now I could say that such-and-such was "*Arion ater*", "*Vespericola latinbrum*", and "*Helix pomata*". Every species had a technical description of their reproductive, digestive and respiratory systems. The classification into family, genus and species was based upon the organization of their respiratory tracts. The book had very strange accounts on certain species. One species was predatory-cannibalistic. It would attack by swaying its head and trunk back and forth in front of the victim and then lunge very quickly for the other snail's main artery running up the center of the spiral.

During a summer camp vacation I requested a friend of my parents to bring the book with her since she was going to visit some counselors. The area had a number of snails I didn't know the names of. When she arrived she made a wisecrack as to the weight of the books. Many of the counselors held academic positions and one of them was a biologist. He was struck by my interest in these creatures, even though at moments during our talks on the matter I felt as if his interest was too attentive and too obsessional. It frightened me into thinking I was also strange for devoting so much time to finding snails and classifying them. The bulging volumes on snails helped me somewhat when much of it was done in an effort to impress my peers that I was a scholarly type.

As I also learned from the book, *Helix pomata* was called the European Garden Snail, and it is the snail the French use for *escargots*. Everytime I went to a French restaurant I ordered *escargots*, charming my mother with my sophistication. ("Isn't that cute, he's ordering *escargots*!") When eating snails began, it was only a foodstuff poor farmers resorted to when they had nothing else to eat. I remember in high school a

skinny black girl in fits over a French teacher eating a snail. “You’re eating a snail?!” she shrieked.

Many times the image of snails grew to disturbing proportions. On a boat trip through the Strait of Georgia in British Columbia I saw a “*Post*” or “*Look*” magazine that featured a short story about monster snails on a remote island. The main character described his horror at the enormity of the creatures which was all the more believable with an illustration of one. I think my second eldest sister showed me the picture. When I saw it, terror was my reaction. A giant snail was dwarfing a tree its devourings had probably denuded. The mouth of the monster looked like a ball of a thousand ice picks, ready to rip apart anything organic. The image of the mouth was most disturbing and I thought about it often during the vacation. I would frequently open the magazine and fixedly stare at the mouth’s prickly cavern.

During that vacation, my mother and a good friend of hers, the mother of the accompanying family, loved to prepare fresh oysters. (Oysters are not snails or slugs but are similar in terms of a fleshy, usually edible body, with a hard calcium shell.) With plenty of oyster beds around, we would partake of many lunches “on the half-shell.” It seemed an elegant thing to do in the wilderness. Mom’s friend was quite worldly in my eyes and beautiful enough to have me compare her to Audrey Hepburn. We’d all dive for oysters in clear blue water, armed with buckets or plastic bags. Later on we’d pry them open, a painful task for a shell’s sharp edges would cut you, and the knife or prying tool, after having punctured your skin, would add to the misery of already sliced fingers. A lemon and tomato sauce awaited the hungry minority since many in our party didn’t care for them. One time I found a pearl. It was very small and brought much attention from the older women. I didn’t know where to place it, so I left it in the change purse of either my mother’s bag or her friend’s. I never saw that pearl again once it was safe inside those folds of leather.

A year after the boat trip, I wrote a long paper on the Dutch painter Jan Vermeer. His attention to pearls must have

contributed to my excitement over his work. Besides, the duo of mother and her friend thought me quite sensitive to have selected Vermeer as a subject for a research paper. (I was 14 years old and a freshman in high school.) Mom even told me that Vermeer was considered to have ground real pearls into his oils, contributing to the soft, milky pallor of his mostly female subjects. I grew to appreciate the painting entitled “Woman Weighing Pearls” as his most exquisite effort. Vermeer’s contemporary, DeHooch, depicted a woman weighing gold coins. Similarly attired (though not with the satin and ermine jacket) and positioned before the window of streaming daylight, it failed simply because she was measuring gold, a vulgarity in its failure to understand the resonating significance of pearls. Some critics even thought Vermeer’s woman was weighing gold, but my paper endorsed Lawrence Gowing’s point, how could anyone think she was weighing something besides these jewels from oyster beds?

Another painting, Botticelli’s *Birth of Venus*, features her rising from the legendary seashell. I thought it to be a most beautiful picture. In it her hair coils in spirals while Zephyr fitfully blows his gentle breath, which, if you don’t mind the free-association, was something I often did to snails: I blew on their antennae to see if they were truly that sensitive, and very often they were, as they recoiled their tender filaments. This delicacy sent me in smiles, prompting more assertive measures such as touching the stalks, only to have them recoil more rapidly, hence longer to emerge again and face the human adversary, myself.

* * *

A garden’s bright flowers and glistening leaves has a rapacious predator, the snail and slug. They scar such luminous paradises that reflect a proud owner’s labor. And to see my mother spreading Slug-Be-Gone or some such similar poison on our garden hurt me in attenuated ways. Now the petals of our irises, lillies and petunias could flourish in many a summer’s light unravaged by gaps and holes. The snail’s hated

status was what I attempted to change. I vainly thought my discussions of the creatures would sway my family into appreciating them. The brilliant growth of flowers was nothing to harm, yet harm to them seemed inevitable for they would no doubt quickly wither and die. I even chastised in front of my mother America's cult of youthfulness in women when she was passing into middle-age as seen by my obsessional scrutiny of her face's growth of lines. Her face is still very youthful and my viciousness against the one who had looked over me with tenderness for so many years appears only to be revenge against her obsessive picking of my zits as I advanced into the hormonal disfigurements of adolescence.

The biting snail, like the leeches that had fascinated me in fifth grade, could also draw blood from my face as a freshly extracted whitehead always would. My mother, true to her nursing education degree, would wipe off the oil from her *fingernails/fingersnail* onto her dress or apron. The attack was always on, whether it was combing my hair or wiping off dirt from any part of my body. A compulsively neat person, a product of Lutheran upbringing, is still inspiring me to wash and shave everyday, cleansing a perpetually dirty, shit-ridden envelope of flesh. This *Blasen*, or bubble of skin, is what the snail-headed man, Freud, had designated the physical metaphor of the ego.

Being brought up in a social apparatus that exults in a streamlined passion for assimilating ego-ideals has further transformed the past of purifying dirt on the skin into a militant occupation. I have succumbed to the advertising visage of greater potency, wishing that the photos and commercials I see will be present in my life as a result of buying the product. Then reality will congrue with my hallucination, and I shall be airbrush perfect like all the beauties who could get into Studio 54 without waiting. And yet the few mildly acned and handsome men who were admitted inside have sent me into shivers, propelling my eyes to fix on their human radulas that could bite the very pimples I possessed that evening.

Although I am not identical to the Wolf-Man pacing hysterically to and fro in a dermatologist's office with mirror and face powder in hand, I have encrypted undying fantasies and their corresponding pleasure-words. His pleasure-word, a word in his nose-language, *tieret*, the Russian term for scraping and rubbing, seems similar to my verbarium: *snail*, *slug*, *pick*, or *picky*, *acne*, and *zits*.

Snail rhymes with ail. I am the one who ails from acne. Her *finger nails* were the very instrument of my repetition: *snail*. With *nails*, Jesus Christ's hands and feet were bloodied, an incident known in every Christian home. Before my grandfather's death his hands were also wounded by improper protection from X-rays that he gave to his patients. He was a pediatrician like my father is now. Why did I like to have Poky crawl over my fingers? I am also supposed to be "genetically identical" to my grandfather, so my father says, and I bear his first name as my middle one. My hands have been called "attractive" by those close to me, but a girlfriend I once knew had an exquisite pair, compensating for her very blemished face. Her name was identical to my mother's, forcing me to think of a mother ravaged by what I had, a hopeless revenge. It also helped me endure whatever paroxysms my complexion went through. With bad skin being my grandfather's doom, so have I felt it too to be mine. The letters in *skin*, through anagrammatization and lexicographic contiguity, are related to those in *snail*, the *s*, *i* and *n*. Place an *l* for the *k*, and you obtain *slin*, then go on to *snail*. The *s* and *l* are crucial: both parents possess them in their original names. Also there are lines/lains (*snail*) on the skin/*slin* (*snail*).

Furthermore with *slug* eliminate the *s* and witness *lug*, better yet, *ulg*, or as is clear, *ulg(y)*. "Slugs are so ugly" say the common lot. Slugs make ugly, as Flash did with its cage, or as it did to my finger by its biting, a biting, uglifying slug, scraping at my skin. My mother's name, Julie, anasemically relates to *gul(s)*, similar to dad's endearment, "*Jules*," sounding much like *jewels*. An ugly jewel is the slug that could render the child-jewel of Julie ugly as well.

Oftentimes my mother would lament, “Duncan, you’re so picky,” meaning she probably was discontent with my fondness for criticality and distinction, while thinking I was pickable, that is, prey to her fondness for drawing oil’ out of my skin. One of my sisters was also noted for gouging her younger brothers’ flesh with a finger called “Baby.” (I thought it was called “Pinky,” which is orthographically similar to Poky, my pet snail.) It was all a joke, although at times her attacks were frightening. Fingers poke, Poky on my fingers, the poky, picky finger-snail. Further, mucus or snot, as it is more commonly called, is picked in the nose, something Melanie Klein calls an anal attack upon the mother. Picking your nose frequently like I do is ghastly, and this habit of mine is even worse when I venture to eat the stuff, biting the green junk along the way. (“He has a gre-e-e-e-n mouth!”)

Another crucial pleasure-word, acne, is buried in my name: *Duncan/Dunacn(e)*.

Zits or szit vibrates with shit, and cleaning and washing are of course an anal motif. My criticality, my picky nature is allophonic with zit: critical, citical, zitical. Indeed “Zitical Theory” becomes an explanation for my fascination for the writings of that school, the (s)ugl(y) intellectual reading an image-banishing Theodor Adorno. Don’t adore “self-styling Adorn,” adore me, “*Oui, je t’adore*,” an endearment of my girlfriend Julie.

My move to New York was opportune. I came here to fall into the arms of its beautiful men. New York was “Fun City” and I envisioned the many “fun” people living here. But “Fun City” became “No-Fun Zity.” An *Unlustich*, a no-fun ego, with a zit on its bubble, is not a *Lustich*, a fun ego in the city of fun, beautiful people. One cannot *dance* when one is *acned*.

To eliminate the zit in this city needs an application of creams, reproducing the mucilage from snails I once put on my body. Professional facials are surgeon-like with rubbery hands violently picking away. Snails, nature’s surgeons (they leave scars on plant tissue) are now only cosmetologists for

people to keep corpsehood intact and golden. I'm recalling Baudelaire's equation of love-making and surgery in his "*Journaux Intimes*".

To make golden and youth evocative, to get a tan, is a cryptic impulse in New York, the New York with an island called Manhattan, or Man-hat-*tan*. The numerous "nocturnally active creatures" here with deep brown tans is only the many men with the evidence of being afflicted by Summer's rays, the *Sonnenstrahlen*. And a perfect tan in Manhattan takes some time, be it days, weeks, months, even a hundred years.

I beg forgiveness for all this confessing and the attendant morbidities. It scrapes still in this city of skyscrapers, though not so harshly, and nightlong like my pet slug had done atop the giant TV set. The TV show will not be forgotten as long as I live where TV's are watched, criticized, picked at, without end, *unendlich*.

Turkey-in-State

The doctor who performed Kennedy's autopsy is now at home cutting open the family's Thanksgiving turkey. At this moment he's probably going to slice into a turkey. This doctor will then say to his children, "Do you want dark meat or white meat?"

This evening the Kennedy family probably had a turkey dinner. They've placed something close to their mouths just as the rest of America has done, quelling an eating of something that would only break the law. Who is interred below or within, inaccessible to sight or sound, touch and lips? We can only speak, smoke and eat in spite of the permanent quiet, the hush we sense fifteen years after that day that never should have happened.

Some terms essential to this discussion: introjection, incorporation and the crypt.

Introjecting the late John F. Kennedy suggests an idealization of him. He is made into an image for our behavior, even to the point of miming him, repeating his gestures, re-speaking his pronouncements. His example of youthfulness and liberality is taken as something we should perform in our lives. Indeed this is even further accomplished by recalling his famous phrase, "Ask not what your country can do for you... ask what you can do for your country." Those words and their relation to our public behavior all depend on whether he has been assimilated, taken in, idealized, introjected, usually in slow, laborious and ultimately effective steps.

On the other hand, we also, like anyone in mourning, in the work of mourning (*Trauerarbeit*), possess fantasies of incorporation. Mourning John F. Kennedy, as in mourning a loved-one, springs from a silent, violent act that should not have occurred. He should not have been assassinated. A crypt

is built, either to protect the body from being violated by the living or to prevent the “deadly pleasure” of bodily contact with the deceased to take place. Unlike introjection, incorporation is immediate, magical, fantasmatic, but introjection speaks as supplement to the silent, hermetically sealed space forever closed into the inside of our Inside. We have vomited him into this inside from the mouth that will intone, “Ask not what your country can do for you... ask what you can do for your country.” Introjection compensates for the violent construction of an air-tight barrier both in a “real” cemetery and in our hearts that descended on all America late November, sixteen years ago.

We dare not dig into his impenetrable vault, the Arlington National Cemetery is under armed guard. Besides we all ways have kept a cemetery watch over our deadly attraction to the young president. How could we justify our violation of his sepulcher when eternally burns a flame nearby, and the presence of his younger brother, almost a president, a young and beautiful man, once potent and full of promise, might haunt us, the grave robber, compelling our shovel and pick to be thrown to the ground as we run away in horror?

Even if we were to open John F. Kennedy’s coffin, what would we see? Would we want to see it? And who has seen his dismembered body and how mutilated was it? For days on end we witnessed his handsome face grace our newspapers and magazines. When that terrible event took place, an event that should not have taken place, we no longer saw him. Never again would he be the object of any reproducible apparatus. Never again would we, if we were so lucky, see him in person. He is absolutely hidden from view, save for post-impressions of his brief sojourn on American soil.

But how can we think that he was ever present, alive, fully here? I never saw him in person. I will never see him in person. I’ve never seen the wife who probably saw more of him than any of you or I have seen of him. His mother is also away from my sight, and she too has seen him a great deal. But who has ever seen John F. Kennedy? We see him on matchbooks, in history books, on 50 cent pieces. And

that's all. Yet there is a body, embalmed, interred deep in the soil at the National Cemetery about four and a half hours by train from here. Is that just where he is? He's in a place, a site, a locale in our hearts, America's heart, but where is that? Since our envaulted desire still refuses to think he's dead, he's then alive somewhere entering as supplement, here, at this moment at least, when I say, "Ask not what your country can do for you... ask what you can do for your country" on this day of Thanksgiving and the ingestion of turkey meat.

Today when I ate turkey, I didn't vomit it up at all. I could have, thinking of how much I love the man, how much he could have eaten me up, like the parent he was, besides, don't all parents say, "I could eat you up!?" No, I didn't vomit, but then when you eat too much you feel like vomiting. Yes, I felt like vomiting, but only for a moment and when that moment occurred I realized that I would hate the taste of the regurgitation. So I pushed it back inside of me, deep inside, just so that it would stay there and not come up and out of me.

Why is John F. Kennedy on all the matchbooks, the Kenmore Stamp Company matchbooks? The Kenmore Company is reinforcing its product with the usual illustrious and dead public figures, for stamps commemorate the American dead. But why an ad bearing a duplication of JFK's stamp and why are they so common? Why the conjunction of matches, JFK stamp and a name that cryptically rings with Kennedy, Kenmore? Anyway, I light my cigarette bearing in mind that I must close the package before I strike the match. And when I close the package there's the man, John F. Kennedy. The flame is lit and will stay lit until I put it out. By that time my cigarette is burning while the match is out. Even when my cigarette is out, someone else will have theirs lit. The fire goes on, like the "eternal torch" in the National Cemetery over the graves of John F. Kennedy and Robert F. Kennedy.

John F. Kennedy is alive at the tip of my cigarette and so is Jim Morrison, a dead singer. When the jukebox plays, "Come on, baby, light my fire," we might be more willing

to light someone's cigarette and move closer to another vault with our funeral pyres alight in the darknesses of bars, music halls, theaters.

* * *

The following is a discussion of the opposition between dark meat (as represented by non-European races) and white meat (as represented by European races). The imaginary conflict between black and white obeys mirror-image inversions, and I urge people not to discern racism here. The black-white, brown-yellow, brunette-blonde poles are only spectrographs of American identifications, with subdivisions, series and permutations from one end to the other.

Abraham Lincoln sacrificed America's sons to dark meat along with white meat. Lincoln's Civil War between North and South was ultimately over civil rights. Kennedy's civil war between North and South Vietnam happened while the civil rights movement was growing. Lincoln let blacks eat what whites had been eating, and Kennedy let the two of them eat Asia. Once back on American soil, blacks would be freer than in Lincoln's time to eat whatever whites felt to be proper to their own eating. Blacks would then be able to say, "I can eat white meat or dark meat" because white people at turkey dinners had been doing it all along.

Robert F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King both died within the same year, two men dedicated to letting whites be consumed by the African after the African had been consumed for so long by whites. The mythological cannibal gets revenge *via* civil rights. Dark turkey meat is actually moister, more succulent, even when we still see commercials that praise turkeys bred and cured for their moist white meat. Dark meat is inevitable, so said R.F.K. and Dr. King, simply because it's always going to be in the turkeys authorized by Abraham Lincoln. (Abraham was the biblical figure who nearly sacrificed his son out of love for God. Abraham Lincoln had to sacrifice his sons out of his love for an undivided house.)

Jim Crow was a raven that said "Nevermore." The crow/ raven tapped and rapped on America's chamber door. Has that door ever been fully opened or shut? By eating that crow/raven in the form of a turkey, you'll be able to decide between only white meat eaten, black and white meat eaten together or only black, dark meat eaten. This is made all the more clear since Abraham sacrificed so many sons for the turkey/corpses you've introjected/incorporated a few hours ago or four score, a decade and six years ago. A turkey could be considered a hypermetaphor to the impossibility of incorporating America's dead.

The turkey was what the Indians gave those Pilgrim settlers for their feast. The turkey is then the Indian-Asian totem now in the deepest locales of our American encrypting. Do the massacres of Indians, like the massacres of black slaves and the massacres of white Northerners and Southerners, haunt us all everytime we place forks full of dead bird meat into our mouths?

Europeans want to eat what's unfamiliar to them, that's why the turkey is at once Indian-Asian, black-Negroid, but also of their own flesh, white-Caucasian. The Asian is what we more truly love, because their dead were buried on this land first, in Indian burial grounds before we let Africans and Europeans die on it. American Indians are implicated in the law of generations on this soil more than anyone else. Their ghost-effects are entitled to return with greater power and force of retribution that all the other corpses buried in the American Other.

A dead president, George Washington, was eaten by a black man, George Washington (Carver). One ate the proper name of the other. George Washington Carver invented peanuts, peanut butter and peanut oil. Another president, Jimmy Carter, has based his personal fortune on a black man's invention, the peanut. George Washington Carver's peanuts were eaten by our current white-man president, another George Washington going by the name of Jimmy Carter. Georgia, from George, is a very violent state or violent taste, since state and taste are anagrams. Do

some of its housewives recommend stuffing their turkeys with peanuts? Carver cryptically echoes Carter. Would peanuts have stuck to the wooden teeth of our first president, George Washington, the first authorizer of the celebration of Thanksgiving or George Washington, George Washington who?

Even the city of Washington, D.C., inhabited mainly by blacks, shows how effectively (George) Washington (Carver)-has introjected the proper name of our first president, our founding father. The presidential American father is the post-African's most treasured meal. It assures completer assimilation into a social machine dominated by white-Caucasians still ambivalent about the black man's assimilation. *The Jeffersons*, a TV show on CBS, demonstrates the introjection of an American president, Thomas Jefferson, while the breadwinner's financial success is due to washing dirt from laundry, the white shirts of Americans, white or black. With another president's name living in the family surname, it facilitates their assimilation into a social fabric or social washing machine that still conceives of them as a stain or in this case, busy scrubbing out their stain. Eating a president's name alleviates too much of this washing and scrubbing of the Negro ego.

Cotton seeds are black and had to be picked out by black fingers, thus preserving the cotton's whiteness. The cotton-gin saved slaves from the tedious labor, but their hands would sometimes be devoured by the machines. Cotton seeds make the oil that some foods are often fried in. Fried foods seem to be the cultural property of American blacks, either in the cliché of Kentucky Fried Chicken's black employees whose fingers make the bird limbs "finger lickin' good" or in liberal gastronomes' excavation of soul-food delicacies in the wake of civil rights and some increments in opportunity.

If the turkey is one of the few Indian-Asian things we eat, then the rest of our time is taken up with Colonial Sanders's special recipes or Motown's special recipes. Love to love to introject you... The white-meated ones wave their fair hair about when they hallucinate the dark looks

of an originally African siren. But even the siren is not all African, not all “dark,” dark as night in jungles where no sun pierces the gloom. Donna Summer, a much-epitheted Casablanca (*blanca* equals white) recipe, is as light as the sun in summer. (*Casa blanca*, is a white casa or white house. Black Donna Summer sings from the white house.) Her first name, Donna, is an abbreviation of Madonna, the Virgin Mary whose depictions abound in symbols of purity, such as white linen or the palest skin, a racial badge for her European whiteness. Purity, whiteness, the season of the sun in its bright triumph, are all in a black, African, mulattoed woman, “Donna Summer.”

This primordial opposition of black to white or more accurately, the opposition of brown to yellow, works on hundreds of registers. Jackie Onassis is brunette, Marilyn Monroe is blonde. A Los Angeles blonde homosexual loves to dance to East coast Donna Summer. Chinese people are awe-struck by blondes. Satan is in infernal darkness while God is pure light surrounded by blonde angels. Italians are mostly brunette while Scandinavians are almost all blonde. The daytime is blonde and night is brunette. “Dark coloring and black eyes are more closely related to the sublime, blue eyes and blonde coloring to the beautiful.” (Kant) The sun is blonde and the earth is brunette. Blondes are fascists who wear brown and black shirts while communists are swarthy, Mediterranean, Slavic and Jewish. Marx’s nickname was “The Moor.” Black guys go after blondes. I, a blonde, came to New York to be with brunettes. Hitler was called, despite his black hair, blonde!

Marilyn Monroe went after Joe DiMaggio, a brunette. *The Misfits’* Arthur Miller, Montgomery Clift and Clark Gable were all brunette. America loves the photo of Marilyn with Carl Sandberg (a blonde) drinking the light yellow liquid, champagne. In the Elvis Presley film *Kissin’ Cousins*, Josh Morgan, a brunette, confronts Jodie Tatum, a blonde, both characters played by Elvis. Gloria Swanson, a brunette, lost her Oscar to a blonde, Judy Holliday.

We've all seen ads of Diahann Carroll drinking milk, not to mention the desegregated ads of blacks drinking beer, a token of Teutonic culture. "Chocolate City" is the white-marbled Washington, D.C. And the fair-haired Swiss love chocolate, it's about the most resonantly African thing in their territory. Chocolate, as you know, comes from the Gold Coast in Africa.

Now that we're into November we've probably all lost our tans. But I've eaten golden brown turkey skin. I hope it will return. The ones with cash can go where the sun is and return turkey golden brown. And if you go to California, the land of golden tans or brown skin, it is made more cryptic by a governor whose name is Brown.

Man-hat-tan is an island that requires a tan to keep you on top. Steve Rubell always has a tan, as do a lot of this city's rich Mediterraneans or rich, tannable blondes. Before you come to Man-hat-tan from New Jersey you may glance at Marlboro cigarette billboards of cowboys, or men, many in groups, wearing hats and they've all got tans. To smoke the cigarettes they're smoking is to be closer to the island that does have these men with dark tans and these ridiculous hats, even these Marlboro-Manhattan-country style cowboy hats.

Why do we need a special museum called the "Marilyn Monroe Museum" when "a morn," "a love(d)/*amour*," or "a worn" jean from Norma Jean are the museum's artifacts? Putting on a pair of blue jeans on a sunny morning (*Bon Jour* jeans embed this "good morning"-idea) and thinking about Norma Jean/Marilyn Monroe is about the most irrefutably American event, and that's what the museum should excavate. My "Monroe Doctrine" is not based on a name we freely speak. It's based on a name kept silent and secret, deep in our Monroe indoctrinated hearts, our generation's blue-Jean crypt.

We're off our horses now, and our asses are not so sore, save for wearing a pair that's too tight. Disco jeans, however, need to be too tight, so we can see *your ass* or *Jordache*. Sasson jeans have *ass* at the word's beginning or subsequent to the initial S: *Sasson*. Sasson's logo with the fingers that join index

and thumb thus forming an O or hole is a Mediterranean gesture for someone who's an "asshole."

But a pair of blue jeans needs a T-shirt to go with them. Why? Remove the *r* in shirt. You get *T-shirt* or *to shit*. To shit in your ass/Jordache, to shit in a-n-e-j-s, an anagram for jeans and thus allophonic with anus. Another brand of jeans is called Zena; reverse its letters and you get *anez* or anus again. "It's Howdy Doody time!" Both dummy and ventriloquist were spoken by someone else whenever they wore their interminable, uncanny blue jeans. It's odd to note that on the "Disco Awards" show shown on TV not long ago "Wild Bill" appeared and had all the disco stars and devotees shout, "It's Howdy Doody time!"

Joe DiMaggio places a rose everyday on Marilyn Monroe's tombstone. His last name, in Italian, means "of May" or extended into the name of this loved-one, Joe "of Ma(y)(ri-lyn)." (He's also from Brooklyn, with the *lyn* resounding in Marilyn.) He "speaks" (not really, it's a written statement and is in quotation marks) on those bank ads, "Life insurance rates at the Bowery have been lowered." The "life insurance" and "lowered" are crucial here. His Marilyn/Brooklyn/of May/Marilyn, though dead, is a memorial in his heart. His vaulted desire for M.M. becomes his safe deposit vault, probably at the Bowery Savings Bank and is insured for his life, until he dies and is buried as "low" as Marilyn is buried "low" in the ground.

The advertisement also states, "Life insurance rates for women are lower still." Where are they lower? In our hearts? In the cryptic locales of New York subways that drive past the basements of the Bowery Savings Banks or Joe DiMaggio's future cemetery? Of all the women in America is she the lowest, deepest, *stillest*, in our hearts? Is she really buried in a Bowery Savings Bank somewhere in Manhattan instead of Los Angeles? He says in another ad, "It's never too late to start saving." Change "saving" into "safing" as in "safe," recalling that a crypt is a safe in the Self, a locket, vault, a sealed enclosure. "It's never too late to start your safe deposit vault

of fantasies of incorporation with a dead object, mine being Marilyn Monroe.”

Ted Kennedy’s promotional campaign on television will be edited along with advertisements for blue jeans, Jordache, Sasson or Vanderbilt. Ted is also in the place of John F. or Robert F., since he is identical by being the surviving brother to those brothers now dead. But why blue jeans and a Kennedy? Let us presume that John F. Kennedy had an affair with a woman who was also a “president,” that is, James Monroe nearly equals Marilyn Monroe, noting president Monroe’s first name, *James*, also resembles the *Jean* in Norma Jean. With Norma being “a worn,” “love (*amour*),” and “a mourn” Jean, we can see why jeans and the Kennedy’s are so American. But what can we transpose J.F.K. into?

J.F.K. *J* is an alphabetical symbol that was derived from: the Greek symbol iota, the letter *ι*. *J* is in Jesus, a transcription of the New Testament Greek pronounced “iesu.” The *j* in Jesus is just a harder breathing of an *i* particularly if the *i* occurs in conjunction with other vowels. Pronounce “i...e...s...u” We’ll assume then that *i* and *j* are phonetically similar, allophonic. Thus the letters in J.F.K. now read I.F.K. (There’s also the question of *i* and *j*’s proximity to each other in the alphabet.) What does that sound like? I propose it sounds like “I fuck,” the *i*, *f*, and *k* being prominent intervals in the phrase, “I fuck.”

If J.F.K. or I.F.K. had an affair with Norma Jean/Marilyn (president) Monroe, then we can arrive at the following translations: “I fuck worn jeans,” “I fuck the mourned-for Jean,” “I love to fuck jeans or Norma Jeans.” J.F.K./I.F.K. appears to be the “*I/je fuck*” of every American. Even if J.F.K. did not have an affair with her, we’ll let gossip, speculation and desire rule. She may have been R.F.K.’s companion, yet still Norma Jean is with a Kennedy, an F.K. or “fuck.” J.F.K. facilitates the argument, at least by name only, and with names being the primary source for the cryptographic operation, J.F.K. and Norma Jean make the best rebus-symptom of America’s encrypted affections. This “*I/je fuck*” in J.F.K. proves that libido is masculine and his presidential status

makes him all the more a virile representation for sexual drive in general. His death is tragic because he is no longer this symbol, this J.F.K./“I fuck,” of potency. Marilyn Monroe at least represents the most intense and most rigorous of nostalgic vocations undertaken by us undertakers in our introjection/incorporation of Hollywood ego-ideals. What then is America’s desire? What is the final passageway to the sepulcher of these two presidents, one male and one female? “I fuck in jeans as I envision Marilyn and John coming ecstatically together, despite their deaths.”

Ted is a rhyme with dead, dead as are his two brothers. His blonde wife Joan has an *a* instead of an *h*, the *h* in *John*. Ted and *John/Joan*. John is in Ted’s place with a blonde, Joan. Joan is then a Jean, a Norma Jean. Replace the *e* for Joan’s second position *o* and you have Jean. Joan is again the Marilyn that was or never really was in bed with John or Robert. It’s now Ted’s turn (or it’s always been his turn) to resume the affair that was cruelly cut short by an assassin, suicide, even the conspiracies of espionage. This much demonstrates the heter*jean*ity of the *Ucs.* and/or the anasemic translating from the place of construction of all these crypts.

By now I ought to tell you that I’ve trademarked my own brand of jeans: Kennedy Jeans (for men) and Norma Jeans (for women). If I could steal the name Levi’s, I’d trademark the following names: Kennedy Levi’s and Norma Levi’s. Bear in mind that *Levi’s* is also *Lives*, as an anagram. So Kennedy Levi’s become Kennedy Lives and Norma Levi’s become Norma Lives. Another explanation why the J.F.K./Kennedy/Monroe/Jean/Levi’s words appear to be such a pleasurable series, principally because they allow us to think of them as alive, living or as a plural noun, as many lives. “Levi’s, the legend lives on.”

Elvis, an anagram for *Levi’s*, is buried near Fort Knox, and he’s knocking, rap, tap, tapping with the same initials as Edgar Allen Poe, Elvis Aaron Presley. e-a-p haunts with texts, gold bugs or gold records, mourning for the lost Lenore, the lost Gladys, in our libraries or in the Wolf-Man Jack’s record libraries, for our hearts will always be in

mourning for some precious Thing. Elvis plummets us into mourning for all the Things our generation's mouths eagerly consumed when RCA compelled our wages to buy black vinyl record discs by a black-sounding singer.

The Egyptian pharaohs had the black jackal god Anubis protect all their precious gold objects from grave robbery. We have Wolf-Man Jack or Wolf-Man Jackal to protect the archives of our endless record introjection/incorporation. He's a lone DJ, working into the night with his brightly lit broadcasting studio in the movie *American Graffiti* where he sits beside a massive library of singles and albums. He's also a host for a "Disco Awards" show, making us aware that the eager consumption will be unabated from the '50s on into the '80s. He makes sure we eat these dead singers just as much as he makes sure we eat these living singers, although dead on black vinyl. Their real bodies are not violated though, but the ciphers of their absent presences, their ghost-effects are the only Things we can legally eat.

There's a tomb in my eye. Whenever there are a lot of eyes staring at me, this fervent staring makes me become a star. The resemblance between the words *stare* and *star* become clearer every time one meditates on the photojournalism of stars (reducing themselves to pictures for gazes, for stares at stars) in a newspaper called the *Star*. Reading is a staring, and it becomes more cryptic if the only things we read are movie magazines, the *TV Guide*, or that ultimate book, the television, where most of America's reading goes on.

We stare at stars in movies, on TV, in commercials, in photographs, in discos, at rock concerts, and so forth. They are photographed more often by our gazes than all the photographers who cluster around the star. The camera is only staring at the star so that we will then be able to stare in the *Star* mag. When we go to a disco, we stare at the stars who go there and if they stare back at us in return, then we can say we are a star. Sometimes we read about the Hollywood parties where only stars are invited. There the stars will only want to stare at stars and not at non-stars like most of us. But

if the stars only want to stare at stars, then the stars will have to isolate themselves from a lot of people just so they won't be offended by all the non-stars around.

During the hey-day of Hollywood, the Mt. Palomar observatory was under construction. Although near San Diego, astronomer-engineers designed the largest telescope of its kind, 200 inches in diameter, as Hollywood cameramen and cameramen were perfecting their lenses, filters and lighting systems to record the stars more perfectly on celluloid. While astronomers stare at stars through telescopes, we stare at stars on movie screens almost as big as Mt. Palomar's mirror. That observatory was only finished in 1948, the same year Hollywood's glory was waning. We would then be able to see bigger stars, super-novae, black holes and galaxies and not such puny stars as Clark Gable, Rita Hayworth, Lana Turner or Marilyn Monroe.

Had you stayed out all night you would have gotten circles under your eyes. So you went to a chic disco and stared at the stars. You kept on staring at the stars through the night while your science-whiz younger brother didn't go to the disco but looked through his telescope instead. Both of you didn't get much sleep, and both of you stared at stars all night (which is true) by saying, "Yes, my brother's telescope lets me see the most beautiful stars at night, no wonder my eyes are tired."

Buried in the word "disco," is a word for hell. The City of Dis, in Dante's *Inferno*, is at the beginning of the word *disco*. The behavior of the fallen angels at the entrance to the city was so atrocious that an angel from Paradise had to let Vergil and Dante through to the city of Dis. One is then left with Dis-co or Dis-go, go to Dis, go to the disco, whose co is a rhyme with go. "Go to Hell" was what people actually said when they went to a disco called "Hell." Another disco is called "Inferno," obviously taken from Dante and a disco band is called "Dante's Inferno."

Another "underground" locale is Andy Warhol's Factory. It still lives on and its reputation is what every aspiring artist from out West wishes to reindulge in. To be recognized

by Andy with his celebrated “Hi” allows one to revisit the Factory vault all over again. Saying “Hi” to people in New York is like being in Andy’s place, on Andy’s lips, in Andy’s eyes. Andy is inside, underground, for a new discotheque called the “Underground” will be several floors below or underground the Factory. His once “underground” artistic milieu (now conservative and mainstream) will be undermined by what’s underground, the Underground.

*Turkey-in-State was originally read on the
sixteenth anniversary of John F. Kennedy’s
assassination on Thanksgiving Day, November
22, 1979.*

Die Young Kennedy Jean

With Marilyn Monroe so close to JFK already, we can further illuminate the proximity by a careful look at the last name, Kennedy. As you know, *i* and *j* are close to each other because of an allophonic relation and an alphabetical one. One angles off by sound, the other by swift economic succession in anybody's memory of the Roman alphabet. The second relation occurs when we move from *j* to *k*, and here it is from the *j* in John to *k* in Kennedy. The *j* in Marilyn's hidden name, Jean, moves in the place of the *k* in Kennedy, producing the following substitution: *Jennedy*.

Jennedy can then be easily transposed into *Jeannedy*. The extra *n* can either be a part of the name Jean as in Jeann(e) or part of the *nedy* at the end of Kennedy. Without the *n* in *nedy* we get the following letters, *edy*. Recombined we obtain *dye*. *Dye* is a homonym of *die*. *Jean die* is thus a derivation from these unravelings. It is in the name Kennedy even before Norma Jean ever met a Kennedy. By retaining Kennedy or *Jennedy*, it could be read as: Jean end, or as the participle for die or dye, jean dying/dyeing. Thus *Jennedy* gives us *Jean die*, *Jean dye*, *Jean dying*, *Jean dyeing*, and *Jean end*. The elimination of the *y* for *Jean end* is necessary in light of the idea of a Jean who will die, of a Jean whose life will terminate, will end. The *dye* or *dyeing* resonates with Marilyn's practice of *dyed* blonde hair, not to mention the fact that she *died* young.

Since the word *youth* occurs so often with the Kennedys and Marilyn (either in her own apprehension of aging or the public's estimation that she was "youthful" when she died), I propose *Jean* is an angle thrown to *young* and vice versa. *Jean/young* crisscrosses with mutual attraction. Young people wear jeans. N. Jean was very young, especially when Jean was her surname before she was bestowed with the pseudonym

Marilyn. As well, the Kennedy's/Je(a)nned'y's were young. A young Kennedy, a young N. Jean, jeans worn by young people, young people in love with a Kennedy are some of the constellations arising from Jean/Kennedy/young. Furthermore jeans worn by old people are incongruous, they're usually wearing slacks and other dry-cleaned articles.

Did the young Jean wear young or new jeans, fading them with wear as she was fading into her thirties? We were shocked to find out one morning, when we were about to put on our jeans that Norma Jean had just died, and then mourning set in. If we had decided to wear a young pair of dark blue jeans at the time, then the days that they took to fade would have approximated the days that Norma Jean would have faded from public attention. This fading of our jeans would have cast them into a lighter color, a dyeing of them, so that they would no longer be young. Yet the fading of Norma Jean from public attention is not true. Whatever is happening is not dyeing as demonstrated by the pleasure that countless Americans feel when they let their young jeans fade.

A more technical note: *j* and *y* are similar to each other by being at once semivocalic and semiconsonantal. A *young jean* is a near rhyme. The diphthongs *ou* and *ea* are nearly symmetrical inversions of the vowel series a-e-i-o-u (with the exclusion of *y*, although *i* tends to replace its phonic character). *A* begins the series, but here an *e* is needed for *e* is first in *jean*. Taken as a unit, *ac* or *ea* inverts an upper mouth articulation to a lower mouth one with the *ou* unit in *young*. J(*ea*)n turns into y(*ou*)ng. The important point is that this upper mouth vocalic unit is opposed in a kind of glottal counterpoint to the lower mouth vocalic unit: *jean* to *young*. The two nasals (*n* and *ng*) are only differentiated by the glottalized nasal *ng*, otherwise they're nearly identical. Young (new) jeans worn by young people. Young Norma Jean wearing young (new) jeans. Young and old are caught in an imaginary opposition at the level of *jean/young*, *Jean/young*, principally when jeans get old, they wear down, they're worn

(down), the very worn in Norma. (The *m* in *morn* becomes a *w* in *worn*.) Jeans are not on a non-young Jean.

John and young too are highly similar, not only in circumstance, but in phonic affinity. The young John and the young Jean both died, ended young. Young Kennedy ended young. Young Jean dyed worn, mourn(ed) young.

Australis

From mid-November to the end of December 1979 I lived in Melbourne, Australia. During my stay there I wrote the following impressions.

The first stop over from New York was in Los Angeles. I checked into a motel that had color television, a treat since I could hallucinate what my invisible Australia might have in store. A Peter O'Toole movie was on, fixing my attention because of his blondness and British origin. He could have been Australian since his fairness and accent evoked what was by then of intense curiosity for me. On another channel, Tab Hunter, another blonde, appeared in a Poe-based movie (derived from "*City Under the Sea*"). The movie's seascapes confirmed what would probably be seen *en route*. Poe, if you recall "*MS. Found in a Bottle*", thought that the North and South Poles were great whirlpools. The story in question took place on a ship sailing past "New Holland," an archaic term for Australia. It encounters a massive and ghostly ship, having on board ancient mariners. As they near the southernmost part of the carth, the whirlpool plunges them into its "gigantic amphitheatre" and the last words written in this abyss were "the ship is quivering—oh God! and—going down!" The other movie was a BBC production, replete with English accents. A car salesman's cowboy hat reminded me of a similar variant on the head of a New York male model in an advertisement for Qantas airlines.

On board the LA-Sydney flight I sat next to four young Maori men. My ultra-blonde Aryanism (I had tinted my hair months ago) would be a perfect contrast to the dark Maoris. White European meat mirror-inverted with black Micronesian meat. *Superman* was the on-board movie. My immediate Maori neighbor enjoyed it greatly. (He exchanged his proper name with me, even though he uttered

it unintelligibly.) How strange to let that cinematic event enter their minds before stepping onto their sandy soil, their lonely beaches and originally natural jungles! When Lothar's evil became so monstrous, Superman's efforts to defeat it became just as excessive. Superman then reversed time to undo Lothar's meddling and so saved Lois Lane from death. This reversal of time (while I was approaching the International Date Line) was prompted by the spirit of Jorel-Marlon Brando who chastises his son's presumptuousness. When that scene occurred Brando's face was floating in space. An eternity of stars in outer space can only be the eternity of movie stars ("stars never die"), with Jorel-Marlon Brando being in either place.

After stopping off in Pago-Pago the Australian accents around me were increasing, shading my enthusiasm for the phonetic differences heard in my East Village apartment when I fell in love with a boy from Melbourne.

Sydney finally appeared through the portals, unbelievable in its mass of tiny lights, its phenomenality distinct from its past *National Geographic* reproduction.

Immediate impressions. Large ads for out-of-the-way Australian locales. Big and colorful like their American equivalents. Currency exchange showed Australia's coins to be heavy and thick and its bills depicted historical personages totally obscure to me. Like the colored ads, the money celebrated something, all in green, blue, red and orange. The reversal of street directions happens when everything that is on the leftside in the U.S. becomes rightsided here. "Very disorienting" as the Australians would say. No tipping, a puzzling relief from mentally calculating 15% all the time on my territory. Different cigarettes (I'll still inhale Marlboros), candy bars, newspapers, magazines. Foreign, strange, but still accessible because English is spoken here, although Australians tend to revere a "proper" English accent.

Australians practically look the same as Americans. There are differences, but nearly imperceptible. The media prototypes are both Australian and American, America hav-

ing saturated this country with its Madison Avenue imagery while Australia inserts and re-edits its own versions.

My flight to Melbourne featured nearly all businessmen, thus a commuter flight. Sunlight, male pilot, male cargo, Australian frontier below, avoidance of gazes, no discussion with any businessman neighbor mandated intense paranoia. The few stewardesses couldn't relieve the apprehension. At least they diffused it momentarily when they gave us apples, biscuits and coffee.

From the plane Melbourne seemed flat and yellowish, its dwellings spread out over a vast, arid plain. On the ground, I noticed the proverbial gum tree, a prehistoric species growing amidst industrial objects. My friend's black leather jacket and the Mercedes-Benz spelled recent ciphers when we drove down a highway on one of the earth's oldest geological bodies. He chose classical music on the radio as I smiled to the atemporality of everything in my view.

Knowing that Antarctica is nearby puzzles those who live in the Northern Hemisphere. South and North are just as arbitrary as the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's mental image of a tree with *arbre*. Beyond the clouds that the plane flew over from Sydney to Melbourne lies that continent my "Gold Order of Latitude Zero" (a document testifying to my crossing the equator) displays as one consolidated and confused with Australia. It is from a very old map reproduced in a corner on the document. A few days after my flight a New Zealand Airlines tourist charter crashed into Antarctica's uninhabitable, life-terminating cold. At this point in Roman calendar time, my death had failed by being warm in Melbourne.

While driving into Melbourne from the airport my companion pointed to a purple-painted locale called the "Crystal Ballroom" a punk-rock hangout for Melbourne's vampires of London/New York consumables. We also drove past an amusement park that featured a human head whose mouth served as the entrance, its artificial teeth ready to devour us Jonahs in search of non-work-time enthrallment.

On my first night in Melbourne I went to a gay disco called "Babes." I had not washed my hair knowing that fluffy blonde hair is a criterion of attractiveness in such places. I wore a green and black New Wave ensemble hoping that the Melbournites would want that typically New York item. The disco played songs that weren't as current as the ones played by New York's WBLS, but they were very close. DJ's here only play "new" songs. A TV movie was concurrently showing, thus reducing everything to an intense *scopos* or gazing. There, the music and fashions exemplified America's and Europe's high circulation of their texts onto foreign, receptive territory. Australia duplicates the process with the Bee Gees, Olivia Newton-John, *Playboy* and *Playgirl* models onto nation states in the Northern Hemisphere.

Because Australia is racist in its immigration policies, there were no blacks within sight. Usually in New York at such a similar place you see plenty of black and Latin people. The paradox is in the music, the black man's contribution to the white man's pleasure. Donna Summer was played and danced to, probably resung on the white audience's lips even when there was no black skin within sight. Just as America's imaginary opposition oscillates from black to white, so does Australia's from Italians and Greeks to its fair, Northern European (mostly British or Irish) extractions. Here it's more or less an opposition of brunette, rapidly tanable bodies to blonde, less tanable bodies.

In Australia Mediterranean peoples are much sought after, either in government immigration policies or in the perennial impulse of Northern Europe that seeks its origin in Greece and Rome. Australia is a European prosthesis, like Italy and Greece are. Italy's shoe-like shape (reproduced in many cafes in Melbourne) and Greece's multiple peninsulas that add up to an even larger one confirm Australia's half-island, half-continent problem. Italy could be an island cut off from the rest of Europe like Greece could be as well, nearly detachable pieces of land. The Latin word *paene*, almost, is joined with *insula*, island. These almost islands are also identical to an almost island, Australia.

Australia's duplication of England makes the small island a much larger one, nearly a continent, compensating for England's diminution.

Traveling from England to Italy or Greece is also like traveling to Australia, even if the distance to Australia is so much greater. Australia has a Mediterranean climate although the seasons are reversed. When England is cold, Italy and Greece are warmer, Australia even warmer. For what is northern, Australia inverts the hemispheric designation to southern, just as Italy and Greece are in comparison to Northern Europe. *Australis* is Latin for southern, made, of course, into the major proper name for this former colony of England. Leisure, cultivated in those two Mediterranean climes, is also cultivated here. Life is easy here, a cliché acting as relief from the hard-working Protestant England when its citizens vacation in Italy, Greece or Australia.

During Christmas time some perverse Australians could have celebrated it with a beach party. I can imagine a portable color TV set on a beach playing *White Christmas*. The final scene when the stage opens up to reveal falling snow would have been reversed by 100° F temperatures and a blazing sun overhead. Of course their Xmas picnic turkey will have been "cold" and not "hot."

During the first few evenings I drank a great deal of white wine, not beer. I felt that beer was too typically an Australian toxin, even though "white wine" evoked my assimilation of dry weather, white skin, European propriety and connoisseurship. Before I left for this country I had heard of their beer drinking. "Those Australians and their beer," groaned an English woman at my recently vacated job. In Melbourne there is an unusual juxtaposition of landmarks on one of its central streets, Swanston Street. On one end of it stands a sign in bright large letters, "CUB." with the *U* lowered and slightly overlapping the *C*, confusing me into thinking the *C* was a *G*. I read it as "GUB" for several days until I saw it as an abbreviation for "Carlton United Breweries." "Gub, gub" resembles a sound that fish make or the "glub, glub" involved in drinking, a comic strip onomatopoeia.

Below this sign are the words “Victoria Bitter.” Opposite this is the other landmark, a large monument entitled “The Shrine of Remembrance.” It is quite imposing and I believe echoes the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus. With a beer advertisement opposing a shrine to the some 60,000 “Anzacs” or dead Australian war veterans, I was alerted to the detail that on the “Day of Remembrance” the celebrants drink beer, perhaps Carlton Draught. Remembering the dead is appropriately extended into the ingestion of beer. Anzacs were “drafted” and their deaths are remembered by drinking “draught,” a word once spoken is identical to “draft,” a detail that always confuses me.

Beer is often symbolic, in substitutive fashion, of the the body’s expulsion of urine. Beer is called “piss,” getting drunk is “getting pissed.” Everyone has to urinate yellow urea after several glasses of beer. The “Anzacs” must have pissed a great deal in Europe together in their all-male encampments. Lavatories for men are the only places permitting them to see their genitalia, but the urine is the most visible factor, since shame only meets the curious man who dares stare at a male organ other than his own. Urine is thus seen, not the cock. Men who drink beer then drink the urine, and on this day, the urine of the dead, only to propel them into closer contact with the befallen victims of war.

The “Victoria Bitter” (printed right below the “CUB” motif) also condenses a variety of other motifs. “Victoria” is the state where Melbourne lies. *State* and *taste* are anagrams of each other. The state of Victoria taste(s) bitter. Beer is bitter and so are memories of war dead. “Victoria” is from Queen Victoria, England’s former “Queen Mother” for well over half a century, the century that witnessed Australia’s colonization. Australia’s ambivalence is expressed neatly here. Either they’re bitter about the Queen that authorized their transplantation or they’re bitter about being on a soil that is also their mother, a “Queensland.” This soil is a rock, a big rock, and the mother is a rock. The primordial opposition of good objects to bad objects in the child’s initial symbolic universe applies to its nurturing mother, a mother, a queen or

rock one can love and also be “bitter” about. Australia’s aridity is what its citizens can be bitter about. And after 1901, the time of Queen Victoria’s death, Australia gained its independence, even though it is still aligned to its mother state/taste.

Where does all this urine from Australia’s beer go? It goes into the vast sea surrounding this continent/island. And seawater is bitter, salty, just as urine is too. (Beer, no doubt, is often drunk with salty popcorn or pretzels.) Victoria’s land is surrounded by a bitter substance, seawater. Like beer, seawater foams. Maternally evocative seawater is undrinkable, but beer isn’t. Furthermore all those soldiers or Anzacs went by ship to Europe at the time of World War 1. Beer-seawater-urine enters in these derivative, dilatory ways into the Australian unconscious. To drink bitter draught while remembering drafted war dead is to drink the saltwater they touched, either when alive or when their wounded or dead returned over a vast, salty ocean. And those buried in Europe shall not return from their cemeteries save through a soil that has conquered their flesh, the decomposition drifting to the land, the mother, the “Victoria” that gave birth to them, the mother bitter over the saltwater separating her from the children that cannot return to her womb of soil.

Smoking in Australia appears entirely suited to this sun-drenched, dry land. A bushfire is substitutively repeated everytime an Australian lights his or her cigarette. The desert-like climates here make tobacco into the sensation of dryness itself. Tobacco parches your lungs, just as the desert parches you, dehydrates you. Smoking is a depriving of oxygen and water, all for the fire of leaves, a fire inside the bodies that mimics the dryness of land outside the envelopes of skin.

“Camels” need to be smoked in the desert, and Australia has its “Great Victoria Desert.” “Marlboros” are smoked by cowboys, men who ride horses on arid land, a land that is wild, untillable. “Longbeach” makes the sand of deserts or beaches “long,” stretched out, vaster. And the water at a beach (a backdrop for their ads), as has been indicated, is undrinkable. In these ads, it is usually men who dry their

throats, this was at least observed in a “Longbeach” ad where a woman swims while a man smokes. If this woman swimming had wet, red hair, if she had been a “redhead,” her hair would have then been too wet to light the cigarette the man was contemplating to smoke, since “Redheads” are a brand of matches that light nearly all of Australia’s cigarettes. On the package of Redheads, a woman’s face is framed by the book’s remaining red color field. Each match also has a red tip of sulphur, resembling of course the cigarette that will be lit soon after the match’s ignition.

Marlboro commercials on Australian media have the same cowboy imagery that their American equivalents have. Australia and America can share the common mythology of horsemen, cattle rustlers, outlaws. For lack of a better mythology, Australians half-guiltily consume what appears to be a dominant force in their country, the oversaturation of American symbols as opposed to their own.

The Australian woman is in a highly male-affectionate culture. The frontiersman had to live in male coterie in order to advance Protestantism, capitalist sedentarization, etc. into the Australian wilderness. The 19th century Australian and American gold discoveries also aided the homosexual anal drive of which this cowboy culture (reinforced by its excessive American importation) still feels the pressure. San Francisco, largely male homosexual, has a lot of “golddiggers” as does Sydney. Both America and Australia have the frontiersman mythology, enforced by gold-mining, sodomization *via* sunlight, and an aggressive imagery that excludes the non-white native. Men *together* massacred what inverted their mirror-stage plenitudes, the aborigine, the Indian. Women, in a culture that valorizes these traces of nineteenth century activity, are still effaced in the latter part of the twentieth. Men or “mates” are still content to fraternize to the exclusion of women in their pubs (“drink more beer” becomes in the vernacular “suck more piss”), and women still accept exclusion. Men only need an absolute woman, a Queen (or an island) to pursue their intentions in male-to-male affiliation.

The sun's strength on this island is intense. Its strength is a symbol for the Father. Not being able to see it directly testifies to its prowess, otherwise one becomes blind, blind in the eyes, substitutive and displacable with one's testicles. Australians know the sun's power here. Rituals of tanning and skin protection ward off the omnipresence of the star while also admitting to the delight over its mastery. Sodomization by the sun evidences itself in a submission to its omnipresence, as in the instance of a woman in an ad where her derrier is pointed to the very thing that will make her more golden or blonde. I tend to stay away from too much sun because it's so hard for me to tan with ease, unless I'm methodical, but then that becomes tiresome. Even my name *Duncan Howard Smith* can become totally anagrammatized into *Can't Do Hard Sun Whim*, an observation that unsettled me before I came here.

Australia's animals convey its ultra-archaic, absolute otherness. Mammals, like the platypus and the echidna, are unusual because they lay eggs, yet are still within the phylum *Mammalia*. The kangaroo, a marsupial (they carry their young in pouches or traces of pouches while nursing them), and a very large one at that, made Sylvester the cartoon cat mistake it for a gigantic mouse. On the same cartoon series, *The Bugs Bunny Show*, the Tasmanian Devil becomes the most ferocious animal in the minds of its young viewers. The animals here support the common opinion that Australia is exotic, strange, nonmundane. They tend to fall into the characteristics of science fiction denizens or some clever novelist's conjuring of an imaginary realm. A "wombat" sounds like such a fantastical construction.

A wilderness TV show edified me as to the peculiarities of Australian wildlife, namely its freak of evolution, the marsupial. The show's narrator conjectured that these pouch-bearing animals came from North America, across the Bering Strait through Asia, then Indonesia, and finally Australia. A land-bridge connected Australia hundreds of millions of years ago to Indonesia, and as they propagated on this southernmost continent, the land-bridge severed itself from Asia. Thereupon the marsupials adapted to the

variances in temperature, terrain and flora, coming up with the bizarre species people so often associate with Australia. As metaphor for Australia's status, the Australian artist just might exploit its rarities of climate and geography. Evolving into totally eccentric and other paths would be the aesthetic credo, rather than assimilating the cultural resources of more industrialized nations and urban milieus. Nature has made the oddities of fauna in this locale just as the Australian artist could make totally odd and perfectly indigenous creations, by-products of an environment found nowhere else.

Australia's geological age has often been asserted to me. Since its hills are more weathered and its flora and fauna reflect millenia of evolution, rather than the recent evolution of species in Asia and North America, everyone points out these as indicia of great antiquity. Antediluvian it is, and the 1770–1980 span is such a tiny fraction in time. This notion of Western time is what in Australia, at least in its aboriginal horizon, cannot be tenable. Aborigines have a term, "the Dreamtime," for the interval when no man had consciousness on this land. The transformation of an ancient landscape into rectangular grids and a *chronos* that begins from a Mediterranean idol's birth seems ridiculous and arbitrary here. "Yahweh" was not uttered in Melbourne, but abroad. Australia revives Europe on a soil no one can trace back to a self-present origin, nor can Europe do so in its Mediterranean postponement. The age and alterity of this continent/island haunts the computer card facades of modern skyscrapers. The *ratio* of the West shudders before the nonhistorical sedimentation of a country that has now been given a "proper" name. Marble foundations dig into a mother's flesh, a mother whose name they have borrowed from another rock, England, with its "Victoria." The birth of culture in Australia has begun over the past two centuries, although those sensitive to that contemporaneity know that "Australia" has never had its perfect beginning, its first youth. Europe began exhausting its culture at the moment it underwent imperial expansion. In so doing, Europe could not assert a universal intelligence up against cultures far more eccentric to its claims of absolute

sovereignty. At the time of Australia's colonization, Europe was violently repudiating its loss of a full speech, of a culture self-affectionately moving toward its origin, its youth, its alphabet. And "Australia" had to be named, vocalized in Roman letters, all for another origin to reign when no origin had ever taken place.

On the Current Symbolic Status of Oil

Oil, a highly treasured possession in industrialized countries, resonates vast and intricate meanings. This presentation will deal with oil and its attenuations in our daily lives. Bear in mind that these meanings are not in access to consciousness, but say that which is not being said: the same thing, here oil, is then shown in its (auto)difference.

What is different in our autos, our selves? What is now different to ourselves, our autos?

To begin this discussion of oil, the idea of the car needs to be explored. The car, so important to America's image of itself, is its *autos*, the Greek word for self. The American self or ego bears its reflection within the image of its citizen and his/her car. The word *ego* here is crucial. Reverse the letters and you have *goe* or without the *e*, *go*. *Goes* and *egos* are then anagrams, perfect redistributions of the letters in those words. In a car one goes, drives, and in light of the above, the American ego has a car that lets him/her go(e). Indeed *I go* sounds like *ego*.

The ego holds onto an object, and the common image for that object is one's self-reflection. How many times have we seen commercials for car wax where the end result of scrubbing a car begets a sheeny surface, a mirror for the car's proud owner? The sheeny, mirror-like car is then the owner's pride, for his neighbor has a not-so-sheeny car. The not-so-sheeny car owner will then want his car to be as sheeny as his neighbor's, thus making the dull car mirrorlike as well, reflective of the second party's beaming face.

Egos become aggressive when counterparts threaten the units of this "I" or ego with its objects. Cars, often used in aggressive situations, form an indigenous part of America's

mythologies of strength, endurance, risk, mastery. The game “chicken” shows this aggression perfectly. Either party must liquidate the other, a fundamental condition of the ego when it witnesses a treathening counterpart. Car races affirm this facet of the ego, the car that goes faster than other competing egos: “I *goe* faster than that other *ego*.” Large car companies, such as General Motors and the Ford Motor Company, vie with each other for mastery over the car profit market, just as they compete in another specular battle against non-American car companies such as Toyota or Volkswagen. The car as ego will automatically take place in these struggles for specular mastery. Examples abound: showing off a new car by driving around the block, driving and passing another car on the highway, killing oneself or killing another ego/car goer, demonstrating that suicide or murder are conditions for both the ego and the car.

On another note the non-car driver compares himself to the car driver. Either too poor or proud to have a car, they resent the imposition of cars on their daily routines as car drivers resent the courtesies they must extend to the pedestrian. I goe in a car *vis-à-vis* I goe on foot.

Cars, as everyone knows, are powered by oil, a condition that powerful interests have aligned Western countries, America in particular, to for many decades. Oil is the law for a car’s operation, and the law, or as the French would say, *la loi*, is oil. The *loi*/law of oil is thus necessary for the American car to go anywhere. And where will the ego goe without oil, without a car? Heretofore the *loi* has always been cars driven by oil. This is witnessed by the failure of steam driven and electrically powered cars to have any success on the internal combustion machine market, the present-day oil powered cars made in Detroit. Without the *loi* of oil (conditioned by car companies and oil companies), there would be the likelihood of no oil, no oil for egos to goe on. This is the supreme threat to America’s ego for without it nothing will goe, unless America’s interests liquidate the aggressive, oil-hoarding counterpart. Goe over there....

Within the car there is a radio, and within the word car there is the anagram RCA. Originally a company aligned to the technical innovation of transmitting sound over distances, RCA became equatable with the radio. And nearly every car has a radio or RCA (letterally) within it.

Cars and radios are thus in intimate connection, rhetorically a metonymic one. What is interesting is that cars are powered by oil just as radios, in association, are powered by oil. Both are in conjunction with oil, cars burn oil while radios play oil, that is, records, made of oil or vinyl, are played over the apparatus of a radio. The car that burns oil reproduces the radio that plays oil, here records, an oil-derived product. Even the word *radio* has two essential letters for *car*.

Again without oil our cars or RCA could not go. The loss of oil to power our cars is as threatening as the loss of oil/vinyl/records for our RCA, our popular music, played over the car radio, the *radio* cryptically echoing the *car* it is contained in. We hear the radio with our ears, noting another similarity between *car* and *ear*. *Ears* hear the *car radio*. Also, *ear* is within *hear*. Since we have ended up identifying with our cars so much, we've also ended up identifying with the stars our ears hear, our popular musicians heard on music stations over the radio. Elvis Presley loved cars, which is inevitable since he was signed over to the record company RCA. America loves cars and loves to hear Elvis Presley. The lack of oil will then make loving cars and hearing rock stars an impossibility (since their voices are on an oil/vinyl record).

Ears have wax in them. Wax too is synonymous with oil, as demonstrated by the title for a hit record called *Hot Wax*, now transformable into *Hot Oil*. There is already oil in our ears, the wax, enforced by the idea that there is oil in our cars, in our radios. To be close to the music played over the radio seems to be a condition we have already met up with because the wax/oil makes the distantly playing record much more interior and proximate. Popular music resolves this distance by using words in songs that are exchangeable with its listeners. We then presume the sung material to be our very own, our "feelings." Singing the record to oneself is

an introjection, an interiorization of the distant singer. The singer is brought closer to ourselves, just as the unconscious idea is one of already possessing that record inside our ears, but as ear wax or ear oil.

Around the time that cars and radios were assuming their egological power over American citizens, UFO's were being cited in great numbers. You could surmise this bit of common knowledge to be widespread around the beginning of the 1950s, the beginning of a wide scale introjection of records played on car radios. UFO?'s, or flying saucers, were also often cited from people's ears. I'll venture a correspondence that might illuminate these mutual car/radio/UFO phenomena. A flying saucer is a *disco*, the Spanish word for saucer or disc. A UFO is often described as a disc-like object, resembling in many instances, a record. Since a record playing on the radio cannot be seen, a UFO can, though very rarely. To see a UFO, to be the lucky person, is also the desire, the delusion to see the *disco*, disc or record that we never see in a car when the radio plays that record/music we enjoy so much. And that playing record is a burning one, a condensation that accounts for the reported brilliance of UFO's, the UFO's that are brightly lighted, lighted as if on fire or burning. Granted the accounts of people who might have truly seen a saucer, it also bespeaks a delirious curiosity, at heart a desire to *see* as opposed to *hear* what those purely heard saucers look like. And their appearance is conditioned by the confusion of burning and playing, transforming the UFO disc into a bright, fiery object.

Furthermore when a radio plays a song, we have no visual equivalent as to how that sound reached the ear, the car's radio or the radios in our homes. A flying saucer, seen by someone, is the visual transmission of a purely auditory stimulus. And with our reflexes reduced to staring (while driving) so much, the mysterious radio sound is perforce given its sheer visual support, a record that flies into our car. The quickness of the radio signal is also in relation to the UFO, that ultra-fast disc. Crazy as this idea might seem, it fits in with the craziness of the teenagers then who loved to listen

to car radios as were those people called “crazy” if they saw a UFO, or *fou*, the French word for mad or crazy. People who hear pop music go crazy like the people who see UFO discs. A record, a picce of wax, a waxen disc, flies into my ear, a nonidentifiable object, a nonvisual object, the sound. Already crazy with a nonscopic sound in my car, the record/wax sound makes me crazier and the record/wax/*disco*/UFO makes me the craziest, since I’m really seeing what I can only hear. Incidentally, a major record and stereo equipment entrepreneur goes by the name “Crazy Eddie.”

When cars go or drive on tar, they drive over the asphalt on such roads. Without asphalt or tar, there would be no surface for a car to drive on, no tar or oil for a car to drive with and no tar or sound from the records heard over the car radio to listen to. A car travels along a road, a path,-a trail. These are the “grooves” on a road, associative with the “grooves” on a record. Road equals record, since both are derived from oil, roads being made of asphalt and records composed of vinyl, derived as asphalt is, of oil products.

The stylus that plays the record is the car that drives along the road. A record’s turning motion allows the stylus to move. The turntable is powered by electricity, often a transformation of energy from oil. A stylus, besides being a writing instrument, is also related to a ship’s prow, the edge that cuts through water. Every car has a hood, a “prow” of sorts. Ships travel as do cars, one on water, the other on land. Both are called “she.” The car/ship has a stylus, podium, prow that cuts along a path, and thus its mark or trail is made. The wake of churned-up water is the ship’s path as the drippings of oil is the car’s path. The oil drippings of cars are the indicia of a car’s path (not to mention its tire marks). The record’s sound from an LP is the index of a stylus’ path. Sound travels on tar/oil/vinyl records as cars travel on tar/oil/asphalt. Thus a stylus traveling down a record groove is an allegory of a car traveling down a road.

In another vein, without oil there would be no art. In *art*, there’s the word *tar*, an anagram. Tar is derived from oil. Painters, of course, use oil to make their art. There are many

kinds of oil, or many tars: vinyl, records, acrylic, etc. Artists need tar. Artist-musicians need tar/oil, the same kind of tar that's involved in the manufacture of records. Painters and musicians employ different art forms or they use different tar forms. Some of them can become a star after becoming successful with their art made of tar, such tar allowing them to goe far. The anagrams arts/tars/star are crucial to the symbols that determine an identification in our culture.

With stars on tars doing arts, the lack of oil threatens their activity too. No oil means no arts, not a single star because of the lack of tars. Again without art or tars or star(s), what will that do to star(ing), what will happen to our sight, since no arts/star(s) will be able to be looked at? What films will we see and what car windows will we look through? As well, no ear wax/oil/tars/arts/star(s) over the car's radio also means an imminent crisis for our hearing. No records played or burned, no RCA and no car, means no sound heard as it means no oil for cars to drive on. Not being able to see and hear, taken in their sense as drives, is also a lack of the energy or oil to keep those drives goeing. The other drives, the oral and anal, also derive from this collapse of culturally shared images, pleasurewords, mythologies and *lois*. Thus an ego will then not goe without being driven by the four-wheeled drives of the apertures of our bodies, our bodies that have energy or oil along with the rims or sources from which to discharge that energy: the ears, the eyes, the mouth and the anus. Egos go(es) to drive with oil and aim at oil. Oil drives us from one state of oil to another state/taste of oil.

To taste oil introduces oil's relation to the third gear of the oral drive, noting another phonic resemblance. America's addiction to tar is as bad as its addiction to the tar in cigarettes. Even low-*tar* or *ultra* low-*tar* cigarettes resonate with the desire to move away from tar, too much tar, too much oil. Low-mileage cars are really low in tar as some cigarettes are. Low-*tar* cigarettes are a "rationing" of tar, like the inevitable "rationing" of oil when supplies get low. The oral drive, exemplified by smoking, is also present in the repetitive and pleasurable activity in listening to songs over

the radio, on the jukebox, on one's stereo. Both smoking and listening involve tar/art and oil/vinyl records. Both are an inhalation, since with smoking one interiorizes tar and in the other, in listening, one can interiorize *via* the mouth the record's voice. Resinging a popular song that is played on oil is inhaling a cigarette that has "tar" in it. Introjection is an oral affair, and the record assures us of oral stimulation by the silent, but still vocalized, activity undergoing when we listen, when we hear the wax in our ear that we cannot see. True, the car wax is invisible, the partition between seeing the ear's contents and the eye that is to accomplish that act is permanent, unless you were enterprising enough to have a photograph taken of it. Oil is not only in our cars, but in our ears, in our eyes (our *stares*), and in our mouths. A cigarette, believe it or not, is a small car, an *i caret get*, an *I get(te) a car*, or simplified, an *I get car*. Car's thyme with tar could mean *I get tar* for *cigarette*. "I smoke *cigarettes*" can translate into either "I smoke *I get cars*" or "I smoke *I get tars*." With smoking, the cigarette's smoke is similar to the exhaust that comes from a car, the remains of burnt-up car oil are also the remains of burnt-up tar. But is the cigarette filter's passage of smoke the only "exhaust" when we, as smokers, exhale the "exhaust" from our mouth? The exhaust of a car resembles either the cigarette smoke that then passes through the lungs, throat and mouth, as an exhalation, as exhaust. Smoking a cigarette is then an allegory of a car burning oil as both of them spew forth "exhaust."

Another attenuation of the oral/oil drive. The LP for a vinyl record could bear an *i* between the letters *l* and *p*, producing *lip*. *LPs* are sung on our *lips*, our singing reproduces the singing on the record. *Lip synch* is *LP synch*, a truism to the argument that our culture is heavily involved in the introjection, the filling of an oral void, of records and oil.

Also, introjecting oil is implicated in the confusion as to whether oil is water or not. Oil is not water, but then water is a liquid, just as oil is.

The fourth gear in the "drive" is the anal drive.

Oil companies have a lot of gold from all the money they've made. Gold and oil are nearly synonymous, since their prices affect the status of the world market so radically. Oil is precious, but more precious in its refined state. Black, crude, "dirty," the oil is originally shitty. Refined, made clean by oil refinery, sewage system plants, the oil loses its shittiness and becomes more valuable, like gold, and circulatable, rather than in its less valuable, "dirty," crude state.

But if oil is shitty in its crude state and then valuable in its refined state, a hit record, or one of the *hits*, here was once *shit*, since *shit* and *hits* are anagrams of each other. From crude oil equals shit to refined oil or vinyl equals hits as in the phrase "Top 40 Hits" (Shit), oil will always bear the meaning of its excremental status. Records, as texts, are involved in the problematic of being "extrinsic excrement" or "intrinsic ideality" (Derrida). Oil pollutes too, as in oil slicks or massive refinery plant fires. The dead remnants of prehistoric forests left their rich deposits behind so as to fuel our possessions. Oil is the manure of ancient forests just as it is a manure when "crude" or "dirty" before it is cleaned and refined into the Top 40 Hits (Shit) vinyl LPs. The anal drive completes oil's four-wheel drive that helps the American (to) drive.

Also the anality of oil is prefigured in the means to mine it. Drilling into the earth to yield the riches (Atlantic *Richfield*) withheld by resistant layers of crust obeys sadistic, coprophagic ideas. (Coprophagia is "feeding off dung.") For the earth to withhold its riches is much like the constipated retention of *fæces* that enemas or in similar fashion oil rigs relieve.

Oil is gold and gold is shit. Thus oil is shit, either because it resembles shit (dark, untouchable, nauseating, hidden from view) or because its extremely valued state allows us to compare it with what is the least valued as gold is with shit. Gifts, and the symbology derived from them, obey oblativ, anal drive ideas. Oil companies and oil rich countries give us oil, or they, in their withholding, retain the precious gift. This is sadism in its truest sense. Furthermore, concern over the profits oil companies make propels moral ideas as to a more

proper distribution, another facet of the oblique character of the anal drive. The shit/oil/gold should be circulated in equivalent amounts, otherwise retention forces those lacking into accusations of hoarding, another anal motif.

America's desire to ration its oil supplies demonstrates what attenuations the anal drive can go to. Frugality and judicious use of oil are not without their sadistic connotations, a sodomy done to all, while elsewhere lurks the greater sadists, Arabia and the large oil companies.

The unseen character of oil, its abstractness, after all this gross materiality, and its transformation into fire, energy, combustion, etc. is another important idea. I've already tried to explain that with records/oil played/burned on an RCA/car, the unseen disc of vinyl returns in the form of a flying saucer. Oil's invisibility returns in the form of a *disco/disc/vinyl* record that flies into the car/RCA burning or playing the music. This music is the beat that goes/egos on, drives egos on. Oil is usually the fuel that our eyes do not see. Oftentimes it is a simple mathematical quota in terms of the car's registration that the fuel is low. It can also be the rapid calculation of gallons and fractions of gallons seen at the gas pump along with its calculation into a price at another adjacent window on the pump. Its abstract character is further testified by its facilitation of general movement from one place to another. Oil is simply energy, and that energy makes things happen, but energy is not the thing, the idea, it simply allows the thing or idea or event to take place. Like the crucial distinction in psychoanalysis between idea and instinct, oil is instinct, the drive to which the idea is "soldered." Oil determines the drive's energy as well as the object of the drive, the oil-related product. The record's idea, its music, is made possible by its oil/vinyl as are the housewife's errands made possible by car fuel. Oil drives the car just as ideas are aligned to drives, the economic factors that account for the ideas' repetition, their persistence. There can be no idea without its concomitant energetic investment, no idea without the pressure that realizes it. Conversely there can be no energy without an idea attached to such a quantity-ridden abstraction, a

notion prey to alinguistic, transcendental assertions. Oil neither escapes its idea, its conceptual, linguistic, presentational status nor does it escape its energetic quanta, its reducibility to simple distributions of affects. The word *oil* is just as important as its unseen combustions terious pervasiveness that organizes things while at the same time remains invisible to them.

There is the vulgarity of those who stress pure, nonverbal ascensions into absolute energy, vibration, impulse, quanta, etc. They are at once giving an idea to a sensation (a sign too), this distribution of pressures that is never independent of representation, language, speaking subjects, discourse.

The fad of jogging is a near mystical embrace of this idea of pure energy, but why would they be jogging but in a time bound situation where the deprivation of oil or energy insists that they have vitality, a lot of energy or oil? Joggers presume their freedom from oil at the very moment when their livelihoods are threatened by its absence. The fastest jogger inversely affirms a slowing down of the *I go* in cars. One reminder: *race* and *car*. Eliminate the *e* in *race* and permute the rest of the letters into *car*. Joggers are in a race, a strange car race. Even the *ger* in *jogger* echoes *car* (*c* and *g* are both velar stops). Mania, here in the jogger, is close to mourning, where the oil-ideal (usually an ego-ideal) is now about to become lost forever to the historical specificity of driving oil-powered automobiles.

Other movement manias, the discomania and the roller skating mania, are close to the problem of the disappearance of oil. Dancing in discos and roller skating obey the general idea of movement and lots of it. Disco music is the music that is in our ears whose ear *wax* is also the *oil* that constitutes the records played over sound systems. Hearing oil is also moving to it and being driven by it. Dancing and its euphonic embrace, this mania for the ego in perfect self-presentation, is only about to mourn the loss of what makes the dancers go so energetically, the oil record or the car/ear oil/wax under question. When we dance our ears are driven by oil and when we drive our cars are driven by oil.

Oil as instinct will probably find its greatest threat in the future when no oil makes impossible libidinal contact with others. The freedom for a young man and woman in a car, flaunting parental admonitions against sex, to have that pleasure (and the car/RCA/radio music that serves to express that impulse) is threatened by no more oil. Going elsewhere for sex is becoming an archaism, at least when fuel, energy, oil is involved. Granted there will always be libido, drives and instincts, it's just that oil has tyrannized ourselves, our *autos* to the point where its exclusion would result in the deprivation of key ideas governing so much human intercourse. No energy (oil) is no sex, a thought related to Ernest Jones's observation that what the subject fears most is the loss of libido, *aphanisis*, an idea more threatening than the irreducibility of castration. Will no oil castrate the Western/American subject so radically as to force libidinal contact into retreat? Will the lack of oil dismiss representation altogether? An impossibility, despite the intimate congruence between its manufacture and the significations surrounding it. No sex, no art, no stars, no records, along with the absence of their energetic foundations, shows the profound anxiety we're going through. Its resolution appears to be intractably elusive, considering oil's complex impregnation into our culture's discourse, our intramental and socially exterior selves, our *autos*. How can our auto/ego let go of oil?

Some further points.

Having used the phrase "our oil" throughout the text, it appears to be a cryptic device since it works on a variety of registers. America's oil, the country's oil, or "our oil" works on a phonic level with the *l* and *r* substitutive with each other. Some Oriental people have difficulty learning the interval *r*, since both *l* and *r* are liquids. *Our oil* can reverse into *oul oir* in light of the transposability of the liquids, thus proving the word *our's* proximity to *oil*. On the semantic level, *our oil* makes the phonic connection even more binding since we do believe that oil is essential to our selves, our *autos*, our properties, our cars, our records, stars, arts, etc.

Iran anagrammatizes into *rain*. Rain is from the air, whereas oil is from the ground or *oils* are from the *soil*. But Iran is in a desert where there is little rain. Oil's difference to water is also implicated in the question whether the Persian Gulf has water, drinkable or nondrinkable, or oil within the waters of the gulf. Is the Persian Gulf made up of oil? Since, empirically, it's saltwater, our desire believes the Persian Gulf (as in the Gulf Oil Company) to be composed of oil, an immediate explanation for its oil-rich status. But Iran and its Persian Gulf neighbors are in an arid, desert-ridden land. They only have oil and saltwater, and none of them are drinkable. America, however, has water, fresh, drinkable water in great quantities but none of the great quantities of Persian Gulf oil, made into an even greater quantity because of the equation of the gulf's waters with the wealth of the oil near its shores. The rain or water in Iran is its oil that does not come from the air but from the ground, even in our delusion from the oil-rich Persian Gulf itself, the sea, the saltwater. Saltwater already has a mineral in it just as it could possess oil: oilwater for saltwater shows a mixture of mineral with water.

I wrote this essay during the hostage crisis in Iran. Then, in 1980, nearly every American politician ran for office. "I ran" is a conceivable phrase to have been uttered by a presidential candidate in the '80s elections. "I ran against Iran" forms a neat cryptophor in the narration of a campaigning ego. And that ego will have to go far on oil in a car to assert why Iran is something he (in specular opposition) is running against. "I go" becomes the same as "I ran" (aren't some candidates joggers, an "I ran"?), but with Iran being the aggressively counterposed party, the I go/ego/I ran of an American presidential candidate will have to outdistance Iranian policy, a difficulty since the politics of oil make that running, going and driving a tremendous problem.

Iran's oil anagrammatizes into the opposition *no Israil*. Either America gets Iran's oil at the expense of Israil/Israel or refuses Iran for the sake of Israel.

The Arab oil *cartel* is a cryptophor working against those cultures that have lots of cars but no oil. A *cartel* of oil rich countries makes Americans in particular angry over what will not let *car(s)* run on their needed fuel.

America's president, (Jimmy) *Carter*, remixes into *car tar*, another cryptophor that would explain our current repetition of an oil-based economy. (His predecessor was car-related: Gerald *Ford*.) *Carter/car tar* cryptically advocates cars powered by tar, even though this man set up a Department of Energy. Its secretary, Mr. Schlesinger, is from the army; from the occupying forces to the question of "force" or energy in general, he is still in the same role. For force to be used against the cartel that will not let our cars goe needs someone intimate with force, energy, drives in general. If we were to "occupy" or to "*besetzen*" Iran, for example, it would be true to the Freudian idea of economy, the economic factor in his metapsychology. To occupy Iran is the very thing that determines occupation, *Besetzung*, mistranslated by James Strachey as "cathexis." The cathexis of oil in our daily lives shows how much oil is on our minds. Our occupation with oil will lead us to occupy oil, to occupy the countries that have oil. The occupation of Iran is only the intramental equivalent of an occupation, a hyper-occupation (*Überbesetzung*). the same kind of energy that makes joggers and disco dancers goe so fast. James Schlesinger's position in the Energy Department makes him the Defense Department's chairman all over again, simply because he will advocate "occupation," or oil, America's energy that is now about to loose occupations, to loose peace, to loose a machinery of signs, all to countries that America has to occupy for its occupation to continue. A beaten Iran will be occupied and the beat will run on and the occupation will continue its simultaneously pleasurable and unpleasurable drive.

* * *

Rock music is on vinyl records. Rock music/records enforce their oil-based status even further by the key word *rock*.

Oil, because it is a liquid, is not a hard, nearly unbreakable substance like other rocks, such as granite, basalt, etc. But oil is from the ground, it is a mineral, a rock, though liquid. Rock music or rock records are really oil music or oil records or even just oily oil. The same goes for disco music with *disco* now a *disco*/disc and equivalent to vinyl/oil. Music is also equivalent to the record/*disco*/disc that contains such sound. Disco music really means *disco disco*, or disc disc or record record, even in the case with rock music, oily oil. Rock and disco's asserted difference in style is refuted by their mutual equatability with oil.

The *roll* in "rock and *roll*" sounds similar to oil. Translated, rock and roll says "oil and oil." Sometimes the *and* in the phrase is abbreviated to just an 'n. Cryptically the 'n connotes *negation*, the *no* or *not*. Retranslated, "rock 'n roll" equals "oil no oil," a truism since the record's materiality, its oil-relatedness, is not just its essence, its intrinsic ideality as opposed to its extrinsic excrement.

New York rests on a rock, the firm bedrock of Manhattan that will probably not be beset by earthquakes. *New Rock* is an understandable transformation for *New York*, the *york* really *royk*, a closer approximation of *rock*. *New (R)ock* is also *new rock 'n roll* but as *new rock 'n roll in New York*. *York* can become *work* noting a near rhyme for *York* and *work*. *New work* and *new rock* all go on in *New York*. *Rock* musicians come to *New York* to do *new work* on *new rock 'n roll*. With *new* it can become the anagram *wen*, similar to the verb *to win*. To *win new work* on *new rock* in *New York* is what the aspiring rock musician aims at, particularly a *new* record, a *new oil/rock*. *New York* manufactures the *new rock*, the *new oil/record*. The aim is then the record, a word within *York*, *ryko(rd)*, *record*. To win *new work* on *new rock* in *New York* ends up being a *new record* that wins more *new work*.

A *guitar* immediately associates with oil. The *tar* in *guitar* separates itself from the other letters to produce a series of novel (but always already known) phrases. *Gui tar* becomes *I gu tar* or *I ug tar* or just *gui tar*. The *gui* resembles the French *je*, an echo of *I*, with the *I* already in *gui*. (This *je*-idea is

still present in our memories of that language that constitutes sixty percent of our English language.) *Je tar* for *gui tar* is not far from the truth since a rock musician is really a tar musician. The guitar is a prized possession of a rock musician, a part of his body, his ego. *Guitar/je tar/I tar* make possible the identification with tar, and intense as it is, the *I tar* fits quite neatly into *I star, I artist* on the tar/oil/vinyl record that wins or is won by a new rock/work record in New York, maybe on a “New Wave” idea.

Furthermore the *guitar* is also an *ug i tar* or *ugh, I tar*. The ambivalent enterprise of playing a guitar and the identification with that playing flips into intense idealization and intense rejection. “Ugh” expresses hatred and the phrase thus goes, “Ugh, I hate to play a guitar” while its mirror inversion affirms, “I am a *star* (on the guitar).” The remix *ug i tar* resembles *uglier*, not without meaning since rock stars get uglier from their relative youth to their relative age, the transition being marked by the clichés of too much work, too much exposure, drugs, America’s mythologies of the fatalities of stardom. The ego/goe is already buried in *guitar* when we think of the transformation *I gu tar. I go tar* or *ego tar* stems from *guitar*, the object of a rock star’s ego. And that ego gets trapped in tar as it goes on records. A guitar on the record/tar is the ego tar(ist’s) tar baby uglifying or asserting a rock star’s ego.

* * *

Ending this discussion evokes the ending of the Poe story, “*The Fall of the House of Usher*”. The narrator describes the ancient house breaking apart:

...—my brain reeled as I saw the mighty walls rushing asunder—there was a long tumultuous shouting sound like the voice of a thousand waters—and the deep and dark tarn at my feet closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the “*House of Usher?*”

There is much that applies to our discussion of oil in this little quote.

To begin with, cars are like homes. They have walls, doors, windows. People can live in them or they can die in them, as did Roderick and his twin sister. This is confirmed by the example of mobile homes or vans, where the car/house equation becomes clearer. With car an anagram for RCA we cannot forget that Roderick Usher was a musician, and in our current situation, a potential RCA artist. (He played the guitar.) Change the story's title and you get, "*The Fall of the Car of Usher*" or with the car/RCA anagram, "*The Fall of the RCA of Usher*". Nearly every house has a car in association with it. Also the radio is inside the car just as the RCA music plays inside the house. The strange name "Usher" evokes immediately those movie hall ushers that guide you to your seat to watch or stare at the film, to stare at the stars, at art, the tar of visual impressions. The word *Usher* can be transformed into *Rush* with the *e* omitted. Change the story's title again and you have "*The Fall of the Rushing Car*" or "*The Fall of the Car that Rushes*". And the word *rush* is in the quote, "the mighty walls rushing asunder." Both the word *go(e)* as near-anagram for *ego*, and the verb, to drive, can be substituted for these verbs of movement (rushing, rushes): "*The Fall of the Car that Goes*" or "*The Fall of the Car that Drives*".

What is also pertinent is the quote "and the deep and dark tarn," knowing that "tarn" is similar to "tar," a word central to our discussion of oil. A tarn is a lake in a mountain in its denotative, dictionary meaning. But why tarn and net a lake for the fragments of "*House of Usher*" to close over? *Tarn* conjures up an image of a black pool, a pool filled with, and let's be playful, *tar* or oil.

The rushing car or house closes over the tarn/tar. From one state of oil falling or closing over into another state of oil. There seems to be no escape from the pervasiveness of oil. We are "deep" in oil, fallen into it and closed over it. We are ending in oil, but the ending is not yet done, since the story can be read again, or restared at, after it has closed over into the tarn. But we're somewhat free of oil, since the

narrator was standing by the “deep and dark tarn” watching the fragments, any fragment, even this fragment entitled not “House of Usher” but “On the Current Symbolic Status of Oil.” My fragment too closes over the tarn. We can only watch or stare at the art that will still need oil or tar to witness or “stand” by that closing over.

Why Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend

Why are diamonds a girl's best friend? Diamonds, the most popular gemstone, are also the symbol for steadfast love. A girl's best friend finds symbolic expression in the idea of the diamond. However, a diamond is not a friend, nor a lover, and then it is in very odd ways.

"A diamond is forever," so say those advertisements for diamonds, the female being quietly embraced by the man she is either engaged or married to. Her ring indicates lifelong friendship with the companion. The ring can be worn until she dies and thus she may pass it on as an heirloom, a testament to her brief stay in the world of the living, a monument of her former life. Or she may discard it as soon as that love has corrupted into divorce, a broken engagement, her partner's death and so forth. Even off one's finger, diamonds are still around, they still "ring" and are not necessarily on one's finger.

When we hear a record being played, we know that a record player's pickup and its needle are composed of a perfectly hard substance, a diamond. Rubies and sapphires, the next hardest gems, are not as strong as the diamond. This is because of the diamond's four-carbon molecular structure, a structure that pervades the entirety of the diamond and makes it the hardest, most "invincible" of all matter. *Adamas* is the Latin word for diamond, a corruption from the adjective for invincible, *adamantinus*. Steadfast, invincible love has the diamond as its metaphor. But the music or song heard by those two lovers is facilitated by the very substance they wear on their fingers.

Hearing a song off of a record has the diamond as its medium. The sound of the record is transmitted by a dia-

mond and heard by the lovers who are fondly staring at their diamond. The diamond “rings” in front of their ring.

When the lovers say, “Darling, this is our song,” they may or may not be aware that “their song” is rung into their ears by a diamond. A song that memorializes love is also the diamond ring or “ringing” diamond stylus memorializing their love.

A diamond stylus is only heard, not seen. The brilliance of a diamond ring is also met by the brilliance of sound waves meeting the air, the sound waves reverberating by means of the faculty of a diamond stylus’ perfect contact with two sides of a record’s groove. The jewel that is seen is also the jewel that is heard.

A diamond in contact with one’s eye, the diamond ring, is also the diamond in contact with one’s ear. The heart, the place where love builds its figurative home, has *ear* within the heart of the word *heart*. And *hard* is a near rhyme with *heart*, just as *heard* is also euphonious with those two words. A hard diamond is placed in conjunction with the hearts of lovers and with their *ears*. The sound of the diamond falls into the hearts of lovers, into the *ear* which is in the heart of *heart* or *heard*. Pearls, too, have *ear* within their heart, *pearl*. Steadfast, invincible, hard love builds its home around the hard diamond seen or around the hard diamond heard in the ear over a record player. The immortal “song in my heart” has been heard and seen, since deep within our hearts lives a diamond, a four-cornered, fourchambered object, just as our heart is. (There are heart-shaped diamonds.)

The strength of the diamond, its uniform, crystalline structure, has no air within it, no air for sound to reverberate within it. The heart, however, is quite loud, for even in the greatest of silences, we can always hear our hearts. Remember when Raquel Welch had to close her ears in the film *Fantastic Voyage*? The microscopically shrunken vehicle ventured into the comparatively gigantic chambers of the man’s heart, and the sound of the muscle beating was unbearably loud for the voyagers. There is no sound within a diamond, no pockets of air, at least in flawless diamonds.

When the diamond performs its function as stylus, the sound has the diamond as its point of origin, albeit the perfectly faceted and angled sides of the diamond that can register all the variations felt along the record's groove. Never, never can the diamond have sound pass through it for the diamond's symmetry and the ensuing vibrations only issue upon contact with the diamond's outside, while this jewel's inside, its heart, its airtight interior cannot carry sound within it.

On a religious note, this diamond-idea is related to the idea of the Holy Trinity, particularly the Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost. The correspondences of the Mystical Kabbala have the diamond represent the idea of the one in three, God in the three persons, Father, Son, Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost/Spirit represents the love between father and son, between the unbegotten Father and the begotten Son, Christ. The Virgin Mary was infused with the spirit of the Holy Ghost at Annunciation. The Holy Ghost also made its divine presence felt at Christ's Baptism and the Pentecost.

The angel Gabriel at Mary's Annunciation was never really seen, for according to the *"Catholic Encyclopedia"*, careful inspection of the New Testament reveals that the angel imparted some kind of inner voice within the "silence of Mary's soul." God spoke to Mary *via* the angel at the moment where the Holy Ghost, represented then by the form of a dove, was present as well. A dove, with its wings outspread, forms a diamond shape, four diagonals join its tail, two wings and beak. The spirit or breath of God, his "sound," in its broadest figurative sense, is effectuated by the dove, the Holy Spirit in its diamond shape.

At Pentecost, when Christ promised the Holy Spirit would visit Mary and his disciples, the Holy Ghost was described as "a roar like that of mighty winds [which] filled the house and tongues like tongues of fire rested in everyone present." Old Testament meanings concerning spirit are often concerned with breath, the breath from God's mouth that gave life to Christ, that breath being the Holy Spirit with its "mighty winds" and "tongues like tongues of fire."

Back to diamonds. If diamonds facilitate the transmission of sound to our ears, conceivably we are in the position of duplicating the Trinity. Singer-musicians breathe into our ears when we hear the record. Singer-God has a diamond-Holy Ghost for us Christs on earth. This voice from afar, God, enters our ears, as the Virgin was inseminated with Christ's embryo through her ears. (St. Augustine thought that Mary was fertilized in such a fashion.) We, as listeners to music, to the diamond ring, receive the spirit, the voice, the breath.

The eternal love of the Holy Spirit for the Father and the Son congrues with the diamond, this symbol of steadfast love. The Holy Ghost, as a four-cornered dove, or diamond stylus, is eternal, despite the relative duration of a diamond stylus being only 100–500 hours of playing time. The record's grooves wear down the stylus into unplayability, an argument against its steadfastness in playing or ringing out those songs of love.

Synthetic diamonds are made from graphite when extremely high temperatures and pressures are exerted on the same substance that allows us to write with pencils. A diamond stylus relates to another stylus, the pencil, but has anyone written with a diamond-tipped pencil? In order for oil to be mined, synthetic diamonds bore into the earth's crust so as to unearth the crude. This is odd since oil is what makes up record discs, both played by diamonds and mined by diamonds.

Is a platinum record playable or not? Can I play a platinum record with a diamond stylus? Then it will really be a "diamond ring," since diamond rings are set in platinum and since a platinum record played by a diamond needle is also a diamond ring, a diamond supported by platinum.

The next transition: from gold records to platinum records to diamond records. A diamond record played by a diamond stylus. An invincible record and its invincible pen. The love between those two diamonds will be invincible. The non-vinyl, non-oil record would never warp, yet its diamond stylus would still write or cut the grooves of the diamond record since it takes a diamond to cut a diamond.

Now laser beams are being used as styluses on videodiscs. Their invincibility surpasses the diamond for they are capable of boring holes through diamonds.

One question has plagued me during this discussion: What other jewels could be used for a stylus? Besides the diamond what could be substituted, what would allow the divine breath to vibrate perfectly throughout the air? A ruby stylus, an emerald stylus, a pearl stylus, a sapphire stylus, a topaz stylus, lapis lazuli, amethyst? Rubies might be appropriate since they are the next hardest gem and are indispensable for the formation of laser beams. Emeralds are much too precious, rare and expensive to be used, besides, we would be straining ourselves terribly to see such an exquisite though tiny stone once made into a nearly invisible writing point. Sapphires were originally used as styluses, and like the emerald, we would be despondent not to be able to see the pale, cross-shaped star draped over these magnificent gems. I will discuss pearl styluses further on.

Certainly the listener is not at a loss when the music compensates for the absence of the visual brilliance of the diamond or any of its equivalents. Listening to the compositions of musical geniuses must face the inevitable loss of those prismatic gleams when light strikes these jewels under question. The tininess of the diamond stylus cannot shed the treasured refraction. Placing one's finger under the pickup needle asserts the diamond's presence, albeit by mere touching—and if the stereo's "power" button has been pressed—a finger's pores and rippling array of lines, swirls, "grooves" again, facilitates the diamond to register the sound of such a fingertip's landscape. We can then "hear" the finger that only feels hot or cold, rough or soft and another argument for the diamond's perfection—sound for the touch, sound for the short interval of pain at the stylus' sharpness, and while under such a delicious sensation, we beg our cars to receive the equivalent. Oddly enough, it all started since the prism was never seen.

Pearls, however, would not hurt whatsoever if they were made into styluses. Their roundness and smoothness would be a welcome sensation to the finger dismayed by the surgical

potential of the other gem. Inside a cultivated pearl is a sharp object, a chip off of the oyster's exterior. The oyster's outside, composed of calcium, grows layers and layers of shell. These encrustations are what pearl divers chip off and insert into the oyster's lip. Once inside the oyster, this formerly "outside" chip irritates the soft fleshy interior, thus propelling the oyster to cover the hard edge of the chip with what will eventually become the ideally smooth surface of the pearl. From the outside of the oyster to its inside, and once inside, the chip is then a foreign body (although it is part of the oyster, hence not so foreign) about to become reconciled with the interior. Whenever the oyster is happy with the very thing that caused so much discomfort, the pearl-diver may remove the former chip. The pearl is thus a prophylactic to the pain of the oyster's inside. Eventually the pearl consecrates the oyster's relative ugliness, the oyster's exterior layers of unsightly calcium growth, when that ugly exterior was the very origin of the pearl before it evolved into its hemispheric perfection. A pearl, like a diamond, is really a chip, a hard, knife-like surface. (If you have ever dived for oysters to eat on the half-shell, your fingers get sliced up terribly.) But only in the heart of the pearl does that chip exist. To touch a pearl stylus is a comfort in comparison to a diamond stylus. Indeed, if such a stylus existed, the pearl just might (a hypothesis) wear down and become the chip it began building itself upon. Then that chip would be diamantine. The heart of a pearl has a diamond, however odd that may strike your ears.

All record grooves are now suited for the purposes of a diamond's point to travel along. What would a record's grooves evolve into if a pearl, a round pearl, were to be used? Instead of V-shaped valleys we would have U-shaped ones. The pearl would have to touch on grooves that were essentially curved, not angled, as with a diamond. And what would that sound like? Would the music become softer, fuzzier, slower, what? To hear a gem "clearly" has always had a diamond as its standard. Could there be a pearl sound standard where the category of "clarity" and "sharpness" no longer applied, but the predicates of "subtlety" or "softness" did? Con-

jecturing a pearl stylus, even the shape of a record's grooves, seems at best a fantasm. Its only truth is that diamonds and pearls are gems, hence interchangeable. If not, the imagination leaves the pearl to a future of silence, whereas the diamond maintains both visual and acoustic brilliance. All those pearl divers have to do then is to drop diamond chips into the oyster and see whether calcium by-products will make the nacreous shell of a pearl. A diamond is now in the heart of a pearl. That double gem will elicit delicious sound, eventually after pearl dust has scattered itself over the record disc. As the pearl wears down, casting the sheeny black surface into one that is more opalescent, this hybrid stylus then advances the sound's quality and clarity once the strange stylus is fully a diamond.

This hypothetical situation with a pearl-diamond stylus, this pulverization of the pearl as it transforms itself into a diamond in the process could happen with a diamond as well. The 500th playing time of the diamond stylus signals the diamond stylus' vulnerability, its breakage. Could the diamond stylus be shedding itself along the way?

Let us suppose that a diamond does just that, that by wearing down, it chips off, it crumbles through strain towards its 500th playing time. And where do these diamond morsels go, where do these even tinier fragments of a diamond stylus go? A transformation of the diamond takes place and, conceivably, diamond dust results. This is quite possible with the fabulation of a diamond record and its diamond stylus, since the cutting of a diamond has to take place with a diamond, the diamond record's grooves now doing the pulverizing, the cutting. Powder then fills the air and enters into ourselves in the strangest of ways.

Since my entire argument is replete with hypotheses, I shall make another. After the diamond's fictive wearing down into diamond dust since it played so many times on the record, the dust becomes transformed, alchemized if you will, into the pharmacological habits of a record's listeners, the drugs cocaine and heroin.

With all this dust traveling through the air, this precious dust from the diamond playing on record grooves and its being pulverized by such grooves, the dust enters our bodies. If the similarity between cocaine or heroin or any other dustlike drug with diamond dust is justified, then this dust enters, as is common practise, though the nose. Of course rock musicians will snort “rocks,” the rocks in question being more precious than gold but not as expensive as the rocks that are diamonds. A bird of paradise flying up my nose could mean the four-cornered dove of the Holy Ghost flying up my nose and into my lungs, the very site of breath or spirit again. “Angel dust” resonates with the idea of the angel Gabriel accompanied by the

Holy Ghost at Mary’s Annunciation when she is about to hear God. The head that is suffused with diamond dust, or sound for that matter, cannot ingest diamonds per se, only their closest equivalents: substances that are crystalline, expensive and in association with the nonrepresentational, nonwordly commonplaces of music. “Getting high” on music or drugs finds the diamond-standard always within the two categories. Besides, the music industry attempts to saturate its viewers with a scopic or visual spectacle as well as an aural spectacle. Here the thing that is missing is the drive of the heaving of the lungs, satiated by near diamond dust, an illegality and the envy of those hungry spectators who think that rock musicians get all the “rocks” they want.

Heroin users may have what are called “works,” the usual needle, syringe and cooking spoon. Heroin and its necessary needle also entail the necessary “pickup needle” with its diamond stylus. This association finds its truth in the myths of junk taken by musicians. They may have made albums or not and for what albums they play a pickup needle is needed, or if their need for junk is great, they use a needle full of prepared heroin to pick them up. A diamond stylus, if pressed hard enough, could puncture your skin, while a needle and syringe will accomplish the act. Even with “glass works” the sharp diamond stylus finds its companion in something else crystalline, a glassy needle. These associations should

be placed next to the mythology of drug-taking musicians or music lovers, reinforced by the stylus that lets them hear their own music. It is an alignment to an object that resonates a primary masochism, crystalline drugs the interiorized object that magnifies the external world's cruelty on its recipients. The heroin and cocaine addict demonstrates, though not completely, that such consumption is an allegory of a pulverized diamond stylus.

This habit, of course, is not simply restricted to just musicians. Commonplaces of filmmakers and painters and their expensive injection of usually cocaine are rife. Filmmakers work with cameras whose glassy lenses at one point had to be polished. Using cocaine appears to be a repetition of the lenses' corruptibility and pulverization. Painters, like their filmmaker counterparts, require precise visual judgements, their eyes are indispensable for their work. The Russian word for eye, *glaz*, is a near homonym of the English "glass." Besides haven't we heard of those with a glass eye, the eye being the glassiest part of our bodies? Cocaine cryptically embeds the eye-related stems, *ocul/oculus* within it: *cocaine/coke*. *Occhio*, Italian for eye, fits neatly here with the following misspelling: *cocchio*. Even the letter *c*, cocaine's first letter, is a homonym with the verb for sight, *see*. (Also cocaine's *i* reasserts this repetition of sight since *i* homonymically relates to *eye*.) Visual artists addicted to cocaine are simply reinteriorizing the very thing that promotes their art, their seeing, their eyes, now metaphorized into a glassy, eye-like powder. When a filmmaker or painter snorts cocaine, it figuratively returns to the eye it was chopped up from. The resultant lack of sleep keeps one's eyes open, for now they've had their strange nourishment.

The ritual of cocaine or heroin ingestion through the nose remains within this general crystallization that the diamond idea secretly originates. The crystal powder is cut into lines over a pane of glass or mirror. A razor is often used, a highly sharp tool whose cutting power metaphorically resides with the cutting power of the diamond. (Addicts desire *power* from the *powder*.) If glass or a mirror is used for the ra-

zor to cut the dust up on, we then encounter a crystal cut by a near crystal on a crystal. Crystals are cut by crystals on crystals. Diamonds are cut by diamonds on a diamond. Diamond styluses are cut by diamonds on diamond records, enabling more pulverization, the pulverization of the diamond stylus that fictively becomes the precious powder we put into our bodies. And all of this is accompanied by a loud rapping of the razor on the mirror as it divides up the powder. A diamond stylus elicits sound just as the razor, another sharp implement, elicits peals into the air.

One procedure in coke- or heroin-taking consists of using a pen empty of its ink-filled cartridge. The hollow tube allows easy suction of whatever drug under question. Again another writing implement enters into a ritual of drug taking.

A few words on the nose. The nose is a prosthetic extension of the body, it is an appendage of the body, specifically the face. The nose "sticks out," it juts into the air. One's profile has the nose as its distinguishing mark, a kind of "prow" or "stylus" or more cryptically, a permanent "dais" of the body that writes itself through the empty air. Figuratively, the diamond resembles the nose for the nose forms a small "V" reproducing the diamond's point that is either placed in platinum or on record grooves. The nose is a diamond also in terms of a topography of the ego. Every ego is a bubble of sorts, an envelope of skin, whereas the nose, this raised platform, this "dais" is a bump on the ego-bubble. The diamond, since it is attached to the body, a "hump" of sorts on the body, resembles the nose in the objects' interruption of the body's relatively smooth homogeneity. They are, in a broad system of substitutive terms, lumps, outgrowths, cysts, pockets, lobes and so forth. Indeed earlobes can bear diamonds in the form of earrings, as do fingers, another bodily appurtenance, in the form of diamond rings. Even the head, the body's biggest "bump," can bear a necklace at its base.

The cocaine or heroin that goes back into the nose goes back into the diamondhood these drugs are metaphorically derived from. From the pulverized diamond stylus (or lens)

to the drugs on a diamantine surface to the diamond in the nose-diamond. The song played by a diamond corrupts into dust which returns to the most diamond-like part of the body, the nose. Similarly, too much dust inhaled collapses the diamond-nose (its septum) just as the diamond stylus had collapsed from too much playing. People who snort too much diamond dust also lose their diamond, their nose, since the ample diamond dust was derived from playing the diamond too frequently, the ambiguity here residing in either snorting too much dust or, because they are saturated with music, diamond-written sound.

Yet have we answered the question “Why are diamonds a girl’s best friend?” Perhaps the discussion should explore the role of Norma Jean as the quasi-authoress of this invincible demand.

Norma Jean starred in a film *All About Eve*, a film that appeared in conjunction with *Sunset Boulevard* with its Norma Desmond. Both films were up for the 1950 Academy Awards and are often billed with each other in movie houses not to mention the instance of seeing *Sunset Boulevard* on television when *All About Eve* was playing on another channel, the two films having begun at the exact same time.

Norma Jean appeared outside of *Sunset Boulevard*, but she was inside it, inside that film by virtue of the one name that was “inside” of her, the “Norma Jean” inside Marilyn Monroe. Norma Jean is, however far-fetched this sounds, the Norma Desmond played by Gloria Swanson. Norma Jean-Desmond is the star who can cross either place, either film, her only ticket being “Norma,” Marilyn’s original name, a strange entrance to the *All About Eve/Sunset Boulevard* sepulcher buried within ourselves.

Norma Desmond can flip into Norma Diamond, “one diamond” the first words Norma Desmond called out in the bridge game sequence in *Sunset Boulevard*. Diamond and Desmond both have an initial *d* to their sequences of identically numbered letters as well as the final *-mond*. Now that Norma *Desmond* is Norma *Diamond*, Norma Jean is Norma Diamond as well.

Norma refracts into the French word for love, *amour*. With Norma Diamond or Norma Jean we can obtain the transformations of *love diamonds* or *love jeans*, since *amour* or love lies buried in Norma. I have already shown how love and diamonds symbolize each other, the diamond *ring* that is already a diamond stylus that *rings* out songs of love, where love's *v* mimics the shape of a diamond stylus. Such a diamond reverberates with Neil Diamond singing *Forever in Blue Jeans*. (His first name is an anagram for *line*, the lines or grooves his voice sings from? He is also the one who sings the *Jazz Singer* lyrics "Love on the rocks...") *Forever in Blue Jeans* translates into "Forever Listening to Blue Diamonds"; there are blue diamonds (blue diamond styluses?), like the Hope Diamond, as there are blue jeans. Neil Diamond sings the "blues."

Jeans are made of denim. *Denim*, as anagram, is *mined*. The mining of oil needs diamond drills, the playing of vinyl records diamond styluses. Our dancing to this sound is fulfilled when we wear jeans or *denim*, such sound derived from the vinyl oil that has been *mined*.

Jean, the word jean, cryptically advocates identity since *jean* angulates into *I am*, the *I am* a translation of *jean*, the piece of cloth or the *Jean* in *Norma Jean*. *Gene*, a homonym for *jean*, is the repository of the DNA molecule, a 20th century positivist's pleasure-word. (DNA, a pleasureword too, has at least two letters common with *jean*. Besides are not jeans also called *denim jeans*? Respelled, d(-)n(-) (-)a(-) echoes DNA, a significant idea when one confronts genetic scientists who like to wear *denim jeans*.) The *Je* in *jean* is identical to the French *I*, made possible by our memories of that language as well as *j*'s proximity to *i* in the alphabet. (A study of American culture and its origin in the thinking of *Jean-Jacques Rousseau* would be interesting. Davy Crockett with his raccoon hat and blue jeans is echoed by Rousseau's similar headpiece, but did he wear the cloth of/*de Nimes* as all those 1950s youngsters did?) Furthermore *denim's* anagram, *mined*, congrues with the *I am* idea within *jean*, *my jeans*, the jeans

of *mine*. (Homosexuals usually wore a pair of *denim* to the *Mine[d]*shaft.)

Even in *diamond* there is this *I am* moment. The letters after its initial *d* are *i*, *a*, and *m* exhibiting the *I am* that is a refraction from *jean*, or the proper name *Jean*. Diamonds can then be respelled into *djeamonds*. Furthermore in *America* one finds the *I am*: *I am erca*, or *I am e car*. The latter phrase could translate into *Jean a car* or *Jean, a car*, a truism for stars (Norma Desmond/Jean) are supposed to be cars. Getting into a pair of jeans is an allegory of getting into a car. Jeans that cover legs for walking are met by cars that somewhat dispense with legs for driving. Besides every American has a particular brand of jeans as they have a particular model of a car, a Levi's or a Ford. And every American takes care of their jeans or car, the phrase *I am erca* from *America* now splintering into *jean care*, *care* embedding *car* and *ear* as well. (*America* also anagrammatizes into *I camera*.)

The car's affinity with the diamond stylus is proved by styluses played on vinyl grooves while cars drive over asphalt roads. A car is a stylus (related to the prows of ships, ships substitutive with cars), thereby displaying that a car in transit is an allegory of a diamond stylus in transit, grooves and roads the paths on which the respective objects travel along. The tire of a car is a stylus too, styluses write as do tires write, *tire* always already an anagram for *rite*, a homonym with *write*.

Of course Marilyn Monroe would think "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend" since within *diamonds* lies buried the *Jean* she kept buried. Marilyn Monroe's best friend is her name *Jean* long after she had left that name for the one that is new, rewritten and nonoriginal. Marilyn will always be the friend of *Jean* since that name was bestowed to her at birth, but *Jean* never issues from her lips in her films, whereas diamonds will, *djeanmonds/djeamonds/diamonds* being the place of her secret name. Yet she wears jeans in *The Misfits* and was married to Joe DiMaggio, *Joe*, an *O, je*, this *je* buried in *jean*. Meanwhile Norma in *Sunset Boulevard* falls for Joe (Gillis). Diamonds are Marilyn Monroe's friend (Monroe's sounding like Mon-rose) because she has lost the buried

name Jean (buried in diamonds/Desmond), once stardom demanded a pseudonym.

As well, *diamonds* are going to be Marilyn's "best friend" since the *dia* in this word can be easily transformed into *die* or its homonym, *dye* (as in *hairdye*). She sung of *diamonds* and she *died*, killed herself or was murdered, along with her *dyed* blonde hair of the hue called platinum, echoing the platinum that diamond rings are set in. Norma Djeanmond will *die* young and she will *dye* her hair. Americans will love (*amour*) jeans forever or they will love Norma Jean forever. They will listen to diamonds forever while wearing their blue jeans, the jeans whose "blue" color is always already in conjunction with "blue" diamonds or Neil Diamond's "blues."

The diamond that is worn is also a part of the *Norma* in the Desmond/Jean constellation, *worn* a distorted anagram of *Norma* as *Morn(a)/Worn(a)*, the *M* always reversible into a *W* in this mythological hieroglyph. Worn diamonds are a translation of Norma Desmond/Jean. To wear jeans occurs when we wear diamonds, those diamonds usually styluses, the wear having *ear* within it for *wearing* jeans occurs when our ears hear diamonds as we dance in nightclubs in our jeans.

Maybe the ultimate mystery in *jean* is its refraction into *jean*, *r* a truncated *n*. The ear and the meanings that issue from this aperture are always the most unconscious, *jean/i ear/I hear/I here/I am* accounting for the unconscious in *jean*. (*Jean* is close to *year*, we wear our jeans for years, our diamonds¹ styluses last for years, the fading of our jeans took years, etc.)

The above is an anasemic interpretation of the word *jean*, the secret surname of one of America's legends², Marilyn Monroe. The word is thus in intimate conjunction with the word diamond, but what are the other facets of the diamond, this jewel whose letters can gleam like jewels?

With so many facets that have shedded from the *dia* in this word, what about those that shed from the *-monds* in *diamonds*? Neither *monde*, French for world³ nor *Mond*, German

¹ diamond?

² legend?

³ add comma?

for moon⁴ confirm a motivation of sound buried or “muffled” within diamonds. As is the case with Desmond, *-monds* is simply a refraction thrown off by *sound*. (Yes, *sound* can sound different.) With *-monds* we can obtain *sownd* (as anagram and the *m* reversed). *Sound* sounds like *sownd*, thereby letting *diamonds* gleam like the diamond into *dia-sound* or *dais sound*, a dais, podium, or stylus like the diamond.

Dia, respelled *die*, now associates with *sound*, producing *die sound*. In “*Diamonds Are a Girl’s Best Friend*” the advent of a girl’s death has diamonds to prevent its approach. The die sound/diamonds speaks of death at the very moment it assures the girl of life, security, attractiveness. She may begin to look old, but diamonds prevent that aging, this symbol for steadfast love ignores flesh’s decay (diamonds, like love, are forever) while reminding ourselves that its ringing and singing is death, diamonds a *die sound*. (The author’s name will ring throughout his lifetime *Duncan Smith*, or *D. S.*, a *die sound*.)

When Norma Jean/Marilyn Monroe sings *Diamonds Are a Girl’s Best Friend* we do not notice that *are* remixes into *ear*. Of course the diamond is in our ear, particularly when we hear, *Diamonds Ear a Girl’s Best Friend*. But what probably happens is that girls get earrings, diamond earrings, a demand they place on the partner who has assimilated their “cry” for diamonds. But the *demand* resounds with *diamond*, here the *diamond demand* a paronomastic tautology. Girls demand diamonds, they cry for diamonds. Their demand is adamant.

Diamonds, too, are a girl’s best friend only when we bear in mind that a gift is implied, the demand for a gift fulfilled, the diamond for a gift, here diamonds, fulfilled. (*T.G.I.F.*, an anagram for *gift*, is an abbreviation for “Thank God It’s Friday,” the Friday evening when people go to dance halls to listen to music played by diamonds.) But what returns? Surely not diamonds in the form of rings, earrings, magical powders or money, but the paltry substance of just the music, the *ring* of a diamond stylus, the *ring* in the ear, the *Diamonds Are*

⁴ add comma?

a Girl's Best Friend played over the film sound track, record player or radio. Without diamonds, girls settle on diamond styluses, the invisible ear ring. The song *Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend* thus confirms that the mere hearing of the song is the fulfillment of the diamond demand, the only demand obtained being the *ring* in the air or in the ear in light of the absence of a *ring* on one's finger. At the moment Marilyn Monroe strikes one's ear, a diamond hovers, compelling the deprived listener to believe that their friend, whoever it may be, is *nearby*.

Further Remarks on Diamonds

Hidden in the heart of sound is a diamond. The diamond plays the sound on the record, but does it capture any light? Does the diamond stylus reflect any light off of its tiny surface? Could we see any prismatic gleams off of the diamond that plays the records we are so fond of?

The opposition between hearing and staring finds its strange union with the diamond stylus, a diamond above all that writes out sound as well as reflects light. If the diamond stylus is too small to reflect light, then what serves as the diamond, what replaces the diamond's capacity to reflect light even though its association with producing sound tends to make the diamond (stylus) invisible?

On cards, a diamond is a four-corncred design rendered in the color red. Square, rectangular, rhomboid, the essential shape is that of four points and four lines joining those points, each opposing line parallel. A diamond, in its broadest figurative, geometrical sense is a square-like object, at least in the schemata of diamonds on playing cards. This is also confirmed by the molecular structure of diamonds composed of four tightly interlocking carbon molecules.

If the diamond in its most generalized shape is a square, what else is a square, a square that echoes the diamond and supplants its shape onto new objects, when those very objects are linked with a diamond, here a diamond stylus?

Before the record is played by a diamond stylus, it is contained in an album cover, a square-shaped album cover, a diamond of sorts, although composed of cardboard. The album's cover with its photograph of the recording star reproduces the squarelike configuration of the diamond. Thus the album cover is a diamond, it is a four-cornered reflective surface just like diamonds.

When we look at such an album cover we see the star we will eventually be able to hear over our stereo systems with their diamond styluses. Hearing the star needs the diamond stylus just as staring at the star needs the diamond photograph. Even while hearing the star we will summon up the absent record cover's picture in our minds. While hearing the diamond we envision that record cover diamond.

All photographs can be tipped on one of their corners and thereby form the diamond schemata of playing cards. If the imagination of the listener thought that the diamond photograph were the stylus playing the record now being listened to, his supposition would not be far from the truth. The origin of such sound is a diamond, a diamond that captures light as perfectly as it captures sounds imprinted on record grooves.

To move from ear to air to loudspeaker to stereo with its pickup needle is not a far-fetched progression, despite the usual ignorance that accompanies our perception of the music-saturated air. The star that is heard is now, and always has been, the star that is seen, both hearing and seeing mediated by the diamond-idea.

The star (in a photograph) is framed by a diamond. That diamond then becomes the diamond that plays the words and music of the star. As well, to stare across such vast distances of a music hall, to its record player, to its needle, to the time and place of the record's taping, even to the bedroom of the star, simply shows the incredible curiosity on the part of the listener to see into what he/she is hearing. The tininess of the diamond stylus is contradicted by the desire to see such a stone reflect its gleams, and its gleams are seen, at least in the hallucination of the record's cover, photographs of the star, movies of the star, etc. Within the diamond stylus or diamond photograph, the two being interchangeable, lives the star, the star we want to stare at. Hearing will not suffice, thus our tremendous curiosity to see up to that point, that diamond stylus point, that diamond stylus-photograph point, all the way to the bedroom of the star.

The paths of the stars in the sky are recreated every moment a song or film is played over the radio or television. Stars

are in the sky, and we can see these distant stellar objects, but not the stars that are human beings who course through the heavens until we eventually see them on our television sets or hear them over our radios. The distance of the stars (in the sky) and the distance of the stars (on TV, on radios) is quite far, the former more so than the latter. Both distances are insurmountable, a condition that propels us to be closer to the very thing so far away. Looking into the sky, in order to traverse such great distances, will always be the most extreme or sublime effort taken by the scopic drive. Even within the word “sky” there is already “eye,” much like “star” that always has “stare” issuing from it. *Sky* rhymes with *eye*. Since *k* and *g* are similar consonants, we can obtain from *sky*, *sgy*, its anagram *gys* or *gaze*. We *gaze* into the *skies* or *skeyes*. The *sky* will draw our *eye* into it or the *skies* our *gaze* or *eyes*.

The gleaming and faceted nature of a diamond is no doubt similar to the stars in the sky. And while visual and auditory messages are invisibly coursing through the starry sky, an invisible diamond-mediated image or sound conveys human stars. These human stars too gleam and throw facets like diamonds when their voices are played by diamond styluses and when their images are caught in the frames of television sets that are as square-shaped as diamonds. When televised stars are caught within a diamond, does not their sound appear to be caught by something else? It is hard to say whether sound over TV or TV-transmitted movies are facilitated by a diamond stylus or not: shows that play popular songs, for instance, are those songs on a record played by a diamond stylus or something else?

Since our ears and eyes are two entirely different sources for the invocatory and scopic drives, they, however, can become identical as in the Sony ads that confuse “sound” and “color.” By obliterating the differences between separate media, the TV screen, for example, is made into the place where the sound comes from, not its inchesaway speaker. It is never an actual identity, merely a desired or delusionary one. The schematic isomorphisms of the (square) diamond image and the (square) diamond sound enforces this desired identity of

sound and image. Diamonds fulfill both sound and image, the two events mutually reasserting each other despite the possible nonpresence of an actual diamond.

We see sound by seeing the diamond photo or we hear sight by hearing the diamond stylus. What serves as the most impregnable writing instrument, the diamond, writes out sound just as it frames (a spacing, an irreducible component of any writing) visibility. Without the diamond, there would be no “unity” between these two apparently exclusive activities, seeing and hearing.

On Wit

With every champagne bottle a cork is used to prevent the froth from spilling over. The strength of the cork is attested by the ability to shake the bottle vigorously so that the pressure inside can be contained. Once opened, the loud “pop!” and the ensuing foam signal the absence of the cork. The cork has left, just as much as the mysterious froth of letters lets *cork* cease its sequence for that of *rock*, as anagram. *Cork* and *rock* are then another example of “wit as the anagram of nature” in the words of the famous German writer, Jean-Paul.

The containing of a wild foam, a mass of liquid, once shaken, bursts out of its confinement, bursts from under the cork/rock, the cork that is placed over any confinement, either the confinement of letters in their stipulated sequences or the confinement of liquid, here champagne. Every bottle of champagne (and every bottle of wine or beer for that matter) has this cork/rock, but what is the ultimate import of the cork, this rock, that seals something that would inevitably gush and explode from its imprisonment?

Standing on the floor of the very place where the cork-rock is opened is also a cork/rock of sorts. The floor of the bar locale is also the cork/rock that has been opened, about to explode with a “pop” and its ensuing fizzle. What shakes and froths below the floor/rock as the champagne bottle froths with its liquid about to gush?

Every floor is the ground we stand on, the layer of earth that covers the hot brewing mass of lava found closer and closer to the center of the earth. A ground too is implicated in the idea of language as Holderlin’s *Patmos* gives expression: ... *und furchtlos gehn/Die Söhne der Alpen über den Abgrund weg/Auf leichtgebauten Brücken* (...and fearless over/The chasm walk the sons of the Alps/On bridges lightly-built). The “lightly-built” character of a bridge is a floor, truly a

flimsy, breakable, collapsible thing. And the floor we stand on is always about to break asunder, this cork/rock that goes “pop” as this floor/rock could go “pop” in some volcanic conflagration. To open a champagne bottle reproduces what happens in nature, a volcanic eruption, an abyss of super-hot matter, hotter than any piece of self-sufficient substance once it is subject to the temperatures that make it molten lava, about to burst through the crust/cork/rock of the earth/champagne bottle.

Alcohol, in its pure state, burns with the contact of fire, just as oil does with any combustion. And oil, as anyone knows, lies beneath the earth’s surface, and like lava, it is about to burst, gush and soak us in its ooze as it did to James Dean in *Giant*. Being coated in oil, crude oil, is similar to being coated with alcohol, the champagne gushing over the rock-opener’s hands and body once the “inside’s” pressure is relieved.

To lift the *cork* from *rock*, the uncovering of *rock* from *cork*, the uncovering of *rock* in its proper sequence of letters, shows what froth letters, taken in the broad sense of wit or the German *Witz* uncovers as well. Wit, the joke, the unexpected discovery of a relation, is a “dissolution of spiritual substances which consequently, before the sudden separation, must have been most intimately intermingled.” The quote is from Friedrich Schlegel, the man who said he wrote in fragments because he thought himself a fragment. This pervasiveness of wit could take place in milieus where champagne bottles are uncorked in all the possible refractions that the fragment “cork” allows. Again Schlegel writes, “Good definitions cannot be made offhand, but ought to occur to us spontaneously. A definition, which is not witty is worth nothing, and for every individual there is an infinite number of real definitions.” (“*Eine Definition, die nicht witzig ist, taugt nichts.*”) To define experience needs wit, or rather *Wissen* needs *Witz*, where knowledge and wit are practically puns in the German. The correlation has wit as its more perfect expression, since a play at the level of the letter is involved, or more broadly,

since the form of an idea is under play, a form that makes for a new idea, at best a truer idea, a new definition.

For every form there's a foam, upsetting the form just as the form is about to restrain a heterogenous foam. Champagne, lava, oil, the unconscious are all sheathed by something that prevents the spillover: a cork/rock, a mantel of earth, a rind, the ego. Chaos is found in a bottle, but the manuscript never ceases foaming. To joke is to let spill the foam when in every joke we spell everything differently. I'll spill the proper spelling just as I'll form the foam when I decide to unrock the champagne bottle. As Schlegel observes, "Imagination must first be filled to the point of saturation with life of every kind before the moment arrives when the friction of free sociability electrifies it to such an extent that the most gentle stimulus of friendly or hostile contact elicits from it lightning sparks, luminous flashes, or shattering blows."

And if the unpoping of a cork into that of rock elicits laughter, that laughter only confirms the very foam that is released after such an unpoping, uncorking, unrocking. Freud, in his *"Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious"*, discussed laughter that issues from the joke or witticism (*Witz*). He states "the discharge of an inhibitory cathexis is similarly increased by the height of the damming up." Laughter can only be the result of a discharge of an energetic barrier, the inhibitory cathexis or, in this instance, the socially maintained restriction against allowing cork to be rock, a repression of recombining letters which would introduce an unwanted chaos in social discourse. Wit relieves us of rational constraints while laughter signals that relief, its discharge being made from ideas and associations formerly held under, again, by the cork that resists the foaming over into that of rock.

Reflections on Rhetoric in Bars

While I was explaining to a friend the difference between sign and referent at the closing time of a bar, a portly gentleman, the bar's bouncer, was telling everyone to leave the premises. I continued to elaborate that all language is bound to an extralinguistic event, a thing, a referent, despite the fat man's edict. The man persisted, "Gentlemen, please leave this area." My friend gradually became aware of language always aligned to a referent. He made a joke, "Jike a referee." At that point the bouncer loomed ominously over us. We immediately broke out laughing. Of course the bouncer was the referee, his command meant precisely what we were supposed to do, just as language with its signs are bound to referents, "referents" a pun on "reference." A referent, by our wit at that moment, became the "referee" of language. "Gentleman, you have to go." We resisted when someone exclaimed "reverend." When we did leave, fulfilling the referent of his command, our convulsions grew in intensity. Any further wordplay on our parts had to cease since the bar was about to close. We had to "leave," we had to obey the referent of leaving just as we had to obey the referee. To make "referent" into "referee" meant we were releasing "referent" from its standard, denotative value. But again the empirical reality of the bouncer, the referee, still referred us to the exit. With our wordplay at an end, my friend at least knew the inescapable unity of sign and referent despite the dream that language could take flight into better wit once freed from the edicts of referces and referents, impossible and futile as that hope may sound. The answer to all this constriction was to hang out at an after hours bar.

The bar we decided to visit had lots of dancing going on. I recalled those famous lines of Yeats: "O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,/How can we know the dancer

from the dance?" Part of the last line has become a title to a "gay" novel by Andrew Holleran. Just as I was demonstrated earlier by the incident with the referee, the poem, too, asserts, "How can we know the difference between a sign and a referent?" While dancing at this gay club, I asked my friend whether we can know the dancers from "*Dancer from the Dance*". How can we make a distinction between the men who are dancing and the men who embody the "dancers" described within "*Dancer from the Dance*"?

Gay people are implicated in this rhetorical play. They might call themselves "gay" but by so doing they fall prey to referential, denotative *straight*jacketing. Gay culture prides itself on its irony, its exuberant "lying," hence making the designation "gay" or "homosexual" a possible lie, a rhetorical play, an ironic figure. To make homosexuality into a referent, as does "gay liberation," seems false in terms of the idea of a "gay sensibility" with its ironic and aesthetic trademarks.

Yet gay people, despite their irony, are always implicated in the referent, quite obviously by virtue of what "gay" refers to, a sexual object choice. Gay liberationists know that homosexuals still resist the designation simply because when it comes to getting a job or entering a foreign country such "lying" is necessary. Gay people will never be able to surmount the problem of what "gay" means, its referentiality always made abyssal by the possibility that an individual can say "I'm gay" and "I'm not gay." The first step into gay oppression is to attribute reference to something that can always resist that reference. But for those who feel that they are always "gay," the question of reference is a simple and transparent thing, confirmed no doubt by those who feel the referent of "straight" or "heterosexual" as simple and transparent.

Does gay liberation now mean that gays can no longer lie about their sexuality? Does it mean that language henceforth will entirely consist of referents adequate to their signs, intentions to their expressions, thoughts to their utterances? Does it mean the death of lie? No matter what happens, access to language is contingent on our capacity to lie. Inasmuch as gay liberation desires gays to have the courage to

speak the truth, it will not be able to control those situations where a lie will preserve life and livelihood. Why should one be a referee of one's sexuality if there's the possibility that honesty could cause one's death? As long as there is oppression and adverse legislation, gays will be forced to lie. From the referent "gay" to the figure, lie or ironic posture of "straightness" is the oscillation a "gay" still endures.

Someone came up to me and said, "Let's dance." I hesitated, but eventually gave up thinking about whether to or not. Dancing made any deliberation stupid and worthless.

Either you dance or you don't. When you dance you resolve the tension in the statement, by this time a performative, since the words convey an action about to take place. Not to dance, "No thank you," resolves another tension, since no one has to do what others feel compelled to do. In other words, "Let's dance" is an utterance that eventually becomes an action, the dancing. "Let's dance" is explicitly performative while its uttering is often just a statement and not necessarily implicated in its realization.

Yet to dance, after such deliberation, resolves the impasse created by the statement considered as mere statement. The performative eventually gains the upper hand since such deliberation is by now busy with what else to do besides dancing, the "no thank you" preoccupied with the question of entertaining oneself with another drink, a conversation, etc. Deliberation is just as much an activity as dancing, dancing the metaphor for action, an action that embodies all action. Deliberation, hesitating, fretting, and so forth, are all actions, a "dance" despite its relative motionlessness and interior reflection.

To dance is to confess to the uselessness of thinking about acting at all. Dancing resolves any thinking of performing something that is not dancing, that nondancing action still a performance, a dancing. The only thing to do is to dance since a nondancing dance will take place elsewhere. Why perform a nonperformance since the nonperformance is still a performance, still a dance in its nondance? The ecstatic moment in dancing is the release felt in understanding this para-

dox, an affirmation of the failure to do anything else since it embraces these moments attributed to be motionless, inactive, nonperformative, dancing the discovery that nothing is exempt from dancing.

Dancing next to one who has asked your hand will take place, eventually, after seconds or longer intervals, simply because *to do* or *to dance* is always at the heart of *to be* or *not to dance*. Dance, please, otherwise you will affirm the error that there is no dancing taking place, a falsehood. Yet without the “stationary” partner making the request, there would be no dance. One can perform a “No thank you” and let that be the “dance.” On more abstract terms, there is no idea without its act, just as there cannot be an act without the idea that allows the act to take place. Words can never be a substitute for actions nor can actions substitute for words since activity is always intermeshed with language.

To say, “Let’s dance” is a lie since a nondancing dancing is always taking place. “But I’m already dancing, even though I’m just standing and not moving.” Yet it is not the commonplace idea of dancing. So you shall dance, shall do something, but that doing is shaped by an idea of what that doing should be. Should I dance expressively, touch my partner, raise my arms, or move very little? Thus this doing becomes embellished by the figure one cuts, dancing now embodying its own expressive, rhetorical figures. From initial statement (figure) to activity (performative) to statement (figure) again: the dancer’s “statement” a figure of their dancing, their expressiveness.

Dancing condenses the aporia between figure and performance. It celebrates the failure of the two achieving unity. “Let’s dance” could still be taken at the level of a mere turn of speech, a figure, while at once revealing the phrase’s failure to remain as mere utterance, the speech that “turns” or “cuts a figure.” Once dancing, as it always does, one is not just dancing, one is dancing in any number of styles, gestures, positions, the embellishments upon the action of dancing, reproducing the action with its “turns” or “figures.”

The person who asked me to dance had an interest in myself, but I had no desire for an amorous affiliation with him. I still felt that he was attractive and courteous and that maybe a good conversation would convince me to spend further time with him. Yet I dared not make any avowal of affection that would give him a false impression of my feelings at that moment. His reticence attracted me since he wasn't overtly sexual or too demanding of my companionship. He was above all friendly and, like myself, intent on forgetting the vulgarity of our sexual passion at the expense of some knowledge as to what we both believed in, thought about, and so forth.

I, by this point, grew anxious at the prospect of spending the evening with him. Certainly he was pleasant and attractive, but I was not in the mood for his companionship, no matter how agreeable he was. I thought that I was being terribly cold and insensitive to his gentleness, even his sincere passion. I have turned away far too many people who could be emotionally rewarding. I was attracted to more impossible desires that evening.

By this point I thought over the nature of love. I thought that love could happen at any time, right now, here in this club with this sincere man. I thought how wonderful it would be if only I made a reciprocating gesture, if only I acted on what I really wanted. But I did not. I did not act. I could have danced longer with him, looked into his eyes more, touched him more, but I did none of that. Not that he was offended, he probably knew that my feelings were elsewhere, or that I was really cold and impregnable.

By this time I realized that love between two people is based on deciding that person is their love. With love the more prominent idea, since it is essentially a summa of figures, the beloved becomes the one to whom these figures can be given their performance. The figure of love, the fantasy, is now disfigured by the counterpart. To love is to perform its figure, an endless task since the figure palls before the action when "love" performs itself. Loving someone is terrifying when up against the vaster illusion of love. Love performs its

avowal by saying "I love you," the sentiment an irrevocable event by utterance of those fateful words.

How often I have wanted to avow my love to someone but was too cowardly to say so. How often have I had my chance, how often have I failed to gesture. Yet love, despite its illusionary character, cannot happen without the performance of its illusion. If the illusion exceeds the performance, then another performance will contest the illusion. Love as illusionary figure always disfigures its idea in the trials of enacting its figure. At any moment "love" can be performed, so why not now? Yet at any moment "love" can be understood for its illusion, since the counterpart cannot completely embody the illusion.

Surely one encounters companions who do embody one's illusion, but there is always an element that coerces ("Reality") and thus cannot support a hallucination ("Fantasy"). Facing solitude as opposed to companionship is a hard alternative, but one cannot relinquish the illusion or the figure since it is the only basis from which one can love. "Give it a try" does not work because the counterpart will not quite affirm the illusion in the first place. However, the illusion is only proved when one has "given it a try," something I did not do that evening, much to my bemused regret.

I took a taxi home, cheered by my refusal to disfigure my illusion but unsettled by my failure to act. My refusal, though, was an action, such an action never giving me the chance to find out how worthwhile is my illusion. If only I had a referent for the figure of my illusion! All I can do is read the signs along the way. The moment when two eyes meet their field of vision, before tremendous distances, testifies to pages unfolded, doors slammed shut. Who else now reads my love?

Calling All Cars

*You clinking, clanking, clattering
collection of caliginous junk!*

—The Wizard of Oz

No one living nowadays can avoid the pervasiveness of the car. No one can qualify their existence as independent of its influence or control. No one can exist without a car in certain parts of the world. No young adult in public schools can avoid some sort of driver education. Questioning the automobile is tantamount to ablasphemy. I probably owe this discussion to my failure to obtain a Driver's License. All that's left are the reveries of someone confined to the back seat.

Before I begin the discussion, I must ask the simple question, what is a car? Certainly we have seen one, been driven in one or drove one, but where is it and what does it do? I have a definite mental image of one: large, metallic, equipped with tires, windows, doors, fenders, headlights, etc. I have been driven in one, sat in its seats, closed its doors, buckled seatbelts, looked out its windows, and for the few occasions when I actually drove the car, I placed foot upon gas and brake pedal, turned the steering wheel, and attempted parking. In sum I have had the usual repertoire of experiences associated with the literal nature of the car, its concrete, physical aspect. But something tells me that this description is not enough, that there is more in the nature of the car that begs discussion,

The car is not an object, it is nowhere because it is everywhere. Its pervasiveness is such that one cannot delimit a car into the simple referent of a physical object outside the margins of this text. While writing this I hear them outside my window. I may have taken a taxi to my apartment the

evening before and am now in the position to compose this essay on the automobile. My electric typewriter resembles the dashboard of a car. While I sit I operate a steering wheel or keyboard and the tire or element moves across the road or page. Am I saying that typing is simply a variant of driving? Can the pervasiveness of the car allow me to identify a seemingly incompatible experience with this act of writing when to *write* always already embeds *tire* within it? Writing is driving, and both have a path upon which they burn their rubber, their ink, as does consciousness with its neuronal incisions or *Bahnungen* (in Freud's language) when they impress a path or *Bahn* within the Book that receives everything. "Everything exists to end in a book," so said Mallarmé, for even the car is a simple variant of that mysterious stylus that includes all of life into its operation. So where is the CAR now, where can we say exists the CAR, all its letters by now worthy of the allegorical majescale that perpetually burns, brands, incises, frays, skids, writes into our Twentieth Century brains?

The celebration of the CAR takes place with the magical invocation of its name, an invocation sung day-to-day, year by year by every citizen of the country that has the CAR embedded in its name, America, Americas love their cars once we notice how similar the French verb *aimer* (to love) is to *Aimerica*. We could then yield the anagram *Aimer ça*, translated as to love it. To love the *car*? To love the car appears to be what America loves the most, unless something else is loved. The French use it or *ça* for the Id or Unconscious whereas Americans have been using car for its Unconscious. "It" always drives away from the very CAR it was ignited from, perhaps down "The American Road," the address of the Ford Motor Company.

We love the CAR and that "it" whose letters drive into the constellation of *The Eye*, *The Road* and *The Door*. Its *C* speaks See. Its *A* speaks Road whose disappearance into the horizon resembles *A*'s pointed tip. And its *R* speaks Door whose diagonal stroke mimics the *caR* *dooR* when it opens, at that point diagonal to the *caR*. The CAR does all of this, for its driving implicates 1) seeing, 2) the road upon which it travels and 3)

the door that facilitates entrance. The Eye, the Road and the Door are the buried figures within the interiors of any CAR, those letters a locked and secret trunk the CAR has up to now concealed. But other bodies are buried in the CAR, bodies that are merely letters, for the C can always become a CH, G, J, K, Qu and X. A can always become another vowel, as in the paradigm A, E, I, O, U and occasionally Y. R can become L, since the two are “liquids,” consonants that behave almost like vowels. Anything that partakes of this respelling, this anagrammatic reshuffling, utters the CAR, however far it has driven from its source. The buried respelling of CAR within words is called the anagrammatic cryptophor. Now and then an italicization will serve as reminder of its insidious *effractions*.¹

The human body is never composed of metal, but the love of cars in our *culture* stipulates that flesh be as efficient as its metalled counterpart, the CAR. The Latin *caro* for flesh opposes the English *car* for metal. Our self, our *autos*, has the auto as its standard or ideal, along with the CAR-spelling as a determination of our ego in its perfection of carhood. *America* proves the desire for carhood when it respells into *i am e car*. When our names echo the CAR, as in the names *Carol*, *Cary*, *Carlos*, *Carleton*, *Cara*, *Oscar*, *Carmen*, *Carl*, *Carveth*, *Carlo*, *Caren*, and so forth, we may find ourselves behaving in ways that suit the properties of the cars we may or may not drive. Our *autos* or self may like to work hard, go far, excel, persist, drive hard bargains, and even if we don't evidence such behavior, the car-ideal will prove the most amazing mimcries or commit us to its sleight of hand.

Carol or *Caren* are not the only ones who evidence the CAR buried within the name, but *Richard*, *George*, *Celia*, *Marcel*, *Spencer*, *Michael*, *Charlotte*, *Charles*, *Craig*, *Rachel*, *Corey*, *Cheryl* as well. (*George*, *Marcel*, *Craig* and *Rachel* have another repetition of CAR in their names as italicized on other letters.) The CAR drives its tires everywhere and leaves the most indelible *tracks* behind. But who are those who

¹ See Permutations at the end of this essay.

have those names and what do they do that would directly attribute the *characteristics* of CAR within their *careers*?

Billy Wilder's masterpiece, *Sunset Boulevard*, has Max, the chauffeur, say to Joe Gillis, Norma Desmond's lover, "It's not Madame they want. It's her car they want to rent." He says this when "Madame" is visiting Paramount studios with the hope of starring in a "return" to the cinema under the aegis of Cecil B. DeMille. She erroneously supposes that the calls from Paramount Studios were for her, but they were for her Isotta Fraschini, her antique handmade automobile that cost her \$28,000. It is the car, not Norma Desmond that the studio wanted.

This film then states that movie stars are cars and if they no longer are young, beautiful, box office potential, the car will thus assume its ideal up against the disfigured star, the car whose smooth running and impeccably shiny surface prove to be more dependable than a corruptible, ageing human being, a Norma Desmond. Thus the movie star has to be a car, the movie star has to be as smooth and shiny as the car they often act in. When they get older, they may get surgery to erase the indicia of time, just as cars, when they get older, may get custom work done to erase the dents they're subject to. The star/human being grows *scars*, while *cars* grow more delapidated too.

And what do stars or cars travel down? They drive down films or roads, the title *Sunset Boulevard* equivalent to the road Sunset Boulevard. The allegory is now complete: Stars are Cars that Act or Drive down Films or Roads.

At this moment the CAR drives into the picture. Every star, now subject to the metaphoric transfer into that of car (the *driving* into car), must in some way or another mimic the very thing they are inexorably compared with, a car, and that *mimicry*, springing from letters incised by invisible tires, speaks the CAR, the magical invocation of Hollywood publicity departments when they, like automatic writing, concoct pseudonyms. Certainly if the emerging star has a *Carol* or *Charles* in their original names, then the studio producer won't be so worried, but if their names

veer too far from the CAR combination and all its bypaths, a suitable name will have to emerge. The simplest series, the original order for CAR, has produced the following star/cars: Carroll Baker, Claudia Cardinale, Kitty Carlisle, Art Carney, Leslie Caron, Leo G. Carroll, Johnny Carson, Carolyn Jones, Ricardo Montalban, Carl Reiner, Brenda Vaccaro, Carol Burnett, George Carlin, Keith Carradine, Carl Betz, Linda Carter, and so forth. (Carroll Baker, Claudia Cardinale and George Carlin all have another echo of CAR.) The series can angulate into GAR as with the following: Greta Garbo (a cryptophor for “car beau” or “beautiful car”), Ann-Margaret, Dirk Bogarde, Humphrey Bogart, Gary Cooper, Ava Gardner, Judy Garland, Greer Garson, Margaret Hamilton, Gary Merrill, Art Garfunkel, Garrett Morris, Gary Lockwood, Samantha Eggar, Edgar Bergen, etc. (Greta Garbo, Ann-Margaret, Dirk Bogarde, Greer Garson, Gary Lockwood and Edgar Bergen embed other echoes of CAR.) The ever-permuting series, as unpredictable as Alban Berg’s² discovery of tonal relationships in the course of composing twelve-tone rows, stammers KER: Carroll Baker, Deborah Kerr (pronounced “car”), Forrest Tucker, Robert Walker (this transfer does not permit him to “walk,” but only to “drive”) Keir Dullea (diphthongs are permissible), Dan Blocker, Bob Barker, etc. Less obvious permutations are possible, as is the case with KLE: Henry Winkler, Art Linkletter, Don Rickles, Schnecklegruber, Hal Buckley. (Schnecklegruber has another echo.) Even the combination LUG produces some surprises: Bela Lugosi and Jack Klugman (also Klugman). QUEL gives us: Jacqueline Bisset, Raquel Welch (also Welch), Jacqueline Susanne (*Valley of the Dolls*), and if this person isn’t a celebrity, Jacqueline Kennedy/Jackie Onassis, what are all the others then? John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan all support my argument for the CAR as America’s supreme pleasure-word.

This argument for a relation between name and thing goes back to Plato’s “*Cratylus*” where *Cratylus* asserts to Her-

² i itch to italicize

mogenes that there is a “natural fitness of names.” (Socrates actually said this, but it’s Cratylus’s argument.) Hermogenes’s name would not be naturally his since he only believes in convention and its arbitrary character yet *Hermogenes* evokes *Hermes*, the god who deals with speech, that messenger, thief, liar or bargainer, the interpreter (*hermeneus*). The CAR in a star’s name (its rhyme with *star* another example of the motivation) asserts this ancient debate between the name and the thing it embraces. If stars are to behave like cars as they act or drive down films or roads, then that CAR ineluctably enters into the construction of their names, an activity that is also found in the denomination of cars: *Cougar*, *Mercury* (also *Mercury*, like the god that drives his messages everywhere), *Chrysler*, *Mercedes*, *Volkswagen*, *Cadillac*, *Toyota Corolla*, *Rolls Royce*, *Lynx*³ (a perfect name for a car, simply because the condensation is so economical, only four letters, three of which are echoes of CAR: l/r, y/a, x/c).

The offramps of a highway are also the *places* where the CAR can drive its letters, or rather, there are metonyms of the car that enter into stars’ names, objects that are contiguous with the car. There are also variant names of the car (wagon, van, Ford, Olds). The car’s brand name may not necessarily have to have CAR buried within it, but it is sufficiently recognizable to give us the following series: Joan *Crawford*, Glenn *Ford*, Peter *Lawford*, Mary *Pickford*, Ann *Rutherford*, Harrison *Ford*, as well as the *Fondas*, whose *n* can be truncated and produce the following: Henry *Forda*, Jane *Forda*, Peter *Forda*. Another auto company, General Motors, bears the “body by Fisher” emblem. Was it responsible for the careers of Eddie *Fisher* or Carrie *Fisher*? An “Olds” abbreviates Oldsmobile and thus yields: Burt *Reynolds*, Debbie *Reynolds* or Marjorie *Reynolds*. Other brand names register *Chevy Chase* (Chevrolet or Chevy), *Royce Wallace* (Rolls Royce), while types of vehicles register *Martin Landau*, Peter *Lorre* (for lorry), Burt *Convy* (for convoy) and then there’s also parts of the car that register *Richard Gere* (gear) or

³ ?

Patricia *Brake*. Rex Harrison starred in commercials for the car *Volare*. What's odd is that *Rex* is a homonym for *wrecks*, something no star or car should be subject to. The car's motions (to drive, to park, to turn) yield the following: Robert *Drivas*, Burt *Parks*, Michael *Parks*, Fess *Parker* and Lana *Turner*. The van or wagon gives further credence to Cratylus's argument: Lindsay *Wagner*, Robert *Wagner*, Lyle *Waggoner*, Porter *Wagoner*, Jo *Van Fleet* (the *Fleet* visualizing a fleet of vans), *Van Johnson*, Dick *Van Dyke*, *Van Heflin*, Dick *Van Patten*, Jo *Van Ark* (her *Ark* a perfect permutation of CAR), Billy *Van*, Vivian *Vance*, and on and on. Those ramps, exits, streets, roads, ways, paths, the general surface upon which the "literal" tire writes itself (notice the *tire* in *literal*), writes out

- 1) lane: Burt *Lancaster*, Priscilla *Lane*, Hope *Lange*, Angela *Lansbury*, Shirley *MacLaine*, Sara *Lane*, Charles *Lane*;
- 2) road: Barbara *Rhoades*, Harry *Rhodes*, Michael *Road*, *Rhodes Reason*;
- 3) rue (Fr. road): Jack *La Rue*, Cash *La Rue*;
- 4) *strada* (It. street): Erik *Estrada*;
- 5) street: Sidney *Greenstreet*;
- 6) way: Faye *Dunaway*, John *Wayne*, Jeff *Conway*, Gary *Conway*, *Wayne Conway*, *Mae West/Wae West/Way West* (the M is inverted); and
- 7) miles: Sarah *Miles*, Ray *Milland*, Ann *Miller*.

Even the *tire* finds its tracks in John *MacIntire*, Jaime *Tirelli*, or *Macintyre Dixon* while its anagrammatization seeps into Fred *Astaire*, Marlene *Dietrich* *Thelma Ritter*, *Barbra Streisand* (for someone as addicted to producing "tire tracks" or "grooves," such a name seems perfect with the "natural fitness of names"), Shelley *Winters*, John *Ritter*, and *tire's* extensions into: Patricia *Wheel*, Mark *Wheeler*, Eddie *Firestone* and the improbable conjunction of the *Ernie Flatt Dancers*. Every car has to *burn* oil and so do stars, as do George *Burns*, Audrey *Hepburn*, Katharine *Hepburn*, Mike *Burns*, Gene *Rayburn*, Carol *Burnett*, whereas the *bur* in *burn* is echoed in *Billie Burke*, *Ellen Burstyn*, *Richard Burton* and the burning

of a *pyre* in Richard *Pryor/Pyror*. Oil helps that burning and so its anagrams help the careers of the following celebrities (there's a Chevrolet model called the "*Celebrity*"): *Louis Armstrong*, *Louise Brooks*, *Gloria De Haven*, *Gloria Swanson* (*Gloria* is an anagram for *oil rag*), *Olivia De Haviland* (*via oil* for *Olivia*), *Goldie Hawn*, *Laurence Olivier*. These tires *carve* the strangest incisions and skid down all sorts of detours and out-of-the-way trails.

Perusing my "*Great American Movie Book*", which lists over 1,500 performers, I found many names of drivers, chauffeurs and the like with the CAR embedded in their names. These people are the *true* actors since they fulfill the allegorical function so well, they act *and* drive down films *or* roads. The drivers are as follows: *Francis Ford* (In *Old Chicago*), *Jerry Lewis* (a "mad driver" in *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*). *Billy Curtis* (*My Gal Sal*, a midget driver), *Sol Gorss* and *Charles Sullivan* (*They Drive by Night*), *Max Wagner* (echoing *wagon*, again *They Drive by Night*), *Ford Dunhill* (*Viva Las Vegas*), *John Pikard* (*Wake of the Red Witch*). The taxi drivers, more numerous, have not had the privilege of *Robert de Niro*, and unlike him oftentimes cryptically embed CAR in their names: *Dick Crockett* (*Breakfast at Tiffany's*), *Donald Kerr* (*Detective Story*), *George Davis* (*Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*), *Kit Guard* (*Here Come the Waves*), *Peter Falk* and *Leo Gorcey* (*It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*), *Jack Carr* (*The More the Merrier*), *Lloyd Ingraham* (*Mr. Lucky*), *Arch Johnson* (*Niagara*), *Mushy Callahan* (*The Nutty Professor*), *George Davis* (*One Hour With You*), *George Chandler* (*Since You Went Away*), *Charles Hall* (*Swing Time*), *Connie Gilchrist* (*Thousands Cheer*, two cryptophors, *Gil* and *chri*), *Pedro Regas* (*Waikiki Wedding*, not to mention the *gas* at the end of *Regas*), *Garry Owen* (*Watch on the Rhine*). Not as numerous as cab drivers, the chauffeurs go as follows: *Reginald Farmer* (*Car Wash*), *Billy Wayne* (*Dangerous*, the *way* is significant), *Bud Geary* (*Dead End*, *Gear* is also identical with the *gearshift*), *Morgan Wallace* (*Grand Hotel*), *James Cromwell* (*Murder by Death* and his name was *Marcel*), *Charles La Torre* (*Three Coins in the Fountain*), *Creighton Hale* (*Watch on the Rhine*).

There are several truck drivers: Fred Graham (*The Asphalt Jungle*), Max Wagner (*Black Legion*, echoing wagon), Charles Sullivan (*Easy to Wed*, notice the van), Bobby McGriff (*The Last Picture Show*), Boyd (Red) Morgan (*Pillow Talk*), Clegg Hoyt (*That Touch of Mink*), Wayne Hazelhurst (*Up in Smoke*). Stage drivers, so frequent in Westerns, still permute CAR even though they drive more antique vehicles: Cliff Clark (*Fort Apache*, also Clark), Bud McClure (*Destry Rides Again*), Poodles Hanneford (*San Antonio*), Jennings Miles (how many miles did he travel in *Winchester '73?*). Motorcycle cops, aptly eulogized in the TV series *Chips*, evoke CAR despite their cycles being miniature versions of the former: Tom Greenway (the echo of CAR and the crucial way in *How to Marry a Millionaire*), Garry Owen (*Notorious*). One bus driver, Charles Jordan (*Cat People*), and one ambulance driver, Fred Graham (*No Way Out*), are the only other drivers in a vast repertoire of actors who must have had to acquire drivers licenses to act in all those films or roads. Incidentally, Erich von Stroheim, the chauffeur in *Sunset Boulevard*, did not know how to drive, “which humiliated him” (“*Swanson on Swanson*”), so the Isotta Fraschini was pulled by “ropes the whole while.”

At times the Cratylitic limits traverse into the oddest of conjunctions. Garret Morris stars as “*Wheels*” in a TV show called *Roll Out*, his acting a mimicry of his names? In *Cool Hand Luke*, where the *Cool* and *Luke* both echo the CAR, Clifton James is named “*Carr*.” The perfect name for a star, according to this method of the anagrammatic cryptophor of CAR, is *Clu Gallagher*, since the *Clu* echoes CAR, as well as *Gal*, as well as *lag*, as well as *gher*, a repetition of CAR made four times within the entire sequence of letters of this proper name. *Tea and Sympathy* stars Deborah Kerr and John Kerr. The one piece of visual information I have from this film is both Kerr’s in a tender embrace. James Dean, a “car” if ever there was one (he was fond of racing and died in a car crash), starred in *East of Eden* and was called “*Cal*,” a perfect respelling of CAR, *l* being *r*’s substitute. The drama was set in the state of *California*, land no doubt of many cars and

stars. Jayne Mansfield's decapitation in a car accident represents a perfect *allegory* of cinema, all those "cropped" heads within the frames of cameras had their *grisly* equivalent in her *spectacular* death, when always already CAR inhabits the *camera*.

Not wanting to swerve too far from our subject, the CAR and all its permutations, the names of stars are also based in part on the mimicry of the word AMERICA. America, besides containing CAR, also contains the crucial words ARM, MAR, RAM, etc. The proliferation of Norma, Mary, Roman, La Mar, Morgan, Mark, Norman, Marilyn mimic the first four letters of *America*. A psychoanalysis of Hollywood must begin with the letters of America within the letters of a star's name. After all, stars are only letters: what else are empty spaces filled up with? Letters/letster/letstar. Picking a star's name is a precise ritual that follows from several sources: 1) mimicry of CAR; 2) mimicry of synonyms/metonyms of ROADS; 3) mimicry of AMERica; 4) mimicry of STAR; 5) mimicry of synonyms/metonyms of EYES and EARS (the two drives involved in the perception of films); 6) mimicry of I or JE; In the 1937 version of *A Star is Born*, Esther Blodgett becomes Vicki Lester, a repetition of STAR.

The common myth of stardom is that one attains ultimate recognition on all levels: artistic, emotional, sexual, financial, the entire prism of *colors* that shine from that as yet unobtainable *carrot*. Initially the "road" is a long one, but once the horizon is reached, the speeds one can drive at in that nether-nether land are *incalculable*. The movie star demagogue (the *movie* prefiguring an even vaster *mov[i]ement*), or anyone intent on being at the "top of the heap," becomes the swiftest set of wheels ever to incise on any extant road. Any obstacles in their path are ruthlessly wrenched from their position so as to let the *Great Car Course to Glory*. But the *great inscription* and its formidable wake, those *traces*, ghosts, *ventriloquies*, only *reach* that *tragic margin*, the Sunset Boulevard *cul-de-sac*, the End-of-the-Road, the *career* that *careens* to a *crashing* death.

What happened along that Road, that Career's Course where the Car began to corrupt? The commonest fatality that meets anyone whose ascending career swerves from its rightful course is, of course, drugs. How many news reports have we heard of stars caught for drunk driving, cocaine possession or the ultimate horror of an overdose?

Drugs, whose *rug* refracts the CAR, resembles the gasoline that allows cars to drive. Any kind of drug is an interiorization of oil ("high octane" as a taxi driver friend expressed it) since they enable one to "go" far, perhaps on a "trip," that may or may not end up driving you *crazy*. Drinking and driving don't mix, but then *alcohol* echoes *oil* as in the misspelling, *alcohol*. "Alcohol" has also been suggested as an oil-substitute for turbine engine cars. A can of beer resembles an oil drum, besides what are all those "drums" emptied of, beer or oil, once thrown in trash cans so often former oil drums? Cocaine's similarity to oil occurs in the drug's tendency to induce vivacity, restless activity, mania, sleeplessness, properties that would not take place in a car deprived of fuel. John DeLorean, the tycoon of the DeLorean Automobile Company, was arrested for intent to smuggle \$24 million worth of cocaine to save his enterprise from default. Here the equivalence is cocaine for cars since the drug would have "salvaged" his automobiles. Such a vast supply can corrupt someone's nose and collapse it into the powder that destroyed it; the tycoon could thus instruct his engineers to customize another fender of human flesh. Speed or dexadrine cannot help but associate with the high "speeds" cars attain or what large trucks do, their drivers often resorting to the substance in their marathons across the country. Any cigarette, tobacco or marijuana, echoes the ignition of a car's engine, their smoke the transubstantiation of exhaust. Tranquilizers and opiates, although dissimilar to the manias induced by cocaine and speed, still allow one to "go" somewhere else, their alteration of consciousness a detour down unfamiliar paths, something all drugs accomplish.

A milder substance, coffee, is also what those truckers quaff when they stop for gas, the two liquids metaphors for

each other. No wonder the star/tar Margaret Hamilton endorsed tar-evocative Maxwell House coffee, the “good to the last drop” substance. Another one of its commercials featured a carpool of executives (worried over the high prices of oil), cautiously drinking a rapidly diminishing cup of that coffee. Coffee, so similar to oil by virtue of its darkness and the “energy” of the caffeine, finds itself composed of *wax* after we invert the M in Maxwell House: *Waxwell House/Oil well House*. When I worked for an oil company, my boss, a Mr. Moore (intent on mining *more* and *more* oil), fetched all the fellow workers coffee in the morning. Throughout the country of Mexico, Pepsi signs are placed beside gasoline stations. The *sugar* and caffeine in that soft drink will propel the driver as will Mobil oil propel the drinker’s car. Pepsi ads (it was once endorsed by that famous star, Joan Car[w]ford) announce themselves in the colors of the American *flag* just as Mobil oil ads do in similar tricolor heraldry. Junior eats Sugar Frosted Flakes in the morning (induced by its cute *cartoon tiger*) while Daddy loads up with Esso Oil (induced, like Junior, by another cute cartoon tiger who says, “Put a Tiger in Your Tank.”)

Even if the *accelerating celebrity* were to be actually driving, loaded with drugs as their cars are loaded with oil, the possibility for them to suffer another crash *increases* the density of the allegorical scheme onto another level. The star/car that acts/drives down films/roads now meets its rhetorical inversion: *peripeteia*, the reversal of fortune, the “sudden-unexpected reversal of the action in an opposite (unfortunate) direction.” (Lausberg) *Peripeteia*’s compliment, *anagnorismos*, is a “sudden process of recognition that proceeds from a change of direction of the course of action.” The simplest example of *peripeteia* is from Aristotle’s *Poetics*: “...as it is for instance in Oedipus: here the opposite state of things is produced by the Messenger, who, coming to gladden Oedipus and to remove his fears as to his mother, reveals the secret of his birth.” The light said “go” and when we drove on, another car came upon our left, smashed it, injured our flesh and hospitalized us. Our lives changed in different degrees

of intensity from that point onward. Car accidents, as well as the “pitfalls” of success (peripeteia is etymologically related to fall, *piptein*), reverse the ascension into Glory into the descent into obscurity, the same peripeteia or Fall that met Adam and Eve when God expelled them from Paradise.

Tragedy’s most powerful clements are its Peripeties and Discoveries, so says Aristotle. Epic poetry also “requires Peripeties, Discoveries, and scenes of suffering just like Tragedy.” So *the American Tragedy* is the car that didn’t go, it stopped too soon, it went off at the wrong time, it turned up the wrong street (as did Joe Gillis’s in *Sunset Boulevard*) and no doubt its other failures along life’s journeys. Drinking and driving don’t mix (carousing), otherwise the incompatible activities will perform what everyone knows is an ambiguity in the phrase “falling star.” The Great Crash of 1929 was also a “sudden or unexpected reversal of circumstances or situation” of the Roaring Twenties when another reversal of fortune took place, the emergence of the talkies after a decade of silent films. The next decade, the Depression, reversed the mythologies of quick success into the realities of nagging poverty, something that could take place at any time knowing the capriciousness of capital, which, like any text we read, gives us no idea as to what it’s up to. Missing an exit sign (the “change in direction”) and its Discovery by reversing one’s tracks, as on our interstate freeways, resembles rereading an entire passage from a novel because we didn’t discover *X* was married to *Y*. Going forward, and remaining *there*, however contradictory that sounds, is *the* dilemma that besets those success stories who have been “driving” or “smooth sailing” all along and are now faced with the problems of maintaining their former speeds. The Allegorical Car encounters the Careening Peripeteia. Hopefully the victim will come to his senses and recognize or discover the means to change direction.

The peripeteia is sudden, unexpected. Right away, in the dictionary, even with words whose initial three letters spell CAR, we find the series *careen*, *career*, *carefree*, *careful* and *careless* follow each other nearly one after the other. This

purely lexicographic coincidence, this succession of antonyms, can engender the following sentence: to careen from the career shows that one was carefree, not careful, in fact, careless. Their swift contiguity merely duplicates the suddenness of inattention and its tragic reversals, the brief moment when one isn't watching and *careful* swerves into *careless*, letting the *career careen*. There's also "*Webster's*" definition of *carry on*: "1) to behave in a foolish, excited, or improper manner; 2) to continue one's course or activity in spite of hindrance or discouragement." Two antithetical meanings exist in the same word, for the Car's uninterrupted course, its *carrying on* (continuance) will not, pardon the expression, be carried off (realized) because one *carried on* (acted foolishly). Further, the "*Oxford English Dictionary*" right after the noun "car" ("a wheeled vehicle or conveyance") lists an adjective, "car," meaning: "a. left, sinister; commonly in car-hand, car-handed. b. awkward; perverse; wrong; sinister." It mentions a proverb, "You'll go a car gate yet." If the *car* is to stay on course it musn't go in a *car* direction. Here the metaphor "left or right" coerces as intensely as "to kill or not to kill," for if the car direction is kept, you might get killed. Driving in a car- or left-handed lane can be as dangerous as driving in a right-handed lane depending on what country you're driving in. The right course for the car is met up with the wrong or car course. The "fiery *carre*" of the sun will always travel east to west and never in a car direction.

The *ca* in *car* is an echo of *go*. (And an echo of *go* is in *echo*.) The *ca(r)* must *go*. Another ambiguity: the car *must go*, 1) either it goes forward, in its fated direction, 2) or it gets discarded, thrown away. Of course it can "go backward" in order to "go away." Forward or backward, on course or reversed, car or right, all are contingent upon "going" in whatever direction. Verbs that convey movement enact the same transitivity of their referents. A movement of the eyes, reading, requires a registration of the word "movement." When "movement" disappears, we move on. We don't read in a car direction but just to the *right*. Here the homonym with *write* is a mysterious *rite* in our culture's habits of *right*-oriented eye

movement while reading and in its bearing to the *right* lane while driving. But then as intense as the metaphor is, we veer left while reading only to stay on course to the right. In a car we may sit to the left, but we hug the right. We may choose the Left (whose version of history is a peripeteia of capitalism by means of revolution) or the Right who oftentimes only distinguish themselves when they *right* social order as they *write* out or suppress the Left. Maybe the reason why a communist revolution in America will fail is because everyone has to drive on the right. Bearing right is a cryptic anthem to conservative politics, while understanding the *double entendre* demands reading to the left a little.

Write/right/rite/tire enter into another meaning, style, where the plural of *tires* most closely evokes that of *style* once certain transformations are accomplished: tires/stire/stile/style. Through anagrammatization and switching the *r* into an *l*, *tires* becomes *style*, a relation not far from each other since the tire is a stylus of sorts, a pen that leaves its marks on roads, like styluses that incise record grooves, like draughtsmen who design clothes.

The style of one's tiring or attire, the clothes designed by a famous name, incises the CAR throughout its discourse, the proper names, brand names, slogans and advertisements surrounding such articles.

The names of designers, like the brand names of cars, closely evoke the CAR. We may simultaneously think of the person who designed the piece or the product itself that has such a name attached to it. Among the many names that repeat the CAR within the designers' names are: *Calvin Klein*, *Oscar de la Renta*, *Pierre Cardin*, *Nino Cerruti*, *Christian Dior*, *Claude Montana*, *Courrièges*, *Diane von Furstenberg*, *Ungaro*, *Karl Lagerfeld*, *Trigere*, *Kay Unger*, *Thierry Mugler*, *Gloria Sachs*, *Anne Klein*, *Sonia Rykiel*, *Krizia*, *Reiko*, *Nina Ricci*, *Guy Laroche*, and *Gianni Versace*. *Calvin Klein*, *Karl Lagerfeld*, *Trigere*, *Sonia Rykiel* all have multiple repetitions of CAR within their names. *Gianni Versace* possesses an anagram of *cars* within his while *Thierry Mugler* has *tire*.

Fashion products also evoke the CAR. Dresses include: St. Gillian, Cricketeer, Chloe. Other clothing articles (hosiery, shoes, purses) comprise: Caress (purses), Garolini & Galo (shoes), Lycra, Flexatard, Gerbe and Le Gourget (hosiery), Calderon (belts), Blackglama (furs). Jewelry and watches go as such: Van Cleff & Arpels, Cartier (car and tire), Cellini Collection by Rolex (the word *collection* is often found in fashion periodicals), Krementz, Majorica, Concord Quartz. Perfumes, so often a mystification of oil, are the most highly refined product. One perfume, Nocturnes, is made by Caron. Even the stores where these products are sold have the CAR haunt their names: Neiman-Marcus, Bergdorf-Goodman, McCurdy's, Collin's, Michelle's Boutique. Another area of bodily adornment, of tiring, is skincare: Clinique, Clarins, Prescriptives, Georgette Klinger. Throughout the language of the advertisements for these collections and products one finds a plenitude of CAR-haunted words: mascara, clinical, cellular, facial, specialist, classic, clay, cleanse/cleanser/cleansing, collagen, cologne, color, creme, crystal, allergy, gel, glamor, glow, gold, grains, program, fragrance, great, silkier, milk, leg, liquid, look, complexion, luxury, regimen, recovery, enrich, indulge. Sometimes their congruity produces the following conjunctions: Milk Cleansing Grains, Specialist Cellular Recovery (whose *rec* sounds like *wreck*, the opposite of *recovery*), Maximum Care Eye Creme (*max*-beginning words always evoke *wax*), Allergy Tested/Fragrance Free (for Clinique), Supplegen Firming Moisture Creme, Skin Care/Skin Repair. Indeed everytime the word "care" is used, its closeness to car only enforces the quasi-natural relation between bodily maintenance, the care or attention we give to our health, and automotive maintenance, the care or attention we give to our cars. Cosmetics like "Scarlet" or "Jolen Creme Bleach" metaphorically glide into car-waxes, polishes, buffs, and the like. Revlon's "Back at the Ranch Collection" describes itself as a "rich & restless collection of colors" where the CAR redundancy confirms its status as a cryptic garland of our culture's most magical permutation, Merle Norman is an organization that calls itself "the place for the custom

face” where women undergo its “no-nonsense make-over” in order to become more beautiful and confident with their appearance and wardrobe. Such a drastic change resembles Detroit’s yearly restyling of its cars, as is also proved by a Revlon slogan (*Revlon* embeds love): “New Year, New You, New Colors for Fall.” Paco Rabanne, true to fashion’s blending of the flesh-proximate (perfumes) with the not-so-flesh proximate (cars), markets a product called “Mētāl.” The pretentious diacritical marks mystify the consumer into thinking that it’s not metal that their bodies are aspiring to (which they, in fact, are). The edge of the body begins with clothes and then moves on to the car. Cosmetics are the closest to the body, perfumes almost of the body’s very essence. This veil or flimsy appurtenance at flesh’s very edge simply gradiates towards its architectural enclosure: the car, the apartment, the office. The language of furs, the most luxurious and protective of the body, repeats the CAR: “Fur, *Racier*, *Rugged*, More Elemental” and “*Crystal Fox & Cross Fox*.”

From flesh to clothes to cars, so goes the metonym. Bill Blass has designed women’s clothes just as he has designed an automobile, the Lincoln-Mercury Division’s Mark VI, the “Bill Blass Edition.” A multi-paged advertisement which appeared in the October 1982 *Vogue* (whose *V* mimics the styler’s pen or scissors) promoted both Ford cars and Bill Blass fashions. Three cars, the 1983 Mark VI, 1983 Continental, 1983 Lincoln, were photographed next to three models (a word that also means car) posing in different Blass outfits. Right away the language is ambiguous: “The Lincoln Commitment—It’s built into every Lincoln *model* for 1983.” Substitute Blass for “Lincoln” and you’ll have identical praise. The CAR seeps into such phrases as “only *cars* of the highest *calibre*≤”, “checkerboards of bold, *racy*, potent *color*,” “a *car* of singular *quality* and *style*,” “a *celebration* of American *creativity* and *style*.” Bill Blass has eyes that are “*far-reaching*,” the same kind of eyes needed when driving? He designed the *Mark VI* (wouldn’t every car’s tire make a mark?) that featured “custom appointments that show off the inimitable

touch of Blass.” The ad further claims it’s “a marvelous expression of the Lincoln commitment to originality. And fashion. And image. Your image. Imagine the pleasure of owning a car as elegant as you are.” The car’s image is identic to “your image” for it’s just “as *elegant* as you are.” From car to “you,” the one wealthy enough to buy his \$1790–\$2600 dresses, will undergo the transformation into the car-model or carideal our culture consistently proposes. Its last page featured cars under wraps, implicitly asserting that the human wrapped in Bill Blass clothes equals the cars wrapped by sheets, whose “lines are deftly drawn.” Designing clothes and designing cars are equivalent pastimes since the entities that will be contained in them will be human beings. Blass rhymes with class, and these cars exult in their tastefulness, “with the far-reaching prestige that emanates from owning a luxurious, spaciouly comfortable car.” Acquiring taste and “far-reaching” prestige are accomplished by driving in Bill Blass designs, be they *cars* or *clothes*.

Some other examples. An advertisement for Benhill clothes says: “Benhill Overhaul will have you running on all cylinders. \$109.” The poster shows a man standing beside a car wherein a girl is sitting at the driver’s seat. He is presumably decked out in the “Benhill Overhaul.” The ad goes on to say, “high-octane selection of suits, slacks, jackets...” and “You’ll love the mileage your clothing dollar gets at Benhill.” The fashion store Plymouth! shows that the clothes one puts on and the Plymouth that one drives in are identical even though a mere exclamation mark suggests some difference. A model who walks down a runway in a Plymouth! dress corresponds to a Plymouth that drives down a highway. Why do John Weitz fashion ads appear on the back of buses? Many of them feature a cartoon of a sports car, an oblique reference to his line of sports jackets or his sports car racing pastime?

The diamond stylus that travels down a record groove is an allegory of a car traveling down a highway. The stylus (car) repeats its incision on a groove (road). Thus the sound *created* by the stylus associates with the sound *cre ated* by the

car. Whether our radios are on or not, the sound happens all the time. Nearly everyone lives near a road from which issues the sound of tires grating down the pavement. Nearly everyone possesses a radio from which issues the sound of a stylus grating down those grooves. Notice in *radio* a repetition of *road*, *radio*, an anagram for *I road*. I rode down the road of the radio. Listening, too, simply metaphorizes into driving. (The *phora* in *metaphora* means “change with respect to location.”) Dancing late into the night resurfaces into driving late into the night, the marathons of cross-country travel are met by the marathons of dancing until dawn on oil-evocative drugs. We’re also probably wearing our jeans/sneakers, those clothes that repeat the car/tire idea since once out of our car, these clothes continue the metonym from flesh to clothes to metal, from body to jeans to car. The music-saturated air can happen inside the discotheque as well as inside the car. One stipulates dancing, the other driving. Dancing and driving don’t mix, but the music essentially eulogizes the interior rumblings of the car. There’s even a music to those studded winter tires that *crepitate* once they strike the surfaces of roads. That delicate, watery sound, *like* the aftermath of waves dripping from myriads of pebbles on *rocky* beaches, has often met my ear even through the dense cover of forests. The pervasive car and tire static accompanies nearly every other sound, filtering ubiquitously into every other aural event, *crashing* surf, *creaking* trees, *groaning* wind. Every car possesses a muffler to attenuate the loud bangings inside, and every car interior is protected from that engine’s loudness by solid metal surfaces, another muffler of sorts for the occupant on the inside. Radios, on full blast, displace the less harmonious sounds occurring inside. So much burning of oil in the engine encounters so much tribute to *sexual* passion and romantic love, subjective states that popular music calls “hot,” “on fire,” “burning up,” virtual states for the combustion of the car’s fuel. Such lyrics on these vinyl records confirm that this sound is the voice of oil, its prosopopoeia. Nothing is in the stylus’ way as nothing is in the way of the car’s path. A skipping record evokes thresholds one never

wants to encounter in a car, proving once again that “dancing is dangerous.”

Various New York discos I’ve visited, such as Studio 54, the Saint, the Roxy, mimic this car/road stylus/groove idea. The DJ booth at Studio 54 (where they play 45s) resembles a pickup needle as it hovers above a partially curved dance floor. The Saint’s entire dance floor is round and its dancers are again the stylus that “dances” down the grooves. The Roxy is a roller-disco, but for those occasions when dancers don’t have to wear rollerskates, their ordinary *heels* almost have *wheels* as they did on all the other evenings. The series could proceed as such: cars drive on roads as styluses course down record grooves as dancers dance on dance floors. A stylus is related to a stiletto and the pointed tips of cowboy boots (so often capped with silver, a precious substance like the diamond) evoke the stylus that writes out sound into the air. One track of a dancer’s stiletto incises just as deeply as all the wheels of chariots that had worn down the stones of the *Via Appia Antica*. “Another disco allegory” bemoans the listener when he hears such lyrics as “Circles, circles,” “It’s my turn now,” “Your love keeps me going round and round.” What do songs of *love* mean over disco sound systems when the *v* in *love* mimics the diamond stylus as the rest of *love*’s letters, *loe*, recombines into *oel*, a near-spelling of *oil*? Or what about *groove* whose *r* can substitute with an *l* and produce *gloove*, a reverberation of *love*? We never tire of hearing the word *love* in our ears since *love* always monumentalizes the stylus that writes down oil/vinyl records, those *grooves* of *love*.

Much of these symptoms occur in the “fast lanes” of gay society. The “tight jeans” crowd, those addicted to impeccable surfaces, oil-derived music, stimulants, *muscles*, amyl nitrate (a snorted drug that smells like oil), smoking tarrife faggots (cigarettes), appear to have assimilated the car-ideal quite thoroughly. *Gay*, so close to *car*, is even closer when the CAR reverses its R; CAꞤ the upside down R then embeds a Y: Y/Y. Taking the reversals of C into G and the R into Y into effect, the CAR then becomes the GAY. Gay life

always narrates its successes and failures to live up to its car-ideal or ego-ideal, the car being the standard from which its imaginary (*narcissistic*) captations take *place*.

Undoubtedly there are mysteries such as *gal* or *girl*, two words that are perfect echoes of the CAR. Even the figure of incision, the *v* in *love* or *Levi's* or *groove*, resembles the genitalia of the female, another tire that incises the extensive trails of allegory. What then is a girl's best friend? Stylish attire? Crystalline drugs? Valentino? Cremes? Gels? Mascara? Diamonds? Diamond styluses? Might they all provide as faithful a service as do chauffeurs who never tire in their driving chores? Attired in such luxurious riches, the girl might feel like Schönfeld's "Triumph of Venus" where the painting depicted the goddess of love in a car pulled by all the other gods. Vulcan's labor assures the gentler sex that she'll be well-protected behind the armor of the car, now that she's also swathed in furs, diamonds, perfumes, a virtual inventory of car-related tropes. Diamonds are a girl's best friend just as cars can claim a similar status, both nearly indestructible substances that incise paths. "To incise paths" equivocates with *id.*as of coitus, further confirmation of the allegorical line's density and unconsciousness.

One of the car's greatest blessings is its relative immunity to the outside. Once outside, out-of-the-house, the car offers us the possibility of entering into another interior, another inside. While driving one can close the windows so as to shield oneself from the inclemencies of weather, noise and other distractions. But is one still "outside" even though one is "inside" the car?

Already a great deal of this discussion has asserted the car's cryptic character when the car essentially reproduces the attributes of the crypt or vaulted *enclosure*.

A crypt always complicates the opposition between inside and outside. The vault that is built to protect the dead from the outside also protects the dead who *might* be living from ever coming back inside, inside our homes, inside our bodies. When a loved-one dies we also build an intramental crypt that shields us from the dangerously thrilling fantasies

of bodily contact with the *corpse*. Incorporation, fantasmatic, hallucinatory and magical, becomes supplemented by introjection, a slow, laborious and ultimately effective process. Introjection assimilates the absent object along the lines of identification or idealization and not along incorporation's more violent strategies. The vault that incorporation requires can only speak in ruses, disguises and lexical contiguities that hide the fantasies of contact with the loved one. This vaulted enclosure is then outside to the rest of our inside. Once inside it separates from the surroundings much like the real vault buried in the ground but hermetically protected from the surrounding earth. The crypt or vault in a cemetery mimics the crypt or vault in our Self. (See Jacques Derrida's preface 'Fors' to Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok's "*Cryptonymie: Le verbiere de l'Homme aux loups*.")

So what does this have to do with the car?

If Americans want to attain the attributes of the car, they must interiorize its characteristics in differing degrees of intensity. The movie star who changes his/her name with the CAR shows us a moment of such encrypting, a moment when the outside, the car, enters the inside, the person's proper name, the seal and stamp of subjectivity. When this happens we can safely say that the movie star has incorporated the CAR, both at the level of the letter and in the steps of introjection when the star proposes the car as its ideal. But the rescrawling of the proper name also becomes a rescrawling of the body, another example of the inorganic triumphing over the organic, the mechanical over the biological and thus fashions something as indeterminate as the crypt's status as "inside" or "outside."

The following might be an appropriate parable of our Industrial Age, the time when flesh becomes equatable with metal or the bounties of Nature must mingle with the technological achievements of Man. When our bodies decay through disease or age, medical science can augment or replace the delapidated organs, much like a car mechanic who can substitute an ailing engine with another better running one. This area of medicine is called "spare-part surgery"

where man-made objects take over nature's fabrications. However there are those who will assert that man is a product of nature and thus such devices are "natural" in a sense. My argument only points out that human tools can change what invented it: man. That independence from "nature" demonstrates that man's products are not determined by the substratum of their creation. For now we'll simply assume an incompatibility between nature and man even though nature could account for everything that is "man."

No one would be so naive to believe that the body *is* a machine, for Donald Longmore, the author of "*Spare-Part Surgery: The Surgical Practice of the Future*", says that the body is "of infinitely greater subtlety." Already medical technicians have invented "extracorporality machines" that take over the functions of the heart, lungs and kidneys, but not the liver and intestines for they're "far beyond our skills." The heart-lung machine, an aid for the surgeon performing open-heart surgery, perfects the identity between man and machine, but such surgery is not without its dangers: "Some years ago I compared the surgeon's task in attempting to repair a defective heart with the job of repairing a defective engine in a single-engined aircraft halfway over the Atlantic on a stormy night." Along the lines of this aircraft analogy Longmore also states that the "tricky parts of operating a heart-lung machine are while going into and coming off bypass." For those whose limbs have failed them, prosthetic limbs are also short of perfection: "The chief barrier to progress is our inadequate materials technology: strength-to-weight ratios are far too low; power packs, whether of bottled gas or electrical cells, are short-lived and too heavy; gas- and electric-powered motors respond crudely compared with the line responses we can achieve with our muscles; mechanical joints are clumsy and unadaptable; and so on." The machine's ultimate giveaway is that "there is no prosthetic substitute for touch, temperature, pain, position, pressure, or slip." When accidents of birth or circumstance force people to be bound entirely to a wheelchair, "the 'hand' will be part of the 'chair' (which may, in fact, be a walking bed)..." Sometimes amputees divide the

prosthetic limbs into a “cosmetic” hand for social occasions and a “split hook” for work or at home. The “split hook” oftentimes is more “efficient” than a regular hand. It is better equipped to operate a “linotype composing machine, drive a suitably engineered vehicle, run the signal box of a mainline terminus, use approach-radar facilities, or fly a Gemini spacecraft—and in each case to move the controls much quicker than a man using his hands.”

Various materials, such as artificial heart suture threads, glues and metal parts have found themselves inside the body of many a human being. As Longmore states, “Their use has taught us a good deal about the interaction between living tissue and manufactured materials.” The threads that surgeons used were silk and gut, but both were proteins and “liable to attack by the body’s defenses.” Nowadays “high-tensile man-made fibers” constitute the surgical thread. Stapling machines or barbed rivets (“miniature arrows with double arrowheads at each end of the shaft”) facilitate sealing blood vessels. Plastics, such as epoxy and polyurethane resins, have also done the job of sealing vessels. However the “most effective glue so far is the monomer made by Eastman Kodak.” Metals are also within the field of spare-part medicine, provided they don’t “corrode” or “fatigue.” “They can be formed into complex shapes. They can be plated or polished to give a smooth surface finish. They conduct electricity. And they do not provoke the immune response.” The metals that have been used are Vitallium (“an alloy of 65 percent cobalt, 30 percent chromium, 3 percent molybdenum, and traces of manganese, silicone, and carbon”), 18/12 stainless steel (“steel with 18 percent chromium and 12 percent nickel”), and “commercially pure (99 percent) titanium.”

The dream of a perfectly running artificial heart (after all “the heart is a pump”) would fulfill the identity between an automotive engineer and a surgical pioneer. “The earliest experimental hearts were powered by electricity—a clean fuel, with no exhaust problems.” Electricity is still the power for the “best foreseeable artificial heart,” even though Longmore suggests a “minute nuclear reactor... implanted in some con-

venient body cavity.” The material for the prosthetic valves have been fashioned out of “Dacron, Teflon, Mylar, Ivalon, sponge, Stafoam, and polyurethane without liberating clots into the bloodstream.”

Everything mentioned so far obeys the rubric of “heterografts” (grafts from sources outside the body) while “homografts” (grafts from sources of the body, donations and the like) comprise: “corneas, cartilages, bone chips, arteries, veins, heart valves, and blood.” The part-machine, part-human in the *Six Million Dollar Man* TV series possessed a heterografted eye while the spinoff that featured a woman presented a heterografted ear.

Somewhat removed from our vital functions is the area of reconstructive or plastic surgery. Indeed “plastic” evokes the malleability or customizability of the human body as well as the substances that are injected to enhance proportions. Such substances “must be inert, noncarcinogenic, and have physical properties which simulate the tissue it is replacing.” (J. Stallings, “*A New You: How Plastic Surgery Can Change Your Life*”) Stallings, a professional cosmetic surgeon, no longer uses the usual “silicone rubber devices” for breast augmentation, but the “Klein inflatable implant... filled with physiologic saline or salt water.” Here the *Klein* implant will “simulate the tissue it is replacing,” proving how far medical technology has complicated the distinction between flesh and nonflesh (apropos the saline solution, 70 percent of the body consists of salt water anyway), between our insides and outsides.

The car-ideal and its cryptic infestations are no longer merely fantasies that modify our behavior or propel us to utter words with the C, A and R, they also inform one of the most important of human activities, medical science. There the car-metaphor, the gliding of the human-physiological into the automotive-mechanical, shows us how impoverished our supposed distance from the machine is. Not only does the car-ideal repeat itself endlessly (in our names, makeup, clothes, intoxicants) but when faced with adversity, it accounts for a variety of *recuperations* (spare-part surgery and

plastic surgery) that further sustain and enrich life. The car is responsible for much that needs to be altered in our lives, and at the same time it is responsible, *via* the same redundancies and saturations, for what every human being needs (as expressed in a car wash advertisement), “Tender Lovin’ Care.” We may tire of the car’s tire that perpetually incises, while we never tire of human *charity* or brotherly *care*, especially when we find ourselves conveyed by an ambulance’s tires. Straightaway, the back seat driver’s irony has to yield to hopes for a safe drive.

Permutations

ACHL	CHUL	GAR	IRK	LEAC	REAG
ACL	CIAL	GEL	JER	LEC	REC
ACR	CIER	GER	JOL	LEG	REG
AGR	CIL	GEAR	JOR	LEX	REIK
AKL	CLA	GEOR	KAL	LIC	REK
ALC	CLE	GIL	KAR	LIG	REX
ALK	CLI	GIR	KEL	LIK	RGE
ARC	CLO	GLA	KER	LIQU	RIC
ARCH	CLU	GLE	KHAR	LIX	RIG
ARG	CLY	GLI	KIEL	LKA	RIK
ARK	COL	GLO	KIL	LOC	RKE
ARQU	COR	GLU	KLA	LOG	RKI
ARX	COUR	GLY	KLE	LOK	ROC
CAL	CRA	GOL	KLI	LUC	ROK
CAR	CRE	GOR	KLO	LUG	ROYC
CEL	CRI	GOUR	KLU	LUK	RUC
CER	CRO	GRA	KLY	LUX	RUG
CHAL	CRU	GRE	KOL	OGL	RYK
CHAELE	CRY	GRI	KOR	OLC	ULC
	CUL	GRO	KRA	OLG	ULG
CHAR	CUR	GRU	KRE	OLK	ULK
CHEL	CYR	GUAR	KRI	ORC	URC
CHER	EGL	GUER	KRO	ORG	URG
CHIL	ELC	GUIL	KRU	ORK	URK
CHLA	ELG	GUIR	KUL	QUAL	URQU
CHLE	ELK	GUL	KUR	QUAR	XUAL
CHOL	ERC	GYL	KYL	QUEL	
CHRA	ERG	ILC	LAC	QUIL	
CHRE	ERK	ILK	LAG	RAC	
CHRI	EXL	IRC	LAK	RAG	
CHRY	GAL	IRG	LCO	RAK	

The Homonym Hymn

What happens here or hear? “To be here” sounds exactly like “to be hear.” *Being here*, connoting existence, immediacy and presence, equally reflects *being hear*, a presence of sorts, despite the ungrammaticality. If trembling, lingering, standing are occurring, synonyms for being here, then there is also a hearing of that trembling, lingering and standing, for it’s the *ear* that is *here*, the *ear* that *hears*.

Being here, right now, can only mean reading. Hear! Here! There’s an *ear* in *read*. Here! Hear! *Reading* anagrammatizes into *ear ding*. Reading here, we hear in our ear, in an inner ear, this “ding, ding” of here or hear. Reading is both immediate (*here*) and vocalized (unspoken, but *hear*[d]) and made accessible to a hearing, an *ear ding!* *ding!* that always rings. Reading or *ear ding* relates to the interior speech *hear*(d) here by the inner ear. The read text has a voice that is *heard*, its *r(h)ead* voice always dinging in the ear right here. (Red, too, is heard here.)

The *ding!* in reading echoes another language. *Das Ding* is the German word for thing or matter. Then *reading* is an *ear thing*, a thing in the ear. Since it is usually a word silently vocalized, reading summons up “flowers absent of all bouquets” (Mallarmé), the hallucinated mental image for the word’s status as signifier. The thing is the hallucination, image, object, or phantasy that hovers from the lattice of a text. “*In A Faun’s Afternoon*”, Mallarmé wrote, “These nymphs I would perpetuate”; the nymphs were simply the faun’s or the reader’s hallucination, they were the thing hallucinated, “perpetuated,” while reading. Moreover, the Thing buried and hidden in reading, is the *ear*, the *ding* and the *thing*. While reading, we never hear that Thing which is the “ding!”, here the typewriter’s “ding!” when the line is close to the right margin. All those muffled “dings!” when we read manuscripts.

Freud distinguished between Word-presentations and Thing-presentations, the latter alone constituted unconscious ideas, the former conscious ones, along with Thingpresentations. The Thing-presentation dominated Unconscious always treats words as things, thereby justifying the use of anagrams and homonyms. Wit, for example, uses the letters in words as things and discovers an unexpected connection. The name of a comedian, David *Letterman*, gives encouragement to what must happen for the sake of wit: recombine *letters* to create a joke. Thus the word reading has the things which are its letters, allowing us to say it's an Ear-Ding or Thing-in-the-Ear, *read-ding!* a *read-thing* in the ear. Hopefully texts will "rap tap tap on (our) chamber doors," and those doors, the barriers between the *Ucs.* and *Cs.* systems, will no longer hide the Thing we dare to read.

Dare we read the letter that begins "Dear..."? These "things in the ear," *dare*, *read* and *dear*, pass before our eyes when we see "Dear...". "Dear..." also commands, "Read..." even for the one who writes the letter. No letter, my dear, is sent just to you. And no letter remains merely intact in the letters to friends or in whatever we read.

There are more things to read. Such as the word *heart*. A meaningless anagram for *read*, *ear*, evokes *heart* whose *h* is simply a harder breathing of the subsequent *e*. *Heart's t*, too, corresponds to *ear's d*, for both are dentals, consonants pronounced at the front of the mouth. *Heard* from *ear/read* rings not far from *heart*, for both have *ear* dinging in their hearts: *heard* and *heart*.

Are we getting to the heart of reading? If reading is an "ear ding," we notice a complication between the "ding, ding" of the ear and the moment that it presents the hallucinated Thing. "Ding, ding" goes the Thing, the signified, the Mystic Rose. Ding! *Ding!* The veil of truth rises and naked it stands where? here? hear? *Hear! Here!* When truth is *here*, it happens at the moment the Thing is *hear(d)*. The presentation of the heard Thing comes *here* just as it comes *hear(d)*, here in the ear. Ding! *Ding!* Ding! Thing!

It's still hard to find the heart here. When the EarThing rings in our ears, at that moment or instant the literary hallucination stands before the reader's monuments of catastrophes, his cemetery plots of envaulted loves. And these vaults, these burial plots of exquisite, dangerously thrilling Things have erected the thickest walls, the walls of the "heart," the figurative home for such permanently inaccessible Things. The Word-Thing heard while reading must find entrance, must pierce these fortifications. The beauty of the *read*-Thing is then measured by the pumping *red* heart that has *already* buried the very Thing now being *read*. *Already* in the *red* heart, the *read*-Thing simply returns to the place it was separated from. To read is to place the Thing back in the place, the heart, where the Thing, the Word-Thing-Ding!, was always *already* within. The "ding, ding" rings and raps and taps in euphonious rapport to the Thing always ringing in the chambered vault of the heart. A heart rings and beats all the time. Reading should ring that dinging we rarely let ourselves hear, this ringing heart's Thing and this dinging Thing in the ear. The read write here should pump the red right hear.

* * *

Anyone familiar with older forms of address, such as "Thou art," will be struck by the identity between the archaic verb form for "to be" and the noun for beautiful objects, "art."

"Thou art" is not forgotten everytime we speak of "art," for the expression, "Is that art?" cryptically possesses the archaic mode of address, "Art that art?" At once there is the possibility that "art," as noun, can transform itself into the older echo of the verb "to be." People who resort to purely existential or ontological claims over the validity of "art" will be pleased to know that there "art" a copula happening within "art." The resources of this slip render the claim that "art is" now mean, in the light of the older verb form, "art art." The reversal of the noun "art" into the verb "art" changes or rather

confirms what “art” has been doing all along: predicating identities between disparate entities, here “art” art “art.” The “artist” is then one who predicates anything with anything else. “Art, thou art, henceforth, a conjugation of the verb ‘to be.’” Art that what art art?

* * *

Do I *know*? No, I do not know. Know and no are identical in sound, but radically divergent in meaning. This semantic divergence eventually points to an identity.

Every ego that states “I know” also dreams of its negation, its assertion of non-knowledge, its failure to know, its self-denial of full comprehension before the known. A *no* with a *know* refuses the certitude of a subject, the subject who “knows.” The ego *knows* just as it *no*’s. A Lacanian insight (I don’t know where he said it) propounds that recognizing an ego is a recognition of a nose. *He knows* so-and-so becomes *he nose* his nose.

Knowledge or no-ledge is then cryptically implicated in negation or denial (*Verneinung*), the “trademark” of an unconscious idea. Fetishism simultaneously asserts and denies the desired object, the fetish is the monument to such a confusion. Like those who get a nose-job, they hope another *nose knows* not of his nose. Or with haircuts, the *knot* is made into *naught* by the cutter; another *knot* then replaces what was made *naught* or *not*. The fetishism in both instances is an undecidability between two events: the *nose-jobber*’s desire for others not to *know(s)* of the transformation and the *knot* that was made *naught* or *not* made into another *knot*. As with knowledge, *no* homonymically present in *know* contradicts the certitude of *knowledge*.

Apropos of Freud’s discussion of the Unconscious, he stated that it had “no negation.” If he felt that the Unconscious always already admitted itself into a vertiginous space of assertion and negation and their complete relativity, then he was also, with the “no” before the “negation,” unconsciously admitting that there was “negation,” that is, a lack

of the simultaneity and interchangeability of assertions and negations. Thus, in the Unconscious there is negation as well as no negation, since the author of the essay "Negation" says that the "no" indicates an unconscious idea. Freud contradicts himself when he says, "There is in this system no negation." This means, unconsciously, "There is in this system negation." But this does not refute the truth of his assertion because the idea's truth is determined by something that would radically ambiguate it, the Unconscious. Ultimately, Freud is saying that in the Unconscious everything is permissible (Joyce's "Here Comes Everybody"), permitting us in turn to say, "There is in the Unconscious negation." At the moment Freud asserts a condition of the Unconscious, there is the possibility that the Unconscious will refute whatever condition has been ascribed to it, that is, its status of "no negation." This, then, renders the Unconscious even more of a non-concept, since it escapes the borders between a "yes" and a "no," an assertion and a negation, a contradiction and a non-contradiction. And by saying, "non-concept" I repeat Freud's error.

Everybody Wants Exposure

When photographs are developed the originally white printing paper becomes impressed with the effects of light upon it. The smooth, pure, undefiled surface of such paper thus bears the indicia of light upon it. When blue jeans are worn, the originally dark blue denim cloth becomes impressed with the effects of wear upon it. The crisp, unwashed, navy-blue surface of such cloth thus bears the indicia of wear upon it. Both events corroborate each other, something I knew was happening whenever I saw photographers devoutly wearing their fading denim jeans. Allegory best explains these two events since one narrative, fading jeans, repeats another, photodeveloping. Moreover, photographs of faded jeans comment enigmatically on the two events. The photo, “faded” into existence by means of specific chemicals, registers the jeans that “developed” by means of the elements.

Our culture’s fondness for reproducible images, photographs, films and television has the equivalent close to our bodies in the form of denim articles that retell this story of America’s love of the photograph. *America*, or *I camera*, refracts into *jean care*, for Americans love cameras and they love their jeans. Norma Jean (or Love Jean) once wore jeans and there are films and photographs of her in such clothes. Some of the last photos of her show her emerging from a pool, the same developing bath photographers use or the same container Levi’s manufacturers use to prewash their jeans?

It is no wonder that Diana Ross was once photographed for an album cover with denim jeans. Michael Landon, a celebrity who promotes Kodak cameras, usually wears the cloth in the advertisements. Brooke Shields’s photographed public exposure amplifies itself whenever she participates in Calvin Klein jean ads. The most photographed people in our culture all possess cryptophors of jeans or Levi’s in their

proper names: Monroe, Dean, Elvis, Kennedy. When people want to be noticed, a metaphor for being photographed, they will wear jeans to achieve that attention, exposure, “flash.” Going to Studio 54 required wearing a pair of jeans, yet the “studio” within the discotheque’s name could also equivocate with a photographer’s *studio*, a truism for in its heyday a lot of photographers snapped away at its star habitués.

An additional allegory of photodeveloping is tanning. The short time it takes to develop a picture meets up with the length of time it takes to develop a tan. The tanned body, when photographed by admirers, contrasts with an Instamatic’s brief registration of light to skin’s hourly or daily or weekly exposures. Like a lamp-filled photographer’s studio, there now are lamp-filled tanning salons so as to “Flash ‘em a Coppertone Tan!” These tanning salons have perhaps accelerated the natural tanning process just as photo-technology has accelerated developing speeds.

Jean Harlow died of sun-exposure. Dyeing one’s hair (exactly how did she dye?) allegorizes photodeveloping, from original dark hair to light hair from original print paper to light-registered paper. Overexposed Deborah Harry left her hair in the developer too long. In order to *shock*, people dye their hair, or rather they dye a *shock* of hair. “*Webster’s Dictionary*” defines a shock as “a thick bushy mass (as of hair).” Dyed blonde shocks shock the public so as to further the emergent celebrity’s public exposure. Light print paper becomes darker like dark hair that becomes lighter like dark jeans that become lighter. Light hair, like light paper, also changes color to darker hues as do prints in developing baths. The cliché of a Hollywood home with its swimming pool becomes a giant developing bath: starlets in chlorine pools bleach their hair while 8 × 10” prints, once immersed, also alter their original hues. The innocent ritual of swimming, either in pools or the sea, henceforth metaphorizes into fixer/developer baths. Swimming and tanning appear to be best on the beaches where celebrities and models swim (Malibu, Hamptons, Fire Island).

Photographs are also connected to a highly nostalgic impulse since they are records of a former life however hard we try to revive a past now irrevocably absent. The mourned for Jean could become the mourning for our jeans that are no longer young, unfaded, unworn, these connotations allowing us to think of the disfigurements that await us when we age, “develop.” But then all of us look forward to the time when our jeans will fade just as we look forward to the time when we will be photographed.

Tell Me Why

*...c'est comme si dans l'onde j'innovais
Mille sépulcres pour y vierge disparaître.
Stéphane Mallarmé, Le Pitre Châtié*

i

When the time comes to leave those places where we hope to meet a person who might be able to bring joy into our lives, when we renounce ourselves to rest and solitude from loud music and fervent stares, we begin to ask ourselves why did I go out? why did I stay up so late? why was I so foolish? Indeed if there comes a time when we meet someone who just might answer the question “why?”, the jubilant ride home and the ensuing embraces appear to compensate for all our past sorrows of rejection and desolation. This stranger is the reason why I have been so foolish because he might be the one who will answer all my questions.

Yet when no one can answer our questions, when the hope for a reply seems infinitely deferred into the future, we only have recourse to our consciousness, the private stream of our thoughts. Now and then this interior monologue is broken and our questions can be asked, but only to vanish into the night from where they had sprung. We asked our questions and they were answered with a “No.”

Perhaps we were rejected because we failed to embody the other’s illusion of love. We lonely wanderers soon realize, after repeated rejection, that our appearance is not adequate to the other’s fantasy of what is becoming. So, with the help of cosmetics, exercise, an article of clothing, even plastic surgery, we hopefully emerge as an embodiment of the other’s illusion. Our entrance onto the dance floor now

assumes proportions as mythic as man's mastery over the accidents of nature. Soon, however, time leaves its traces behind, and reality which had coerced our fantasies to modify their sovereignty brings all this supposed emancipation to naught. Still, things become postponed, death is deferred, we can dance and rest assured that that ultimate disfiguration is not yet at hand.

In face of this postponement fantasy asserts an endless, illusory victory. The very prospect of its disfiguration turns into the fervently beating heart of its eternity. Even though time intercedes and interrupts fantasy's operation, it nonetheless enters into the continuum of our unconscious' presentations. Time thus becomes a "figure," a constitutive moment within our unconscious life. For fantasy to be realized, it must do so within a specific period of time, and that period of time, for love-starved gay men, occurs between the hours of 1 and 5 a.m. on a Saturday night.

ii

Between the hours of one and five the gay man dons his pair of 501 Levi's shrink-to-fit jeans in order to find a sexual partner. The 501-wearing man just might enter a New York discotheque called "The Saint" at 105 Second Avenue for this very purpose. If he is a member of the Saint, he probably has paid the special annual membership rate of \$150, further permuting the series of cyphers in 501. Any discussion of homosexual desire must take the phenomenon of the 501 into account. Why do so many gay men from the hour of 1:00 a.m. onward wear these good-luck charms? Why?

The letter Y is the answer why. Every crotch of a pair of Levi's forms the shape to the letter V, the same symbol for five in its Romanized variant: *VOI*. Granted that the V also symbolizes female genitalia, what other genitalia are mimed by the *VOI*? The O again could imitate the recesses of female pudenda or the circular rim of the anus while the 1 the erect, male member. Thus the 501, or more accurately the *VOI*, visualizes the sexual organs just below its surface by means of

the iconic attributes of all its graphic symbols. The fetishism of this cloth is in part explained by its contiguity to the sexual organs that its letters represent. For the male homosexual, the VOI represents his childhood wish that his sister or mother will eventually grow what he has. Here the V or vagina in VOI or LeVi will grow the I or phallus and thereby form the crucial letter Y. The five buttons that seal this fly ask whether this fantasized phallus is about five inches long. The fetishism of the 501 among male homosexuals stems from his belief that V's will transform into Is, a fantasy that is emblemized in 501 Levi's jeans. The 501 is the foundation upon which male homosexuals erect the cypher of their desire. Ask any homosexual what he wants: *Che V(u)OI?*

iii

“Find a friend at the Y” so says a slogan for the Young Men’s Christian Association scattered throughout American cities. Five o’clock strikes and the emblem of the 501 unfurls its mystic banner: I have my friend at the Y, the cock that dangles from his Levi’s fly, the cock of the gay guy. From the depth of the 501 emerges a Y once five buttons are undone. Rather than form just a letter Y, a mimicry of a dangling, limp penis, one’s ecstatic, erect organ reverses the Y into the lambda (λ), the Greek alphabetical symbol which gay liberationists have made into the ensign of their resistance. Exuberant with the companionship of a newlyfound friend, he raises both arms to the sky and only briefly does immortality yell its “yea.”

Yet to find a friend at the Y one must first look like the letter Y. The gay must develop his body so that his chest is wider than his waist, forming the same configuration of a Y’s V-shaped top and slender lower half. Here, at a bench press, he spreads out his arms and so evokes the Y all over again. Some men exercise with a freeweight belt buckled around their waists. Besides preventing muscle spasms in the back, this belt tends to narrow the waist and consequently gives the illusion one’s chest is much wider, as wide as the upper part

of a Y. Even the name of many freeweights also features a Y imprinted there: “York,” “Olympic.” And all of this takes place in a gym.

iv

Gay clubs usually feature loud disco music played to a clientele that invariably wears 501 Levi’s and/or possesses bodies in the shape of a Y. No less significantly, the music that is played there requires a diamond stylus to sound out the grooves of records. These V-, or more accurately Y-, shaped bodies assume the same general configuration of a V-shaped stylus. Now that gay men desire to enlarge their chests and narrow their waists into a V-shape, they also desire to look like the stylus that they dance to. This mimicry of a diamond stylus stems from identifying so strongly with the music to the point where one becomes the very instrument that produces such enjoyable sound in the sloping contours of a developed physique. Having a hard, adamantine body that resembles a sound-producing diamond gives the sound-saturated dancer a visual representation for what can only be heard. The invocatory drive (hearing) is inevitably accompanied by the scopic drive (seeing), otherwise one undergoes a diffuse anxiety, like when sound from a television falls momentarily silent.

This intimacy between sound listened to and the shape of bodies that mime the sound-creating diamond takes place whenever gay men lift 45 lbs. freeweights. While lifting 45 lbs. weights, they are probably listening to visually similar 45 LPs played over their gym’s sound system. 45 LPs are round, usually black discs just as 45 lbs. freeweights are round, usually black, but much larger, discs as well. Even *lps* equate with *lbs* since the letter *p* is a flip-flop reflection of a *b*. One lifts 45s to resemble the diamond that plays 45s.

v

The Latin adjective *levis*, *leve* means, according to Cassell’s Latin Dictionary, “light, not heavy” in its literal sense and

in its altered or metaphorical senses “light, trifling, unimportant; mild, gentle; fickle, light-headed, capricious.” After 5:00 p.m. one puts on the 501 to pursue light and unimportant matters such as dancing at the Saint’s raised dance floor. It is a raised, circular platform over which stands a vast curved ceiling. Here one feels as if floating in the air. *Leves* Levi’s make the bodies of the Saint’s Levi’s wearers lighter by raising them up to this elevated, nearly levitating dance floor. The fading of these *leves* Levi’s also makes them lighter or *leviores* so as to ascend into the sky. Oddly, heavy men, heavy from building their bodies, wear light Levi’s and they too become *leviores*. But then they are gay, “gentle,” and perhaps “fickle, light-headed,” *leves*. By renouncing the propagation of the species, gay people are trifling, non-serious, *leves*.

Many Levi’s-wearing, body-building men who go to discotheques drink Miller Light or Budweiser Lite so as not to bulge at the waist and so ruin their Y-shape. They might also smoke light tar cigarettes, such as Marlboro Lights whose advertisements often feature men wearing jeans that have become lighter, faded. Indeed many of these people frequent tanning salons to render their bodies tanner, *darker*. While they wear their jeans to make them lighter or *leviores*, they also make their bodies tanner, darker, less *leves*. Conceivably the man who wears the lightest jeans is also the one who can lift the heaviest weights. As one lifts weights that are becoming lighter and lighter, one is concurrently persuaded to become darker and darker. Weights that are no longer “heavy” are “light” and thereby convey another antonym for “light”: “dark.”

A Saint ’84–85 membership card features a bolt of lightning against a dark blue sky. This motif was derived from the club’s brochure illustration of a naked man holding the bolt in an empty landscape under a gradually darkening, starry sky, an allusion to the stellar projections of its dance floor light shows. Unconscious to its artist, the man who holds a bolt of lightning is ultimately the Saint member who will hold with his five fingers the One of his dreams, a Levi’s-wearing lover or handsome stranger. The Saint member cannot hold light-

ning but simply a pair of lightening blue jeans. This member will, by wearing such light or levitating Levi's, ascend into the blue sky, he will fly into the Saint's starry heaven. But this starry heaven is only its upstairs lounge, the place in the blue sky where men were wont to unfasten each others' blue Levi's fly. Here they used to fly to the fly and used to hold that levin bolt bursting from the lightened Levi's fly. (As of the '85-86 season, the establishment forbids backroom sex in light of the recent health crisis.) This *flight*-idea embedded in *light* Levi's might be further explained by the name of a New York jeans store, "Wings" at 666 Broadway. Even the Saint's T-shirts feature its name in large letters painted like a blue sky and interspersed with white clouds.

vi

Wearing lightened jeans, lighting cigarettes, drinking light beer, dancing until it is light outside, all constitute a highly pleasurable series of activities indigenous to gay or "light" life. This phenomenon of becoming lighter also relates to gay culture's habit of listening and dancing to disco music. Originally the vinyl records that play the hits gays dance to were made of dark, crude oil. By refinement, the oil became "lighter," viz. turned into vinyl so as to become imprinted with the grooves that diamond styluses would eventually play upon. Generally the lightening of the 501 reflects our petrochemical society's perpetual transubstantiation of crude oil as do diet soft drinks, low calorie cheeses, reduced cholesterol cooking oils and bleached white bread. Nearly every American food product has a "light," calorie-reduced or industrially processed variant. Nothing in our society escapes the vicissitudes of the Other of oil.

Apropos of the anal drive and its relation to male homosexuality, this refinement from dirty oil into clean vinyl, from *shit* into *hits*, undergoes a reversal when clean new jeans, though dark, become dirty or faded from wear. The faded, stained Levi's resolve this lack of refinement by being newly washed, "refined" again. Perhaps their fetishism can be ex-

plained by being *on the one hand* “refined,” “lighter,” hence “clean,” and *on the other hand* “stained,” “faded,” “worn.” Just like the anagrammatic juxtaposition of *Saint* for *Stain*, faded 501s are both “clean” and “dirty” at the same time. Unusually, this cleaning and dirtying of Levi’s finds its cryptic echo in the Latin verb *lavo*, *lavare*, *lavi*, *lautum*, “to wash.” Here the second person singular present indicative active *lavis* (you wash) is nearly identical to *levis*, save for one vowel.

vii

The drive or the dance through the night is a long one. Coffee or speed are what truck drivers ingest in their long marathons across the continental United States. Chemically refined or “lightened” substances (cocaine, MDA, Ecstasy, methadrine, LSD, ethyl chloride, Special K) are what some gay men (not all) take if they wish to stay up until the light of day. Cars require oil to drive and nightclubbers require drugs to dance. Cars shield one’s body and jeans shield one’s legs. (Getting into a car is an allegory of getting into a pair of jeans.) Now that gays have put on their car-contiguous jeans, they also feel compelled to ingest drugs, substitutes for chemically refined crude oil. Drugs give one energy, they help one to “go” and intensify one’s ego. They give one a feeling of omnipotence, confidence, strength. They make one feel as impregnable as the car one ends up imitating in these late night situations. Incidentally, even the word *Levi’s* cryptically contributes to this feeling of strength once its letters are transformed, through anagrammatization and substituting its *l* for an *r* (justifiable since they are both liquids), into *vires*, the Latin word for “strength” in the plural nominative. In the singular accusative this word becomes *vim* or “force.” This coincidence simply demonstrates how much Levi’s contribute to the invincible state of queer *viri* (men) high on drugs. (Surprisingly there is a business in New York called V.I.M. Jeans Stores, Inc. on 16 West 14th Street.)

The incorporation of the automobile that happens all the time in our culture finds its strange consummation in the taking of drugs. Although society disapproves, and rightly so when it is a question of driving while high, it cannot control the inevitable metaphoric transfer between inorganic, mind-altering substances and the synthetically produced hydrocarbons that propel automobiles. Given gay culture's addiction to adamantine physiques and carlike jeans, how willing are its members to renounce substances with the ones that propel cars?

viii

Straight people are trapped into always aiming at the "right" or "orthodox" path while gay people are trapped into always aiming at the "light" or "trivial" path. At its most oppressive, straight culture disapproves of anything that deflects from its vision of the Holy Family. At its most oppressive, gay culture can do nothing but repeat the paths of its metonymic flights. Gay culture perpetually ritualizes its displacement of coitus in the dance. Here gay life's fetishes hold stage and perform their magic.

"Do you want to dance?" hopes for an affirmative reply, and if negatively answered, it will simply be posed again in the hopes for a "Yes." If "Yes," then the entrance onto the dance floor begins an elaborate prestaging of anticipated sex, its simulated performance. Many times it is only dancing and never the exit into far more serious dancing elsewhere. But since dancing is not quite sex, it always performs the impossibility of ever being sex. One keeps on dancing because one keeps on deferring sex and that deferral of sex is thus realized by dancing. Because of this constant shifting of sex into dancing, dancing inevitably embodies the homosexual's turning of the crucial issue of coitus onto lighter issues.

Still in all seriousness dancing is often intended to seduce a "trick," the stranger willing to perform unorthodox coitus. Here dancing turns into the lovemaking that turns from the straight and narrow. Such seductive dance turns eventually

reproduce the redundant turns of a record's pickup needle. The picked-up trick was just one song among many others and further turns just might very well turn another on. As extolled by one of the characters in *The Boys in the Band* who screams "Turning!," the gay turns away from straight life so as to be free to turn, however tiresome this flight can be. The gay turns the Dance of the Seven *Levi's* because the *lives* of gays always return to the turns of these letters.

ix

Without end, the mystery of the 501 continues. Why did the famous cultural anthropologist Levi-Strauss, when discussing the gay resort Fire Island in "*Tristes Tropiques*", not discuss Levi Strauss & Co.? Why is a famous porn-star named after a pair of jeans, Jack *Wrangler*? Further, why is Fire Island called such in light of the near misspelling of fire for five? The horny gay man wears the five because he is on fire, because he is on Fire Island or at the *Pines/Penis*. Norma Jean or Marilyn Monroe sang the line "Guadeloupe 105!" in the song *Heat Wave*, the last and most intolerably warm temperature in a long itinerary of Caribbean locales and temperatures. The hundreds of other instances where the word "fire" is mentioned in disco songs give unconscious, mutual reinforcement to the sexual passion of "fire" and its contiguity to sexual organs as emblemized in *fire-O-ones*. Even the name of a popular discjockey, Michael *Fierman* (who plays at the Saint and on gay nights at the Palladium), anagrammatizes into *Fireman*. As Norma Desmond utters in *Sunset Boulevard* regarding her dead monkey, "He always liked fires and poking at them with a stick."

Add five and one, six results. The Latin word for six is *sex*, identical to the English "sex." Homosexuality always already embeds $5 + 1$ within it, *sex*. *Sex* always seems to happen at *six* anyway, since after *five* one is on *fire*.

The homonym of *I* or ego for *eye* or organ of sight finds itself distributed both in homosexual ego libido as well as its scopic drive. The libido that is invested in one's body, one's *I*, finds just as intense a discharge through the rim of the eye. Given that the *I*, for the gay male, inheres within the letter *Y*, this cypher is also not far from the eye, for it inheres within the very center of "eye." (Incidentally, another homonym, gays gaze at gays, confirms the abyssal nature of this drive of the eyes.¹) Even the lower case letter *i*, its dot, is really a human eye, a cartoonists' schematic representation of an iris. Always in *Levi*, this dot levitates like the eye in Redon's famous lithograph, "The Eye, A Strange Balloon, Moves Toward the Infinite."

As one's *Levi*'s fade into a lighter and lighter blue, one's ideally light blue eyes will rise into the sky, the same starry sky projected on the walls of the Saint's dance floor ceiling. Such a starry sky is lit with so many dots, the very dots derived from all the *i*'s in the many pairs of *Levi*'s worn there. Indeed all of this is happening in a hemisphere like the vitreous humor of a human eye or that lightest, most airborne of all graphic touches, the flourish or pirouette of the letter "i." Here the homosexual's interminable displacement into the lightest and most inconsequential entities is consummated in a dance floor's architecture, a memorial to the "i" in *Levi*. Just as the mirrored disco ball, when descending from the apex of the ceiling and saturating its recipients with a myriad of lights, eerily mimes this letter, so does the dance floor's central, supporting column and crowning hemispherical ceiling as well. True to this letter's substitutability with a phallus, its dot, once scattered into galaxies of facets, foreshadows the dissemination of semen just about to take place when all those buttons, "dots" again, in a *Levi*'s fly are unfastened. Yet when

¹ With all this discussion of homonyms and homosexuals, both of which share the Greek adjective *homos*, how could a homosexual who pursues partners of like or similar sexual organs not utter names or words of like or similar sounds?

fastened, the uppermost and fifth button remains exposed and so the vertical stitching concealing the other four conjures a vision of the *i* all over again. Here at the Saint every Saturday night, a ritualized ecstasy with the cosmos takes place by means of 501s whose digital, rightangled cyphers uncannily resemble the acrostic of Strategic Defense Initiative (“Star Wars”), SDI, 501. Russia may want America’s 501s but not its SDIs. America’s armor is the levitation of its genitalia, its 501, to the *stars* forever scintillating from (Levi) Strauss (& Co.).

xi

Two eyes can resemble two headlights, as confirmed by a Saint poster for a “Black Party” a few years ago. Here an artistic rendition of a man featured his eyes with light streaming from their sockets. Given the roundness of irises as well as the spherical shape of eyeballs, a pair of eyes is not too far from resembling a pair of tires. When two eyes find, by means of a blatantly automotive metaphor, “cruising,” another pair of eyes, they then have four eyes as does a car four tires. The desire to be as perfect as a car has found its consummation in finding another pair of eyes or tires since one pair of eyes cannot run like the two pairs of tires that they necessarily end up resembling. This is related to parents who, with only one child, feel they should have a second one since a three-member family of a father, mother and child is at odds with an automobile that drives with four tires.

Tires also incise paths, they resemble the styluses that play down the grooves of records. Eyes, whose substitutability with jewels is a commonplace, associate with the styluses that write out the sound that is heard. Sight, once utterly dissimilar to hearing, now emerges, in this unconscious sense, as the diamond of such inscription of sound. The abyss of gazing at gays in a music-saturated discotheque is an attempt to overcome the gap between the hearing of diamond-written sound and seeing the diamond- or jewel-like eyes. The gap between the five and the one in 501 would then serve as a

condensed emblem of this impossible identity between the diamond heard and the diamond seen, the V as representative of the invocatory drive and the 1 as representative of the scopic drive. Oddly here a visual intuition accompanies the cypher for sound while an acoustic intuition, the homonym of eye for I, accompanies the cypher for sight. The noncorrespondence of hearing with sight, of intense music with intense staring, has yielded its signal, a letter that has combined the cyphers of these two drives. The homosexual's anxiety over castration finds its tenuous resolution in a figure that synaesthetically evokes nothing less than the very partition they wear about their waists as did Perseus the Medusa's head. Once the fantastically constructed Y encounters its spectator, will he erect those cyphers of chest, head and limbs, the VOI that ultimately has his body spellbound, as in a mirror?

xii

The recent AIDS epidemic has warned gay men to abstain from certain sexual practices. Just the wearing of 501 Levi's nowadays is tantamount to inviting pollution. The priestly tribe of the Levites were experts in matters of cleanliness. Witness chapter 5, verse 3 of Leviticus: "Or if he [a soul] touch the uncleanness of man, whatsoever uncleanness it be that a man shall be defiled withal, and it be hid from him; when he knoweth of it, then he shall be guilty." In light of the warning of *evils* embedded in *Levi's*, is this tribe now persuaded by its past and present pollutions to lead sexually temperate lives?

Afterthoughts

Typing, my means of livelihood for these past twelve years, has had a pivotal influence on my writing. Secretarial wage slavery has forced me to be attentive to the appearance of letters lest a random typographical error provoke the ire of my employer. All of the essays heretofore presented in "*The Age of Oil*" were composed under these circumstances of selling my secretarial labor power from 1978 to 1986, with the bulk of the writing composed from 1980–82. The only essay that was written free from the exigencies of secretarial duties was "*Calling All Cars*," but that essay, like all the others, reflects my attentiveness to the letter, both forced upon myself by my livelihood and by the writings of Freud, Lacan, Joyce, Mallarmé and Derrida.

Perhaps what unifies "*The Age of Oil*" is this question of the letter or, if I may be permitted a typo (now that I'm writing free of supervision), the *lettar*, where *tar* has always already haunted *letter*. Letters are tar, they represent the gross materiality of language that speech always seems to transcend. Just as oil has usually been refined from crude into gasoline, from dirty black crud into the cthereal vocalizations of popular lyrics, so have letters always been spoken, retranscribed into living speech. The "lightening" of oil and its refined state reproduces the "lightening" of letters into their spoken state. As secretary, I earn a wage based on my ability to transform speech into letters. Occasionally the transcription is inaccurate, a "letter" is missing and so the entire missive, a "letter" again, must be typed over. What does a secretary type, letters or letters? When my boss says, "I wish to dictate a letter," the double requirement entails both the rendition of a spoken interval into a visual handwritten symbol (a letter) and the transcription of all such shorthand into

a typewritten format (a letter). My particular type of shorthand, Personal Shorthand, enforces this attentiveness since it deploys alphabetical symbols for such common words as “copy,” “enclose,” “and,” “the,” represented by “c,” “q,” “a,” “e,” respectively.

Given that oil is hidden and stored in tightly sealed containers, the notion of a crypt appears to be entirely transposable to that realm. As well, given the *secret* secret to *secretary*, my obsession with its disclosure could have been predetermined by the title of my occupation. Yet the secrets that secretaries are occasionally privy to, the private lives of their bosses or the confidential nature of their documents, were not as secret as the secrets I was writing while typing. My secret was to write, not to type. Yet I appeared to be typing when I was actually writing, or rather I was typing my writing, not dictated tapes, stenographed letters or handwritten pages of my employers. As a man in a labor pool composed mostly of women, I was refusing to be the mere receptacle of one whose higher wage entitled him to say, “I am who I am.”

Oil or letters are shitty but made respectively less so by refinery experts when they process the crude into octane or when secretaries accurately transcribe the spoken words into typo-free sequences. Secretaries in many ways are surrogate mothers who attend to the incunabula of their bosses, where incunabula has the double sense of swaddling clothes in Latin or of books and manuscripts in English (though mostly before 1501). The swaddling clothes could also be either the briefs of attorneys, their legal documents, or their underwear. One secretary I remember complained of her boss: “He and his shitty briefs!” By fussing over nearly countless questions of wording, spacing, grammatical and typographical errors, the usually female secretary is in sum changing shitty incunabula or briefs into “clean” (as in “clean copies”) or “presentable” ones. Just as *secret* silently inhabits the phrase, “I am a *secretary*,” so does *shit* secretly inhabit my last name, *Smith/(m)Shit*. And I’ve often thought that I ought to change it into something more “refined.”

The hands and fingers of the mostly white, upper class males who extract surplus value from secretarial workers become dirty after they have finished their subway ride read of *The New York Times*. The grime from the *Times* that covers their white hands is eventually washed off as is also the graffiti crime that covers those surfaces of New York subway trains. While the white struggles to erase the train surfaces so as to resemble their light faces, the black struggles to trace the train surfaces so as to resemble their dark faces. Erasing the objective exteriority of writing for the objective interiority of speech reproduces what the white male capitalist does whenever he dictates a letter to a black female wage slave. As long as the hierarchy of speech over writing prevails, so will the hierarchy of white, upper class males over racially diversified, impoverished females. Women, because of their perpetually eccentric position to the paternal law and its linguistic aftereffects, often just “type.” By merely transcribing the speech of males, their relation to language becomes inessential, cosmetic, as it were. “Liquid Paper,” a substance that paints over typographical errors, now offers as nearly a variegated prism as any line of nail polish, not to mention that both feature a tiny brush and handle in common. Once a page has been “eye-lined” (proofread), “polished” (ungrammaticalities expunged) and “combed” for any other infelicity, the smooth, appealing surface can be signed, the white maid-enpaper invaginated. The unsightly blemishes and wrinkles women worry over play their parts again when etters fail to preserve the homogeneity between ideal, spoken intention and written, visually attractive presentation. One brand of makeup I have had recourse to when acne spelled its letters on my cheeks went by the name of “Erase.” Correcting typos and correcting blemishes somehow ultimately confirms my conviction that letters are tar since blemishes are oil.

It was only when I read Marx’s “*Capital*” that I understood capital letters. Capital perpetuates the letter’s dictator to be emblazoned in capitals but the transcriber in lowercase whenever the initials of boss and secretary settle on the page’s lower left corner. Men who usually regulate the dispersal of

capital require the capital whereas a prominent socialist I once knew initialed his acrostic in lowercase. Corporate logos are nearly always capitalized, a virtual tautology of their accumulation of capital. The one who types initials in capitals is the one whose wage capital keeps lower. Capital sentences lower cases to type sentences always with an initial capital. (In the dictionary, “lowercase” immediately precedes “lower class”; lower cases represent lower classes.) An initial capital investment will always safeguard the capital initials of those who have invested. Capital letters are the supporting columns of an entablature of a social division of labor between those who capitalize surplus value and those who capitalize letters. The correctly capitalized letter is the source of the capitalist’s surplus.

Because consciousness so swiftly intends its mental presentations, computers endeavor to attain those speeds by which mental activity runs its course. Secretaries, chroniclers of the consciousnesses of their employers, attempt to bridge this gap between consciousness and its object by increasing their typing and shorthand skills. From 55 wpm to 75 wpm to 120 wpm to 200 wpm, the speeds asymptotically converge toward that phenomenological gap between noesis and noema, thinking and its cognate accusative. “Word processing” is a virtual synonym for consciousness. The circuit from speech to its written equivalent must shrink its distance to that of the milliseconds between thinking and its thought. Even the DOT, a now defunct computer, cannot eliminate the abyss between thought and its dot.

Still it is hard to believe that for every printed letter a human finger hammered it into place. Seeing a letter transports us into the idea without further inquiry into all the moments that led up to that imprint’s existence. The typo consequently reminds us of the intractability of the signifier in relation to the signified and of labor in relation to management. The laboring fingers of secretaries are the hammers that strike their “nails” into the “wood” of paper. That drone of hammering nails often drowns the voices of those who are dictating,

an oddity since the typewriter's loud, distracting strokes are only facilitating the voice's return to itself.

Hammering daylong and nightlong are those subterranean textual chains most adequately represented by New York's subway textual trains. The letter's perpetual effacement by speech in secretarial work here finds solace in the letter's triumphant muteness and iconicity. For those who are enslaved by the speech of white men, the colorfully festooned sides of trains, "pieces" as they are called, now relinquish any purposeful relation to speech. They resist the phonetic appropriation that every above-ground letter must be shackled to. These illuminated manuscripts have been rumbling beneath New York's streets, an antidote to the manuscripts whose capitals still have yet to be emblazoned. May "*The Age of Oil*" be worthy of all the lower cases who have illuminated capital by means of their illuminated capitals.